
NORTHERN TERRITORY OF AUSTRALIA

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

Fourth Assembly
Second Session

PARLIAMENTARY RECORD

Tuesday 18 March 1986
Wednesday 19 March 1986
Thursday 20 March 1986

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NORTHERN TERRITORY LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Fourth Assembly
Second Session

Speaker	Roger Michael Steele
Chief Minister and Treasurer	Ian Lindsay Tuxworth
Opposition Leader	Bob Collins
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PART I

DEBATES

DEBATES

Tuesday 18 March 1986

Mr Speaker Steele took the Chair at 10 am.

CONDOLENCE MOTION Mr J.L.S. MacFarlane CMG

Mr TUXWORTH (Chief Minister)(by leave): Mr Speaker, I move that this Assembly express its deep regret at the death of John Leslie Stuart MacFarlane CMG, an elected member for the division of Elsey in the Northern Territory of the Legislative Council from 26 October 1968 and the Legislative Assembly from 19 October 1974 and Speaker of the Legislative Assembly from 12 August 1975 until 2 December 1983, and place on record its appreciation of his long and meritorious service to the Legislative Council, the Legislative Assembly and the people of the Northern Territory, and tender its profound sympathy to his widow and family.

Mr Speaker, with the passing of Les MacFarlane, the Territory has lost one of its most prominent and outstanding citizens, a man who made a pre-eminent contribution to our political development, to this parliament and to the northern pastoral industry. John Leslie Stuart MacFarlane was a distinctive man in every way and he made a distinctive contribution to the Northern Territory. He was an individualist, a hard worker and a man of independent mind. He was not the sort of man to take a stance purely because it was popular, nor was he likely to toe the party line just because it was the party line. He has been described as a rebel with a cause and that cause was the cattle industry.

John Leslie MacFarlane was an impressive man in all ways. Few who knew him could forget his physical presence. He was a solidly-built man who always exuded determination, confidence and solid strength, the archetypal northern cattle man. When he was fighting for a cause, particularly when he was fighting for the cattle industry, he was pugnacious and tenacious. If he decided to make a stand on a point, he would set his craggy Scots features, with his jaw jutting forward, fold his arms and berate friend and foe alike. He was a man who thought for himself and believed in what he was doing.

He was a representative, a proud and unashamed representative, of traditional values. He was a strong family man with a firm belief in the value of hard work and the future of both the cattle industry and the Northern Territory. He loved his property, Moroak, and he was a hard worker, a man who drove himself hard and demanded similar effort from those around him. Yet, at the same time, he was a man who demonstrated outstanding loyalty and compassion. At one stage, a long-serving station employee was arraigned in Katherine court for a serious, violent offence. Despite the nature of the offence and the prevailing public opinion, Les MacFarlane did not hesitate to front up to the court and give character evidence and help the man as much as he could. Such was the strength of the man. He believed in standing by those who, through the years, had stood by him.

This compassion, this acceptance of human error, was also evident in his conduct as Speaker of this Assembly. While he was a strict Speaker who controlled both sides of this Assembly with his Katherine rules of debate, he was also ready always to give assistance to members who were indisposed. He was understanding of our faults and was always particularly kind to those who,

like him, had served the Territory for many years. He was a great supporter of everything to do with parliament but, in keeping with his independent mind, sometimes he defied parliamentary convention while Speaker.

His loyalty to his electorate was such that, when issues relating to Elsey came before the parliament, he would vacate the Chair and speak from the floor - and he did that often. I remember one instance when some bureaucrat was seeking to charge those who swam in the lower reaches of the Katherine River a fee for the privilege. This stupidity raised Les' ire. No one, he said, was going to charge Katherine kids to swim in their own river. He always had a sharp eye out for those silly little rules which can so harm the young and defenceless in our community.

In keeping with his traditional values and his belief in the family, he always displayed particular deference to all women, particularly those in politics. I am assured that, with ladies on both sides of the political fence, he won a reputation for fairness, kindness and considerable personal charm. He treated women with great respect and courtesy in the manner we have come to expect from a man of his generation and ideals.

Whilst upholding traditional manners in these areas, Les was not one to stand on protocol. With his independent and self-sufficient approach to life, he did not need that sort of formality. The only area where he demanded appropriate protocol and respect was this institution, the Legislative Assembly. Les was a great believer in the value of parliament and the freedoms that it guarantees. He was a keen supporter of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association and contributed much to it.

Les was also a very strong believer in the value of northern defence. As an ex-serviceman, he had been through the horror of war, and he was always a strong lobbyist for strength in northern defences.

Les MacFarlane was a Territorian of considerable personal charm and achievement. He was a traditionalist but he was also a man of compassion. The Territory is poorer for his passing.

Mr Speaker, the former Chief Minister and present member of the House of Representatives, Paul Everingham, also wishes to record in this place his admiration for Les MacFarlane. I would like to read his comments into the record:

'Les was a man of his times in this Northern Territory. He came here with 2 strong hands and a determination to build a cattle station out of nothing. With Peg's support, he succeeded and, for that alone, he must go down in the books as one of the post-war pioneer cattlemen of the Top End.

With Moroak up and running, Les realised that there were only political solutions to the seemingly insurmountable problems stifling industry and enterprise in the Territory in those days: distant markets, lack of roads, the most basic communications and the tyranny of distance. Territorians had no political clout at all so Les joined the other political pioneers of those days - Dick Ward, Tiger Brennan, Tony Greatorex - and was elected to represent Elsey in the Legislative Council. He used the council and later the Assembly unashamedly as a forum to battle for his people, the battlers, especially those in the Katherine district. He spent many years as

Speaker but never hesitated to put aside his wig and step down on the floor of the Assembly if he felt something had to be said on behalf of his people.

Les MacFarlane met with criticism, triumph and trouble during a full and active life. But everyone who met him, friend and foe alike, will remember to the end of their days that they once dealt with Les MacFarlane, a real Territory battler'.

Mr Speaker, I am sure that all members of this Assembly will agree with me when I say that an appropriate memorial to Les MacFarlane's work in the Katherine area is necessary. To provide that, the government has decided to name a wing of the Katherine Rural Education College 'The Les MacFarlane Building'.

Mr B. COLLINS (Opposition Leader): Mr Speaker, it is a fairly commonplace occurrence these days in the Northern Territory for people in public life to talk about the need to diversify and expand the Northern Territory's economic base. I believe that, in 1986 in particular, we are embarking on a new era for the Northern Territory with the construction of the gas pipeline from Alice Springs to Darwin. Obviously, the supply of an indigenous and stable energy source for the Northern Territory will bring about a whole new era of development in terms of cheaper fuel for tourist infrastructure, and perhaps even manufacture with the establishment of the free trade zone. Indeed, across the Territory, there are monuments to the failures of attempts to diversify the Territory's economic base.

In the last century of the Northern Territory's history, the cattle industry has been the one industry whose economic viability has endured. For many years, it was the only thing the Northern Territory had going for it. It almost died on quite a number of occasions through natural adverse conditions, poor prices, the distance from markets etc. I know from personal experience that great hardships were endured by the people on the land during those years.

I do not think that the cattle industry had a more forthright or single-minded advocate than Les MacFarlane. I first met Les 20 years ago when I was an extension officer with the Department of Agriculture in Katherine, and I had a very close association with him through a mutual interest in supporting the Katherine Show, including the very first Katherine Show. Les was well-known over the years for his solid support for both the Katherine and Darwin Shows. Supporting such shows was not an easy matter because it often meant that people in Les' position, on isolated cattle stations, had to go to a considerable amount of trouble and expense to get the animals to the show. One of the things Les MacFarlane accomplished - which was a matter of considerable pride to him and said a great deal for his expertise as a breeder - was that, at those shows, and in the face of competition from far better financed and better resourced cattle properties, he was consistently successful in taking out prizes with cattle bred at Moroak.

In the days that I first met Les MacFarlane, the Northern Territory was a very different place. I was fortunate enough to arrive at the end of the 'Capricornia' era. It was a time when white Russian refugees were still farming peanuts down on the Katherine River - people like Jimmy Simintz and Long John Ivanetz who were remarkable and who had extraordinary stories to tell. On the Daly River, there were people like Squizzy Taylor and Charlie Dargy. I was fortunate enough to know them all. Another enduring character was Tiger Brennan. Of course, there was Les MacFarlane.

Even in those days, Mac was pre-eminent in his one-eyed advocacy of the viability of the Northern Territory cattle industry. Over the years, outside parliament, Les and I had a close association because of a common interest in promoting Northern Territory agriculture. Indeed, it was only shortly before his death that I received a letter from him - as I often had in the past - which contained a clipping from an agricultural magazine he thought would be of interest to me because it involved a particular facet of rural education. Over the years that Mac was a member of this Assembly, he and I had many discussions. He used to supply me, on a regular basis, with ancient and dog-eared copies of select committee reports from the federal parliament on the establishment of a rural college in the Northern Territory. At his funeral on Moroak Station, tribute was paid to him for the contribution that he had made to the establishment of such a college. I must say that I was delighted to hear that, as a tribute to Les MacFarlane, a wing of that college will be named after him. I could hardly think of a more appropriate tribute to him than that.

The other day, I heard some very interesting statistics in respect of a plant operators' course that the college conducted last year. I visited the college to see what was being done there and I was extremely interested to hear that, of the 50 young men and women who completed that course, 48 are in permanent employment. That is a pretty impressive record. It is something that I know that Les MacFarlane would have derived enormous personal satisfaction from.

Les had a unique debating style. Certainly, he commanded the Legislative Assembly with his presence. He had considerable presence even when he put his wig on back to front. Even before Les rose to his feet, members could be certain of one thing: the subject on which he would speak. It never varied - it was always about the cattle industry in the Northern Territory.

Obviously, Mac and I had our disagreements over the years, particularly in relation to Aboriginal affairs. It is reasonable, and I think accurate, to say that there was an enormous gulf between us on that subject, in particular the matter of secure land tenure for Aboriginal people. I recall that, when Sir Ninian Stephen was appointed as Australia's Governor-General, he travelled around Australia making the usual courtesy calls. I waited upon him along with various other dignitaries at Government House. Mac was there in full robes and his wig was on the right way round. The commanders of the armed services and various other people were there, including His Honour the Administrator dressed in his Neapolitan ice-cream vendor's suit. We were standing in the anteroom waiting to go in, and it was Mac's turn to be the cab off the rank. He turned around and said to Eric Johnston and myself: 'Well, when I go in there, I'm going to give it to him with both barrels'. About 15 pairs of eyebrows were raised to the ceiling and everyone said: 'Oh God, what about, Mac?' He said: 'I'm going to talk about Aboriginal land rights in the Northern Territory', and away he went.

He had no sooner disappeared around the corner than everyone said: 'Oh my God!' Of course, those occasions are normally reserved for 10 minutes of chat: 'How's your father, welcome to the Northern Territory, it's a nice day and glad to see you here'. 10 minutes went past, 15 minutes went past and 20 minutes went past, and he still had not come back. He appeared again around the doorway with a great grin on his face, marched inside and had the undivided attention of everyone in the room. Commodore Johnston said to him: 'Did you give it to him with both barrels, Mac?' Mac replied: 'Bloody oath, I did!'

I then went in and met Sir Ninian Stephen, a man for whom I have enormous respect. He had a funny little smile on his face. He invited me to sit down and have a cup of tea. He said: 'Mr MacFarlane has just been giving me the benefit of his views on Aboriginal affairs in the Northern Territory'. I said: 'Yes, we gathered that'. He said: 'I would imagine, Mr Collins, not that I have met you before, that your opinion would be somewhat different'. I replied that it was and I spent the next 15 minutes putting the other point of view.

That was the sort of bloke Les MacFarlane was. Even though I disagreed with his views on many things, one could never accuse him of hiding them. He was always extremely forthright about what he thought and what he did. The one thing I valued very greatly was the personal association I had with Mac, particularly when I came into the Assembly. Some of the more pleasant interludes that I have had outside the Chamber were with Mac in the Members Lounge discussing Territory agriculture, the Territory's pastoral industry and, particularly, his constant interest and concern about rural education in the Northern Territory. The one thing he was always preoccupied with - and he was right - was establishing a rural college in the Northern Territory which did not necessarily concentrate on providing people with degrees - although some day that may well be the case - but on providing young people who wanted to work on the land with practical experience which they could put to good use. That is exactly the kind of institution that KREC has become. I think that Mac must have gained enormous personal satisfaction in seeing that college established after years of striving for it and lobbying for it, particularly because of the successful job that it does.

I join with my parliamentary colleagues, the Chief Minister of the Northern Territory and the federal member in paying tribute to Les MacFarlane. He was a Territorian of real character. He had an individual and unique style which was not always agreeable to people, but it was a style which distinguished him from everyone else around him.

Peg MacFarlane also deserves a tribute in this debate for her presence and assistance in the parliamentary life of this parliament. Again, one of my pleasant memories as a member of parliament was attending the CPA functions which Les enjoyed hosting so much. Those members who have been around for a few years will remember the familiar sight of Mac and Peg standing at the doorway of whatever restaurant or hotel a dinner was being held and welcoming everyone and shaking their hands as they came in. That, of course, was an indication of the gentleman that Les MacFarlane was. He was extremely courteous and good humoured, and he was devoted to the Westminster system of parliament and to the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association.

The opposition joins with the government in expressing our condolences to Les' family, and pays tribute to a man who made an enormous contribution to the Northern Territory and who will be sadly missed.

Mr ROBERTSON (Leader of Government Business): Mr Speaker, I would like to join with my colleagues and also pay my respects to the late Les MacFarlane.

There were probably 3 sides to my relationship with the late Speaker of this place. The first and obvious one is the relationship I had with him in 1974 when I first came here as a member. Of course, that was a very diverse one.

When I first came here, Bernie Kilgariff was appointed to the Chair for a brief period prior to going to the Senate. Les MacFarlane succeeded him. It was at that time, prior to self-government, that I became his deputy. It was during that period as Deputy Speaker and Chairman of Committees that I first came to understand and learn about parliamentary practice and what the Westminster system really is.

My relationship with Mr Speaker MacFarlane progressed when I became Manager of Government Business and then Leader of the House, as it was wrongly called, and Leader of Government Business subsequent to that.

The Chief Minister alluded to the role of Mr Speaker MacFarlane as Speaker, as indeed did the Leader of the Opposition. I would just like to give briefly my views on his Speakership. It has often been bandied about that he conducted the affairs of the Assembly according to the Katherine rules of debate. Really, I do not accept that. I think that phrase typified Les' sense of humour rather than the reality of his conduct in the Chair. I am quite sure that the person whom I am about to name would not mind me naming him. He is still alive but has retired. He reminded me very much of Bob Hall who was a magistrate in Alice Springs. He would never drift beyond what the law dictated. He would always stay within the boundaries of the law - as did Mr Speaker MacFarlane - according to Hoyle. But in the unique circumstances in which they found themselves, each was able to adapt those rules to the realities in which they were placed. This is not the House of Commons; it is not the federal parliament of Australia. The circumstances are different and the level of decorum expected from the Chair and the conduct across the Chamber have generally been vastly different to that which prevails in those very large national legislatures. So it ought to be. We represent a small population; we are a small number. Nonetheless, we have wide duties. Because we have the duties of a full parliament in every respect, with a few powers removed from us by the Commonwealth, we have a job to do. Because we are few in number, I think that job requires a greater degree of application from each and every one of us than the public generally requires or expects of parliaments of 600 or 250 people. The function of people like Mr Speaker MacFarlane, and indeed his predecessor, Speaker Kilgariff and yourself, Sir, has been to insist upon that being carried out.

Nonetheless, we are Territorians and we perceive ourselves as having different attitudes and different lifestyles to our cousins in the south. The capacity of Mr Speaker MacFarlane to adapt to the circumstances of Territory life and to the nature of debate over Territory affairs and issues, and yet to keep within the rules of Pettifer, or the rules as applicable to the Westminster system, was remarkable.

The second Les MacFarlane I knew was the friend. I think it would be true to say that, of all the people elected to this Assembly since 1974, I would have been a closer friend of Les MacFarlane than anyone else, with the possible exception of Roger Steele because of his background in the pastoral industry. My friendship with Les MacFarlane had as its catalyst the fact that we were both returned servicemen. It is a remarkable bond which automatically exists as a result of overseas service. It was the same common background that led me to become particularly good friends with Jack Doolan. He, Les and I were the only people in this Assembly who had that common background. Les and I became very good friends indeed.

When I visited Moroak, by myself or with entourage, Peggy would usually flee. Occasionally she was there, extending the type of hospitality which the

Leader of the Opposition alluded to earlier. My sympathies also go to Peggy MacFarlane.

I remember the first time I landed the Cessna 210 on Les' strip. He came out to meet us, and 2 cartons of Carlton Draught were unloaded. Les looked at the 2 cartons which we had just put on the back of the vehicle. He looked in the hold of the aircraft and, seeing that there were no more, said: 'Ha! You are staying one night'. So, 2 cartons became a one night stand. I remember my next trip. I dropped my Cessna 210 on the same strip and, with the idea of repaying a little courtesy, I unloaded 8 cartons of beer. Les looked at them. He looked in the hold and determined there was no more. Then he said: 'Ha! You are staying 2 nights'.

Speaking of aviation, I am the only pilot ever to make Les MacFarlane sick in an aeroplane. After a few too many syrups the night before, we decided that, early in the morning, we would undertake a low-level survey of his property and also have a look at the potential of the Elsey flood area for tourism purposes which, as a result of proper vision from people like Les, may well be realised. Anyway, Les failed to have breakfast. Mac apparently was a chap whose stomach did not like the idea of flying when it was empty. I do not know the precise rules of courts of summary jurisdiction in relation to evidence voluntarily given in parliaments but I will proffer the view that, if I was 500 feet above the ground, then I had a lying altimeter. It is the only way to check cattle, and I do not have a low-level endorsement. It was quite rough. Les would have flown hundreds and hundreds of hours as a passenger and I have the distinction of being the only pilot to have made him ill.

No reminiscence of Les MacFarlane could be complete without a fishy tale. This fishy tale is about the one that did not get away. We packed a heap of rib bones in the esky - on the top of the ice which was on top of something else - and repaired to a nice waterhole on the Roper that was isolated by that time of the year. Robertson, being forever flashy, had his custom-built rod with a magnificent spinning reel on the end of it. Les MacFarlane was sitting there sizzling the rib bones and watching in amazement as I tried to catch trees very successfully. As the line wrapped around the tree, old Mac shook his head in absolute disgust. He went to the back of his ute and took out a 2 m length of 10 gauge fencing wire. He attached a Nilsmaster lure to the end of it and gave it to a chap named Peter Coney who was with us and said: 'Just flop this in that waterhole'. Of course, we all started to laugh. Coney flopped the thing in the waterhole, dragged it back with both hands and pulled out a 4 kg barramundi. We caught a saratoga by using the same method. Anyone who thinks you have to go to sporting shops and buy very expensive, sophisticated equipment to catch barramundi should take a leaf out of old Mac's book. He really did know what he was doing.

Mr Speaker, I referred earlier to my friendship with Mac. There is a funny myth about returned servicemen, and Mac typified the reason the myth was created. It is believed that returned servicemen do not like talking about their experiences. The fact is they do, but they usually talk about their experiences only to other returned servicemen. There is a fundamental reason for that. People who have not experienced it will think I of 2 things: either you are a crazy warmonger or you are blowing your own bags. It is not a reluctance to talk about the experience at all. It is a reluctance to talk to people who have not had the experience and who might get the wrong impression. After talking to Mac about some of his experiences, I realised how insignificant mine were. It is incredible that men can go through years of that kind of hell and come out at the other end of it with wisdom, compassion and a great sense of humour.

Mr Speaker, Les MacFarlane had all of those attributes. We honour here today a great Territorian and a great Australian, and I pay my respects to a great friend.

Mr LEO (Nhulunbuy): Mr Speaker, like most of the members on the opposition benches, I have not been in this parliament for all that long. I came here in 1980 and, suffice it to say, I am the second-longest serving member of the opposition in the Northern Territory. However, one of the first people whom I met when I came here in 1980 was the then Speaker, Les MacFarlane. He was the oldest member in the parliament; he was very much a father figure as far as the parliament was concerned. For many younger members, I think he played a very necessary productive role in perhaps quietening some of the more excessive passions that happened to surface during debate. Certainly, he was a very authoritarian Speaker.

Unfortunately, he is the first member of this Legislative Assembly whom I have had to speak about in relation to a condolence motion, and that saddens me greatly. In my opinion, Les MacFarlane was a great man. Certainly, he was a very authoritative figure who provided a steady influence within this parliament. He provided me, as a very junior member of this Assembly, with the considerable background knowledge and assistance that we all need when we come here.

Much has been said about Les MacFarlane's view of parliamentary procedure. I must agree with the Leader of the Opposition and the Chief Minister that, no matter what opinions one may have about Les MacFarlane's views on parliamentary procedures, he was even-handed to the point of being pedantic. He was extremely even-handed. Nobody in the opposition, certainly in the time that I have been a member of the Assembly, could ever claim otherwise.

Most that can be said about former Speaker MacFarlane has been said. I too pass on my sympathy to his wife, Mrs MacFarlane. I conclude by supporting this motion of condolence. Les MacFarlane was a true Territorian, a devoted cattleman and a very devoted Speaker.

Mr DONDAS (Deputy Chief Minister): Mr Speaker, I join with my parliamentary colleagues in paying tribute to Les MacFarlane in this condolence motion.

I had the pleasure and privilege of representing the Northern Territory government at Les' funeral at Moroak. Widespread flooding made it very difficult for people to attend. I was fortunate enough to be able to charter an aircraft, but many of Les' friends could not do that. Nevertheless, they made every attempt to get out to Moroak for the funeral. In fact, there were several hundred people there from all walks of life. I think that that is proof of the calibre of the man, Les MacFarlane, as an Australian and as a Territorian.

Many kind words were said at Les' funeral, and I remember saying that, whilst Les was a very serious person, he did have a sense of humour. Like my colleague, the Leader of Government Business, I was his deputy for a time. I can remember being put into the Speaker's Chair by Les on many occasions. This enabled him to argue for the pastoral industry and his electorate from the floor of the Assembly. I often asked myself: 'If Les oversteps the boundary, what does one do?' But he never did overstep that boundary, although we all know he sailed very close to the wind on a couple of occasions. The important thing was that he always played the game, and he played the game right.

I knew Les MacFarlane since 1974, when I was first elected to this Assembly. I found Les most helpful in my early days as a parliamentarian, as did many other members of the diminishing class of '74. I remember the occasion I was put into the Chair as a deputy chairman of committees. I really made a mess of the job. We all remember Gympie Lew Fatt, who was an attendant in this Assembly, walking past and saying: 'Can we help you?' Well, that broke up the whole Assembly. When Les came back into the Chamber as Speaker, and we reported progress on the bill, he was grinning from ear to ear, and he mumbled under his breath: 'The bastard has got you'.

He took me aside a little later and said: 'Look, you really have to get to understand these procedures'. He went through them with me and, in those very early days, I was able to grasp the fundamentals of the standing orders. After that, they never troubled me again. I got on top of the job of chairman of committees.

He played a very important part in the constitutional development of the Northern Territory. We heard that he first entered the Legislative Council in 1968 and then served in this Assembly until 1983. We would be all aware of the constitutional changes that have occurred between 1968 and the first fully-elected parliament in 1974. Whilst he played a very important part in the constitutional development of the Northern Territory, he also played a very prominent role in the development of the pastoral and cattle industry which was his first love.

One of the previous speakers mentioned the cattle spraying for which Les had become very famous and also the number of prizes that he won with his bulls at the Katherine and Darwin Shows. As Paul Everingham said, he started with 2 strong hands and guided Moroak Station into a viable position until very recently when portions of it were sold.

In talking about his sense of humour, I was fortunate enough in 1978 to attend the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association conference at Westminster. On that occasion, I was able to visit other branches in the United Kingdom, including Scotland. My wife travelled with me. Nine months after our return, we had a daughter named Katrina. Les used to always ask me how little Glasgow was going. There was always that smile on his face. I think it gave him as much enjoyment as it gave me when he asked that question.

Mr Speaker, I too offer my condolences to Peggy MacFarlane and the family. Peggy has become well-known to us as a very strong person who supported Les for most of his life. His sudden passing away, at what I consider to be a very young age, certainly will be a loss to Peggy and her family and to the Northern Territory. I once again join with my parliamentary colleagues in paying tribute to a fine man.

Mr BELL (MacDonnell): Mr Speaker, Les MacFarlane was Speaker of this Assembly when I entered it in 1981 and he continued as Speaker until his retirement in 1983. Therefore, he was Speaker for some 2½ years during my time in the Assembly. That is a comparatively short time, but I am sure that Les MacFarlane would have agreed with me that the relationship was not entirely colourless. Les and I had our share of clashes and disagreements. Perhaps less well-known to other members were the support and the assistance I received as a new member in this Assembly. It would be curmudgeonly of me not to place on record the assistance that I received from Les MacFarlane in that time.

Much has been said in the context of this condolence motion about Les MacFarlane's contribution to the Assembly, to public life and to industry in the Northern Territory. I can do naught but second those sentiments and say that, in my time as a member of this Assembly and in my relationship with him, he was certainly a forceful advocate, particularly of the cattle industry. I can remember my first sittings in this Assembly in June 1981 when all of a sudden I saw the Speaker doff his wig and stride over to that seat. I can remember his presence being entirely unable to be ignored. I can also recall the then Leader of the Opposition turning around and saying: 'Well, you know what this is going to be about?'. I said: 'No'. He said: 'Beef'. That was exactly it. Within 2 seconds of rising to his feet, Les said: 'Well, what I want...'. He had that inimitable way of coming out with words that commanded attention - and beef it was.

On a serious note, I appreciated the representations and the efforts he made in that regard. Mention has already been made of it. You, Sir, and other members of this Assembly know the fundamental contribution of the cattle industry in the social and economic life of the Northern Territory, a social and economic life that is participated in by all Territorians.

Mr Speaker, that brings me to the next point I wish to make in speaking to this condolence motion. I think Les MacFarlane, having been the character he was, would have been a little disappointed if this condolence motion were entirely free of controversy. I note with some interest that government speakers eschewed reference to Les MacFarlane's contribution to race relations in the Northern Territory. I note the comments about Aboriginal affairs made by the Leader of the Opposition. On one occasion, I was watching a television news item in which Mac was being interviewed. The interviewer said: 'Mr MacFarlane, what do you have to say to the accusation that you are a racist?' I must admit, Mr Speaker, that I was interested to hear his reply. I was fairly bowled over when he said: 'Well, Neil Bell says I am not. He says I see black men through white man's eyes'. I immediately went back through my recollections and I think that perhaps I may have said something like that. What I meant, and what I stand by, is that Les was certainly ethnocentric. But it is worth putting on record that I do not believe he was malicious; I believe he was a good man. I think that, in paying my respects to his family, I can do little better than close with the words of Robert Burns who said: 'A man's a man for a' that'.

Mr PERRON (Mines and Energy): Mr Speaker, as has been said by previous speakers, Les MacFarlane was indeed a man of principle who stated his views very strongly irrespective of whom he might be disagreeing with. I confess that, on a couple of occasions over the years, I have wondered why he stayed with the CLP because he used to give us such a hard time behind closed doors and indeed in this Assembly. He took the floor many times and availed himself of his opportunity to contribute to the debate of the Assembly. I have no doubt that it was very unusual parliamentary practice for the Speaker to step down from the Chair and take to the floor on a subject of his choice during the adjournment debate. But that would not have bothered Les at all. No doubt, he sized up that there were no rules against it being done and that he saw no reason why he should give up his right to speak from the floor.

He was a very strong believer in the potential of the Northern Territory once it obtained self-rule, and was one of those fighters in the Legislative Council who tried to get some constitutional advancement for the Territory. No doubt, he experienced during those days in the council and in his private life enormous frustration with the system, the frustration of trying to get

bureaucracies and indeed governments to act in the way that he felt would advance the Northern Territory's people.

He placed a great deal of store in the Northern Territory's geographic location with Asia. Indeed, on at least 2 occasions that I can recall, he went with the former Chief Minister to Asia on trade missions and came back each time wildly enthusiastic and spoke in this Assembly about what he saw as the potential for the Northern Territory in fostering relationships with Asia and trade with Asia.

He was seen by many as an opponent of Aboriginals. He spoke many times about what he saw as gross inequities foisted upon Territory society by things such as land rights as it exists today, the social security system and government waste. I did not see Les as an opponent of Aboriginals. I think the member for MacDonnell summed it up quite well. I think he was a very fair man in regard to his assessment of the plight of Aboriginals. That is reasonable to assume, having regard to the fact that he was associated with Aboriginals for many years of his life. But his concern for the injustice of some of the actions that have been taken over the past few years is shared by an enormous number of people, not only in the Territory but elsewhere in Australia as well. He could never comprehend a government which seemed to give things away for nothing.

I remember him talking in this Assembly about a fight that had developed in a Katherine street outside a hotel. Some Aboriginals had pulled up in a brand new Toyota 4-wheel drive and there was an altercation with some inebriated persons on the footpath. These persons supposedly were typical Territorians who had worked long and hard but who probably had gained very little advancement for that in their lives. As Les described it, the altercation was over their frustration about the perceived inequity of busting their guts - that is the term he would have used - for many years to try to get ahead and yet seeing taxpayers' money used in a very loose way in terms of some of the assistance that governments give so freely to Aboriginals. But I reiterate that I do not believe that Les MacFarlane was an opponent of Aboriginals. He saw that many of the things that the government had done were not necessarily in their best interests in the long term.

Les often gave us a lot of curry during budget debates. He did not have a lot of time for government spending on places like Darwin. He did not like to see too much money going towards propping up the public service. Many times, he told us of the things that could be done in his electorate for the amount of the subsidy we pay in Darwin to keep the public bus service running. He would use that to very good effect and made us feel a little guilty that perhaps we had a far cushier time in places like Darwin compared to the battlers out in the bush.

He was a great supporter for the establishment of the Katherine Rural Education College and, through his persistence, that college exists today. He harangued us on that subject for years. He did not want any high-flying college full of academics dishing out accredited courses that might be acceptable to other parts of the world. He wanted a practical college that taught the young people the things they needed to know to get on with the job. I understand that that is how the Katherine Rural Education College is being run at present and, hopefully, the board of that college will ensure that, as a result of the pressure from academia, it will not become involved in increasingly high-flying areas to the point where the people whom it is designed to serve will have to find somewhere else to learn the practical skills that people on the land must use.

He was a great advocate of the Katherine dam, a proposal which has not come to fruition. There have been studies on it and, certainly, there would be a great many difficulties, not the least of which would be land rights, if such a proposal were to be resurrected again. Les saw the potential of agricultural and pastoral development in the region of a Katherine dam.

Les was a politician who did not set aside the views of his electorate after an election. I think many politicians are guilty of setting aside those views. Whilst many people may have disagreed with his views, very few would disagree that they were the views of the majority of his electorate. During his term as Speaker, he maintained the dignity of the office and that was to the benefit of us all. I offer my condolences to his family.

Mr HARRIS (Education): Mr Speaker, I also rise to speak to this motion of condolence. I did not know Les, or Mac as I came to know him, all that well prior to becoming a member of the Legislative Assembly back in 1977. I had heard of this big man who spoke his piece but I had never met him. Over a period of 6 years, I came to like the man a lot. I might say here that that was not because he was the speaker who followed my maiden speech and commented that it was one of the best maiden speeches that he had heard. That was not the reason at all, Mr Speaker. It really was not until my second term in the Legislative Assembly, when I became his deputy and Chairman of Committees, that I came to know Mac. As has been mentioned by other members of this Assembly, he offered a great deal of assistance at that particular time. He always kept his eye on the situation. Even though he was not here on many occasions, I can assure you that he was very wary of what was happening in this Chamber. I can recall that, on a number of occasions when things became a little rough in here - and the member for MacDonnell has mentioned some of those occasions - Les would come in and relieve me from my post. He would say words to the effect of: 'I'll take it from here, Tom'. That was during my early period as Deputy Speaker.

Les was an interesting character. He was down to earth. He did not pull any punches. He also enjoyed a little humour. I would like to share 2 occasions that I will always remember. Les always had a little laugh about these 2 occasions.

The first occurred when I was in the Chair one night. It was rather late in the evening. I asked one of the attendants to telephone my wife and inform her that I would not be home for tea until later. Needless to say, my wife was not all that impressed with that information. Mac came back into the Chamber and, with a smile on his face, gave me the message from my wife which was that the fritz was in the fridge. I will always remember that.

The second occasion was when Les was speaking in the adjournment debate. I forget the subject that he was speaking on but he made reference to a young chap who was sitting in the gallery. He had a T-shirt on which had 'Daly Waters Pub' written across the front of it. Afterwards, we were speaking outside and Les said to me: 'Tom, that is the sort of young fellow we have in these communities - that chap sitting up there in the gallery with that shirt on'. I said: 'Les, that was my son'. He said: 'Oh well, that's what it's all about'. Mac had a sense of humour and I feel very fortunate in having been able to share with him those 2 incidents.

In closing, I could say that Mac was an open man. I think that probably would be the best way to describe him. He was another colourful Territorian. I am sure that he will be missed by many people in the Northern Territory. I

offer my condolences to Peg and family and I share with them the grief of the passing of Les MacFarlane.

Mr VALE (Braitling): Mr Speaker, I would like to join with other honourable members in speaking in support of the Chief Minister's condolence motion for the late Leslie John Stuart MacFarlane. I guess there are not many parliaments in the world, certainly not in Australia, where the Speaker was known to all and sundry as 'Mac' or 'Old Mac' or 'Big Mac'. I guess that shows that, in the Northern Territory, we still have a fair degree of informality. I hope that that can continue. I think that one thing that Les MacFarlane brought to this Assembly, and before it the Legislative Council, was a degree of informality.

Most members have spoken of Les MacFarlane's extensive knowledge of the pastoral industry. I do not intend to go over that except in relating a few incidents involving Les MacFarlane, some of them quite amusing. It was a known fact that, if Les MacFarlane set his mind to debate the cattle industry, then you could roll Winston Churchill, Robert Menzies, Gough Whitlam and everyone else into one ball, put them up against him and still never win a debate. No matter how lucid the argument and how well documented it was with fact, once he had set a course, he would follow that through, sometimes to the bitter end. He had a wide and extensive knowledge of the cattle industry. That was shown in many debates both on the floor of this Assembly and in other venues within the Northern Territory.

Other members mentioned the fact that, on many occasions, Les would step down from the Chair to debate the cattle industry. Les' desire again to keep a high public profile in relation to the cattle industry and also the Katherine district was illustrated by the fact that, even though he was Speaker, he would continue to have questions without notice asked of the ministers and continue to have adjournment debates made for and on his behalf. As all members know, the first person off his chair in the Assembly normally gets the Speaker's attention. What members did not realise during the time that Les MacFarlane was Speaker was that I quite often walked into this Assembly with a pocketful of questions to ask on behalf of Les MacFarlane. For that reason, quite often I would get the call ahead of many other members and I asked many questions, not only on my own behalf but also on behalf of Les MacFarlane.

From time to time, he would decide that standing orders really dictated that he should stay in the Chair and not come down on the floor to debate issues so he would write speeches out for me. His handwriting was second only to a doctor's prescription. It was very difficult to follow. He would stuff it into my hand as I walked past. Quite often, it was accompanied with lots of photographs and documentation. One day, he was very concerned about flooding problems in the Katherine area and he handed me a huge envelope and said: 'Use these in the adjournment debate'. I said: 'I am not speaking'. He said: 'Yes, you are.' He then handed me a speech. I unfolded these large photographs which showed the main streets of Katherine under flood. They must have been taken in the 1950s, if my memory is correct.

As I said before, other members have mentioned Les MacFarlane's love of the cattle industry and also his broad knowledge. In fact, as the Leader of the Opposition said on many occasions, he entered the Katherine Show and scooped the pool. He threatened on many occasions to come to Alice Springs. In fact, he entered cattle but at the last minute scratched them. On a number of occasions, he brought cattle up to the Royal Darwin Show where he again

scooped the pool. Some years ago, I was asked to go to Katherine to judge the poultry section at the Katherine Show. Whilst cattle are readily identifiable with earmarks and brands, poultry are not. They are in unmarked cages and one just goes along and inspects with what one believes to be an unbiased view. I selected a big black Australorp rooster which I thought was the champion bird of the show. I told the stewards and they took all the records down. I then departed to have a look at the rest of the show. About half an hour after that, Les MacFarlane fronted up. He had a grin from ear to ear. He did not often grin. Quite often, I could not tell whether Les was frowning or smiling. He said: 'Guess what I have just won?' I said: 'Mac, I would not have a clue'. He said: 'Champion bird of the show'. I said: 'Oh my God, I judged it'. Within minutes, the Australian Broadcasting Commission - which had a van there - was announcing that MacFarlane had influenced the judge, while I vowed and declared that he had not. Les went on air to assure people that it was not his chook. It belonged to old Bert Nixon down the river and Les had only borrowed it as an alarm clock, and decided to enter it in the show at the last minute.

Mr Speaker, Les MacFarlane and I had one thing in common. The moment the sittings were over, we left town. I think Les beat me quite often. We always wanted to get back to our home patch. Quite often, I wondered why Les wanted to leave the Darwin climate to go back to Katherine, which has a similar climate. I am a desert man and I like to get back to central Australia. The answer would be obvious to members of the Assembly who attended Les' funeral at Moroak Station in January. The splendour of the pastoral property and homestead on the banks of the Roper River made it quite obvious why Les would bolt from the Assembly at the conclusion of a sittings. If any other member lived in a place like that, he would do likewise. I think it is very appropriate that Leslie John Stuart MacFarlane was laid to rest in a grave on the bank of a river in the cattle country that he loved so dearly.

Mr D.W. COLLINS (Sadadeen): Mr Speaker, I was a new boy in this Assembly in 1980. In fact, I was the only new member on the government side. The thing that struck me about Les MacFarlane was that he was so much older than the rest of us. He was a man who had a certain aura of wisdom about him - what I call wisdom of the years. He was obviously less ambitious than many of the younger members, and he was a very cool and calm person in many ways. As the only new boy, I was sometimes a little lonely. I made a few mistakes and was kicked around the bush a bit - and not only by the opposition. It was good to be able to go and talk with the Speaker. I could go around to his office and sit down there. He would not say much. I could chat away to him and, as one finds with people who have had a lot of experience, which in his case included wartime service and involvement in the pastoral industry around Katherine, I would come away with a far clearer perspective. I could see that the things which were upsetting me were not that important. He would calm me down and give me a greater sense of balance. He was indeed a father figure, and I will always remember him as such.

Another thing that struck me was his interest in speeches. Let us face it, some of the speeches that are made here are not intrinsically very interesting. Mine may well be amongst those, but I always had the impression that the Speaker was listening to what I had to say, and that he was taking it in. He was either genuine or a good actor. I have come to the conclusion, having known the man, that he was indeed genuinely interested.

I am delighted that the Katherine Rural Education College will have a wing named after Les MacFarlane as a mark of his great love for the cattle industry

and agriculture, and his desire to see some practical training made available to the young people of the Territory to enable them to better participate in those fields. He realised that these industries now require business management skills, as well as the practical skills of stock and land management.

It has been said that our former Speaker was anti-Aboriginal. He was often denigrated along those lines, but I believe that was because of people playing politics. He had a very genuine interest in Aboriginal people. He did see land rights as not being in the best interests of Aboriginal people. That was his opinion, and he expressed it very forthrightly. It was very significant to me that a very large number of Aboriginal people attended Les' funeral. I think such a tribute indicates that he had many friends amongst the Aborigines. Those many friends knew him and respected him for the man he was.

He was a man of example and a man of great determination. Anybody who could battle through the difficulties of the pastoral industry like he did must have had great determination. He was a battler. Many people think that, if you are a pastoralist, you have money running out of your pockets. I know that Les had to battle for every penny he had and to keep his family clothed and looked after.

He was a man of great principle, what I would call a true Territorian. He was a person who deserved great respect and a person whom we should try to emulate. I am grateful to have known him as a man and as a friend. I will remember him with a great deal of pride. I offer my condolences to Mrs MacFarlane, who was his helper and fellow battler along life's way, and to the MacFarlane family.

Mr HATTON (Primary Production): Mr Speaker, I rise to support the condolence motion. The Northern Territory and the town of Katherine have both lost a fighter because of the death in January of Les MacFarlane. I did not have the privilege of serving in this Assembly during the time of Speaker MacFarlane. My contact and friendship with Les MacFarlane was outside of this Assembly. I would like to direct some comments towards that.

Not all Territorians agreed with the way he saw the world but I believe most of us respected his right to hold his own views and to express them publicly. Mr Speaker, as many other speakers have said today, Les certainly put forward his views, and he put them forward firmly and without fear or favour. On issues that he believed in, he was equally as hard on those he regarded as his friends as he was on those he regarded as his foes. He took his causes very seriously. As I said, he was not scared to put his case with all the force he considered necessary and through whatever medium he felt most effective.

Part of the folklore of the Northern Territory is the interesting experiences government officials often have when visiting Moroak Station. Les MacFarlane was never one for the fineries of government regulation and the importance of filling in forms. I well remember from my previous occupation a young inspector from the Industrial Relations Bureau coming back with a rather shattered and shaken look after having visited Moroak Station to carry out an inspection of Les MacFarlane's wages records. That young inspector had spent a couple of weeks in a 4WD tramping around the bush and going from cattle station to cattle station. It was during the wetter period of the year. He had to drive through a couple of flooded creeks in his 4WD on the day he went

to Moroak Station. He turned up there in a pair of thongs, boxer shorts and T-shirt and he was covered in mud and was generally dishevelled after having camped out the night before. He met this giant, craggy pastoralist on the doorstep who looked down on him and said: 'That is no way to present yourself to do your job'. Les sent him off to get changed before he would speak with him. Les did not leave it at that. He felt that the approach of the inspector at that particular time was inappropriate and decided to take the matter up with the federal minister for the department that the inspector worked for. I can assure you, Mr Speaker, that, from then on, Industrial Relations Bureau inspectors treated Moroak Station with all the due respect that it deserved. Les quite rightly felt that they should adhere to the realities of life in the bush and in the pastoral industry. He tried to get the message through that visiting a small factory in Winnellie was not the same as turning up at a pastoral property and asking to go through wages records, meal allowances and the actual starting and finishing times in fine detail. Quite rightly, a working cattle station in the bush is different.

As has been mentioned, he was a champion of the pastoral industry and a prime mover behind the establishment of the Katherine Rural Education College. Without going too much into that, some enduring images come to my mind when I think of Les MacFarlane. I have an enduring image of a man in a white shirt and tie standing in the back of a truck addressing an audience in Katherine, expressing loudly and strongly, without fear or favour, his views in respect of what he regarded as the inequities of the Aboriginal Land Rights Act, despite the intense pressure that was being placed upon him. I have an image of a solid, craggy, big man who to me was always the archetypal representative of those hard, basic, no-nonsense men of the bush. We have heard today that he quite brilliantly represented those Territorians in this Assembly. I have an image of something I have seen many times on the southern entrance to Katherine. It is a cut-out billboard of a Brahman bull - it is now painted in the Territory colours - and written across it is: 'You are in cattle country, so eat beef, you bastards'. That was Les MacFarlane and his view on the cattle industry. He never stopped promoting it in any way that he could. Certainly, he was as basic, as blunt and as solid as that in promoting the cause of his industry.

At the age of 66, Les MacFarlane was taken from us too early but I am sure he faced death with the same courage he fronted up to life. It has been said many times today - and I believe it would be the way Les MacFarlane would like to be remembered - that the highest accolade that we could pay to such a person is to say that Les MacFarlane was a true Territorian.

Members: Hear, hear!

Mr SPEAKER: Honourable members, I support the motion of condolence which the Chief Minister has moved on the death of Les MacFarlane. In so doing, I speak not only on my own behalf but on behalf of all the people of the electorate of Elsey who mourn the passing of Les. I have also received messages of condolence from the Indonesian Consul and the President of the Indonesian Australian Association of the Northern Territory, copies of which have been given to Mrs MacFarlane.

Mac was a straight shooter. During his 15 years as the member for Elsey, he considered that he had 3 major responsibilities. Firstly, he represented the people of Elsey and did as much good for the electorate as was possible. Secondly, he represented the cattlemen's interests in the Northern Territory. Thirdly, he worked for the good of the Territory as a whole. He did all these

things in a no-nonsense fashion. He was very forthright in all representations that he made. As Speaker of the Legislative Assembly, Les MacFarlane presided over the proceedings of this Assembly firmly but even-handedly. He did much to set the pattern which the Assembly follows today.

I thank the Chief Minister for having arranged for Mac to be commemorated in Katherine in such a fine way. The Les MacFarlane Building at the Katherine Rural Education College will always be a tribute to the memory of Mac and a reminder to the people of the electorate of Elsey of a man who served his people and the Northern Territory with great distinction. I extend my deepest sympathy to Peg and the MacFarlane family. I ask that honourable members signify their support of the motion by standing in silence.

Members stood in silence.

Mr SPEAKER: As a mark of respect to the memory of Les MacFarlane, the sitting of the Assembly is suspended until 2 pm.

STATEMENT

Hon J.M. Robertson - Impending Retirement

Mr ROBERTSON (Constitutional Development)(by leave): Mr Speaker, when the citizens of the electorate of Gillen saw fit to send me to this legislature in 1974, it was my intention to remain in that service until either I lost the confidence of my party or the people of my electorate or I felt that I no longer had any contribution of value to make to their welfare; that is, when I felt I had reached the stage where I thought that it was time to move aside, that new ideas were needed to replace old ones, and that a new and fresh approach by a new and fresh member was in the best interests of my electorate and that of the Territory. Sadly, for me at least, while none of those catalysing factors has yet been reached, I must nonetheless leave this place and the treasured institution it represents for me.

Mr Speaker, due to an attitude I have always had to parliamentary service, there has been repeated speculation since 1977 about my early departure from this legislature. I can only assume that that resulted from views I have often expressed publicly outside this Chamber. It is fitting now to put those views on the official record. Mr Speaker, you have heard many times the expression 'career' used in respect of parliamentary service. It is a word I have never used in respect of my service here and it is a word I have put down in public on a number of occasions. To say one has a political career or parliamentary career is to imply that one believes he has a possessive right or expectation to be in parliament. If we have any right to be here, it is a right given to us by the people we serve and not a right to which we ourselves have any claim.

Many people have misinterpreted the way I have explained that basic principle over the years as reflecting in me a lack of enthusiasm for the duties with which I have been charged. At each of the several preselection processes I have been through, I have made it clear to my party that I did not of right expect its re-endorsement; that if it were its view that another was more suitable than me, then that person and my party would have my total loyalty and support; that I would work for that person's election and would not countenance standing as an independent. This should never have been taken as an indication of a negative attitude of the task given, but rather an explanation of a fundamental philosophy.

Bearing in mind what I have just said, and if it were not for the difficulty I now face, it would still be my wish to continue because I believe I do have something to contribute to the welfare and progress of this great Territory, a Territory which has been so good to me and my family and which I have grown to love so much. After all, like so many other Territorians, I came here for a short visit and have spent the best part of my working life here.

But to carry out the duties with which we are charged here requires not only a will to serve well but the physical and mental capacities to discharge those duties with the highest degree of application. The Territory is an energetic, indeed dynamic, place and, in order to serve it well, its elected members must be the same in spirit and in fact. I am a minister in Her Majesty's Northern Territory government. To carry out the duties inherent therein requires a higher degree of application than it does for non-office holders. The duties of a minister simply cannot be carried out by a person who is constantly in varying degrees of pain and who averages about 4 hours sleep a night and whose general health is in rapid decline. Having said that, I do not intend going further into the realm of Robertson's woes because to do so would be to seek sympathy and that is one thing I shall not do.

I have come to my decision after a great deal of thought and after much discussion with the Chief Minister who has been so understanding and helpful in this matter. He suggested that, if it would help, he would be prepared to grant me 6 or even 12 months' leave of absence. While such an arrangement indeed would have helped in the short term, the fact is that, 3 months after my return, I would find myself in precisely the same situation as now. I came to my decision to depart this place believing in total honesty that that decision is in the best interests of the parliament, the government, my party and, above all, the people of the Northern Territory - and, I might add, in the best interest of my family.

Finally, I wish to explain why I have no intention of following the advice given by many of my electors: namely, that, if I cannot maintain the degree of application required of a minister, I should at least continue to serve on the backbench. Mr Speaker, I will offer a little more philosophy. The backbench of a parliament is not a rack upon which old wine further matures in cool darkness. It is the very heart of the parliament. It is the people's watchdog over the executive. It is the arena from which creativity should stem, given that it is free from the day-to-day, administrative load of government. It is not for the purpose of sedentary semi-retirement and, accordingly, it is not for me. Let that new member I spoke of earlier come here as soon as possible. Let us have the benefit of his or her new ideas and new energy. The people of Araluen are entitled to nothing less.

Mr Speaker, I advise you and honourable members that, on Wednesday 26 March, I will attend upon His Honour the Administrator and advise him of my resignation as a member of the Legislative Assembly of the Northern Territory. I have requested the Chief Minister to advise His Honour of the termination of my commission on that same date. I advise you, Sir, with a great deal of sadness. I also do so with a feeling of satisfaction that I have done my best over the years. Whether that best was good enough is for others to judge.

Mr B. COLLINS (Opposition Leader): Mr Speaker, I move that the statement be noted and seek leave to continue my remarks at a later date.

Leave granted; debate adjourned.

COMMONWEALTH DAY MESSAGE

Mr SPEAKER: Honourable members, I lay on the table a copy of the Commonwealth Day message received from the Honourable Bal Ram Jakhar, Chairman of the Executive Committee of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association, copies of which have been distributed to all members. With the concurrence of honourable members, the message will be incorporated in Hansard:

'Though scattered over 6 continents, the members of the Commonwealth think in unison on many matters of common concern to humanity at large. Today, on Commonwealth Day, we take pride in belonging to a community where familiarity and friendship, cooperation and consultation are watchwords. It is the day for affirming our resolve to further strengthen the bonds that have held us together.

The Commonwealth has been the most successful example of international cooperation. It has served as a bridge between races and cultures, countries and continents, and has provided a sense of belonging among its members. In time of crisis a member finds some emotional security in not being alone. He is aware that an organisation of friends is behind him to lend a helping hand. The Commonwealth has tried to provide a healing touch whenever a crisis situation has developed in any part of the Commonwealth. It is a body bereft of any military force but, by its moral authority, it restrains the nations from straying into wrong paths. Its appeals have a significant bearing on world opinion and international relation.

The Commonwealth has engaged itself constructively in various fields and tried to better the lot of the deprived mass of humanity through a number of programs and a network of institutions and organisations working on the philosophy of mutual cooperation and consultation.

The Commonwealth Parliamentary Association is an organisation of legislators. Here they are engaged in a joint search for solutions to the problems of distrust, conflict and the arms race, as well as to the eradication of poverty, ignorance and disease. Here their hearts pulsate with the one thought of bettering our world. Brought together by history, they are devoted to the common ideals of peace, democracy and respect for the dignity of man. The CPA serves as an instrument to strengthen these ideals.

On this Commonwealth Day, therefore, let us each make a promise that we shall continue to do our utmost to create a society which is just and equitable, and that we shall stand by the people who are still oppressed by poverty, racial discrimination and colonial domination.

Dr the Hon. Bal Ram Jakhar, MP
Speaker of the Lok Sabha, India, and
Chairman of the Executive Committee
Commonwealth Parliamentary Association'.

STATEMENT Presentation to ACT House of Assembly

Mr SPEAKER: Honourable members, on 10 February 1986, I presented a committee table to the ACT House of Assembly on behalf of the Northern

Territory Legislative Assembly. The committee table was made by Ghan Sleeper Craft Pty Ltd of Katherine. After discussions between the then Chief Minister, Hon Paul Everingham, and the Speaker of the ACT House of Assembly, Mr Harold Hurd MHA, and myself, the table was presented at a ceremony in the House of Assembly committee room in Canberra which was attended by members of the ACT Assembly, Paul Everingham and Senator Kilgariff. The presentation received wide publicity in Canberra, being covered by both television channels, and the table was very gratefully received by the ACT House of Assembly. The Speaker of the Assembly has written advising me of a resolution passed by the House of Assembly on 10 February 1986. The resolution reads as follows:

'That the members of the Australian Capital Territory House of Assembly express their thanks to the members of the Legislative Assembly of the Northern Territory for the committee table they have presented to the Assembly. Your interest in the development of the Australian Capital Territory and its people has been evidenced by the presence of your Speaker at the presentation'.

Copies of the letter have been distributed to honourable members. In response to this presentation, the Speaker of the Assembly presented me with the gavel which is now on my desk. The gavel and stand are made from a local Canberra tree. On behalf of the Legislative Assembly, I thank the members of the House of Assembly for their kind gift at the time of this presentation.

TABLED PAPERS

Letters of Thanks from Catholic Church

Mr SPEAKER: Honourable members, I lay on the table a letter from Father Healy, Administrator of St Mary's Cathedral, thanking the Assembly for the motion of condolence on the death of Bishop O'Loughlin passed at the special sitting of the Assembly on Friday 22 November 1985. I also lay on the table letters received from the Bishops of Ballarat, Cairns, Sydney, Toowoomba and Wilcannia-Forbes thanking the Assembly for forwarding to them bound copies of extracts from the minutes and from parliamentary debates of that day. For the information of all honourable members, I advise that bound copies of the tribute were forwarded to the family of the late Bishop O'Loughlin, to St Mary's Cathedral and to all the archbishops and bishops who attended the special meeting.

PETITION

Proposed Provision of Pedestrian and Horse Bridge to the Water Gardens in Millner

Mr SMITH (Millner): Mr Speaker, I present a petition from 141 citizens of Darwin relating to the need for a pedestrian and horse bridge to link the Water Gardens with the suburb of Millner. 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 Speaker and members of the Northern Territory Legislative Assembly, the humble petition of the undersigned citizens of Darwin respectfully sheweth that there is a need for a pedestrian-horse bridge to link the Water Gardens with the suburb of Millner. The Water Gardens is a community asset and the pedestrian bridge will make it much more accessible to the people of Millner. We ask that

money be allocated to allow construction of this bridge as soon as possible. Your petitioners therefore humbly pray that the Speaker and members of the Legislative Assembly give due consideration to the above, and your petitioners, as in duty bound, will ever pray'.

TABLED PAPER
Commentary on Martin Report

Mr B. COLLINS (Opposition Leader)(by leave): Mr Speaker, I table a paper entitled 'Commentary on Martin Report' prepared by Dr Andrew Charles Scott, Chief Forensic Biologist, Forensic Science Centre, Adelaide, dated 21 January 1986. I move that the Assembly take note of the paper.

Mr Speaker, I will keep my comments on this paper brief. There is no need to engage in lengthy debate. I gave a public undertaking that I would table this document in the Legislative Assembly and I seek to do no more than fulfil that undertaking even though I concede that the tabling of this document, to some extent, has been overtaken by events.

Members will recall last year's debate in the Assembly concerning the findings of the Martin Report, the report on the Chamberlain case by the Solicitor General of the Northern Territory. Members will also recall that I spoke at some length during that debate and raised a number of my profound and serious concerns about what I perceived to be the deficiencies of that report. Members will also recall that I qualified most of my remarks by saying that I had had only a short time to study the document and had been unable to obtain professional advice. My comments concerning forensic deficiencies obviously had to be qualified. Subsequently, I determined that I would seek some professional input as to whether my remarks and criticisms were valid or not.

I deliberately approached Dr Andrew Scott. I had had no previous personal contact with him. I approached him for the very clear reason that, when the trial itself was being conducted, Dr Andrew Scott had impressed me as being a prosecution forensic witness who was clear and concise in the information he presented. He was known to me, through the press in Adelaide, as a conservative and careful scientist. That he had appeared in the case as an expert witness for the Crown was an added advantage.

When I approached Dr Scott, he explained to me that the policy of the laboratory in which he worked, a policy which I understand had been implemented by the Labor government in power, was to take work on a normal commercial basis from outside. I was informed that, if I wished to avail myself of that facility, it would be available to me in so far as Dr Scott was competent to comment. I did so, and a copy of the Martin Report was forwarded to Dr Andrew Scott. It was logged in as a job and I have since received an account for the work that was carried out.

I commend the reading of this document to all honourable members of this Assembly. It is not a lengthy document; it is concise and clear in its language. It is not difficult to understand. I will point out some of the salient features of the report in order to draw members' attention to them.

In the summary of his report, which appears on page 1, Dr Scott says:

'The report contains a number of inaccuracies and errors. It is not for me to judge the significance of these points which I criticise, since that is a legal matter. However, my major concern is that it

appears to have been written from a prosecution perspective in that it is sometimes selective and biased in its treatment of the evidence. Nevertheless, most of the report upon which I comment is logical, reasonable and, in my opinion, correct'.

When Dr Scott made those remarks in the summary, he was well aware, as indeed I am, that the majority of the Martin Report is logical, reasonable and correct. When I addressed my remarks to the Martin Report, I addressed my remarks to about 10% of it. I did not even comment on the other 90% for the very reason that it contained copious copies of trial transcripts and reports from eye witnesses, which I had no dispute with. The disturbing aspect of the Scott Report is that its criticisms of the Martin Report, which are severe, go to the very heart of that report's credibility.

No one in this Assembly doubts for one minute that the most important section of the Martin Report dealt with the question of the Behringwerke reagent. The government does not doubt that. The government felt it was so important that it sent the Solicitor-General, accompanied by the former head of the NSW forensic laboratories, to Germany to visit the manufacturers of the reagent. Following the trip, a written report was received. I criticised publicly the actions of the government in doing that. I felt then, as I still feel, that it was outrageous. The government, whose preoccupation should have been to be seen to be completely independent, sent to Germany as a forensic expert and, to the best of my knowledge, as the only expert person employed to advise the Solicitor General during the whole course of his inquiry, the very person who had supervised the tests which were in dispute and under examination. Dr Andrew Scott describes as 'preposterous' the conclusions that the Solicitor General of the Northern Territory reached in respect of the Behringwerke Report. That is very strong language indeed from one who, among the Adelaide media and police reporters who deal with him frequently, has the reputation of being an extremely conservative person. It is a severe criticism.

Members would recall my concern about the language used in the Martin Report in respect of the interpretation of the Behringwerke material, and the extent to which the Solicitor General gilded the lily. That is the expression I think I used at the time; I will use it again. The Solicitor General was not satisfied with saying that the Behringwerke Report supported the prosecution case, which was all he needed to have said if he felt that was the correct interpretation. He had to go one step further and gild the lily by making a further statement to the effect that everything that had been discovered in Germany as a result of his visit had enhanced the prosecution's case. A simple reading of the Behringwerke Report indicates that that conclusion, as Dr Scott says, is indeed preposterous. I point out to the Attorney-General something which he himself knows to be true: if this were the only criticism of the Martin Report, and it could be sustained - as I believe it will be sustained - then it alone completely destroys the credibility of that report.

Unfortunately, it is not the only criticism that Dr Andrew Scott makes of the technical information. I must admit it was with some degree of satisfaction that I found that, in virtually every instance where I had made a technical criticism of the conclusions of the Martin Report, my criticisms have been vindicated professionally by Dr Scott. There is no need to detail all the criticisms; members can read them for themselves. However, I will point out a number of significant ones, apart from the one I have just mentioned.

I have covered my profound concerns about the gross misinterpretation placed upon the Behringwerke material by the Northern Territory Solicitor General. Those criticisms are contained on page 8 of the Scott Report. On page 11 of his analysis of the Martin Report, Dr Scott says:

'Again on page 11, Mr Martin states: "The professor...equates reproductive tract fluids with 'tissues'. The 2 things are completely different". Again, this statement is made without reference to any authority. In fact, the term "tissue" can be used in several senses and the professor is quite justified'.

Honourable members would recall by just using kindergarten biology - and I used that expression last year - that that unsupported assertion by the Northern Territory Solicitor General was arrant nonsense, and indeed it is. But there is a problem. Dr Scott says quite correctly that, even if that information was correct - if Martin was correct and Boettcher was wrong - the matter is completely trivial. Dr Scott goes on to say:

'Moreover, the matter is trivial and there appears to be no point in including the statement other than to attack Professor Boettcher. This is particularly surprising since, on the same page, he defends Mrs Kuhl for inaccuracies in her evidence'.

I would point out that they are inaccuracies which the Solicitor General acknowledged to be inaccuracies, but he defended those inaccuracies on the grounds that Mrs Kuhl was simply simplifying the matter for the benefit of the jury and those inaccuracies occurred in the process of that simplification. I point out very carefully that the significance is that Mr Martin had gone to considerable trouble in the Martin Report, with an extraordinary and dreadful degree of consistent bias which is evident in the report from one end to the other, to knock down whatever obstacle appeared in the way of supporting the evidence that had been presented to him. He disposed of any inconvenient problem with the evidence that supported the Crown's case. This happens to be a classic example. The Solicitor General of the Northern Territory raised a completely trivial matter in respect of criticising Professor Boettcher. He happens to be 100% wrong technically. Yet, on the same page of the report, he defends Mrs Kuhl for inaccuracies which the Solicitor General acknowledges were inaccurate.

On page 12 of the Scott analysis, it says:

'On the same page, Mr Martins states: "Support from a number of Australia's senior scientists is of no weight, given that only the professor presented the matters which led to their signature and we do not know what they were told. The scientists involved are some of the most eminent in their field in Australia. Thus, if their concern was properly founded, it would be a matter of great importance. In the circumstances, I believe that it was quite unacceptable to simply dismiss this in a rather cavalier fashion without making any attempt to even find out what they were told or put the Crown case to them'.

Mr Speaker, honourable members would recall a very crucial matter which was dismissed out of hand by the Solicitor General on the basis of the same completely unsubstantiated assertions which he engaged in in 20 or 30 other sections of his report: the desirability of re-examining the jumpsuit locked up in the High Court in Canberra. People who examined the colour plates provided to the Northern Territory's Attorney-General in respect of the

fragment of material that was found in that jumpsuit cannot help but be concerned that the physical appearance to the naked eye of a small fragment of material found in the fabric of the jumpsuit bears an amazing resemblance to a fragment of what was known to be goat flesh found in the test material after there had been an attack by a dog at the Adelaide Zoo.

In 1984 - that is, since the trial - a brand new procedure was developed. Indeed, I was interested to see the techniques being used here in Darwin at the Menzies School of Health Research laboratories in terms of a DNA procedure which not only could positively identify that fragment as being flesh or not being flesh, but indeed could accurately assert, if it is flesh, that it could be the issue of Lindy and Michael Chamberlain.

I do not think that anyone would doubt that that is a fairly serious matter for the Northern Territory government. The Solicitor General dismissed the need to re-examine that material with techniques that have been developed since the trial simply by saying once again that it was impossible - another one of his many sweeping statements in the report - that that material could possibly be flesh after 5 years. On the basis of that, he said that that material should not be re-examined. Dr Andrew Scott says this about that matter:

'On page 34, Mr Martin dismisses the possibility of retesting samples on the basis that they are now over 5 years old and the results would be inconclusive. This is rather surprising considering the fact that most of the denaturation occurs in the first few months and yet he is willing to accept the results obtained by Mrs Kuhl and I some 14 months after the event. This is, in my view, inconsistent. On the subject of aged samples, Mr Martin comments that material found on the Chamberlain jumpsuit could not be flesh as it would not last for 5 years. This is also inaccurate since biological tissues can be preserved for a very long time in a mummified state under appropriate conditions; that is, dry'.

Mr Speaker, I will not bother detailing the other criticisms made in the Scott Report except to say that the criticisms of Dr Scott substantiate and vindicate the deficiencies that I found as an ordinary lay reader of the Martin Report last year. They attack, as the Attorney-General knows full well, the entire basis of credibility upon which the Martin Report is based. There is no question that its credibility is in tatters.

I want to conclude by saying something which I feel needs to be said clearly. There has been some public controversy with the call I made recently for the Solicitor General to stand aside as the chief adviser of the Northern Territory's Attorney-General when this judicial inquiry is under way. I pointed out in the letter that I wrote that the Solicitor General, on the basis of his own judgment, could make a decision as to whether he should resign or not. I did not ask for that. What I asked for in the final paragraph of my letter is so obvious that it should happen: the Solicitor General should stand aside. I want to make it very clear to the Attorney-General that I was profoundly disturbed and remain disturbed at the commissioning by the Northern Territory's Attorney-General of the Solicitor General to conduct this inquiry in the first place. It should never have been done and the honourable Attorney-General knows that.

I might add that, despite the controversy, this matter has alarmed and concerned legal people far more expert than I in these areas - indeed members

of the judiciary around Australia. The cold, hard fact is that the Northern Territory's Solicitor General, and this is not a personal reflection on him in any way, has been involved on the prosecution side of this the most controversial case in Australia's criminal history since the second inquest. He steered the case for the prosecution as Solicitor General, as was his job, through the second inquest, through the Federal Court appeal, the High Court appeal and so on. He was a completely inappropriate person to have conducted what was meant to be a completely independent and detached examination of whether a judicial inquiry was required into this most controversial case. I make no bones about this and I do not resile from anything I have said on this matter: it was an invidious and unwelcome position into which the Attorney-General placed the Solicitor General of the Northern Territory by asking him to conduct an investigation into what was in fact his own case, and compounding that by sending with him to Germany to examine the most important part of the case, the very scientist who had supervised the tests that were in doubt. In terms of engaging on a course of action which should have appeared to have been completely independent, the government failed miserably.

I do not absolve - and I do not apologise for saying this - the Northern Territory Solicitor General himself from the responsibility that he should have had to decline that commission when it was given to him. There is no question that an obvious and clear conflict of interest existed at the time. The Attorney-General should never have given the Solicitor General of the Northern Territory the job of investigating that evidence, particularly as the government indicated clearly on many occasions that it would be a genuinely independent examination of the evidence. Last year, I described the Martin Report as being a brief for the prosecution and, indeed, that is exactly what it has proven to be.

Mr Speaker, there is also a degree of ethical responsibility on the Solicitor General. The Northern Territory's Attorney-General is not a lawyer and he has to rely completely on the Solicitor General for his legal advice in a way that a legally-trained Attorney-General would not have to completely. The Solicitor General should have advised the Attorney-General last year that he was not in a position to conduct an examination that would be seen to be independent into a case that he had seen through all of its prosecution stages from the second inquest and from the time that the charges were laid against the Chamberlains.

If I am to be condemned for saying something which is such glaring common sense and which has been the subject of much criticism throughout Australia, then I am perfectly happy to have that charge laid at my door. I make that charge again and I do not resile from it. What I feared would happen has now come to pass. As a result of the Solicitor General himself being asked to conduct an investigation into his own case, and particularly since he concluded that there should be no judicial inquiry - and presumably it was upon that basis that the Attorney-General decided that Mrs Chamberlain would not be released from prison - it was inevitable that his report would become subject to an inquiry itself. That is precisely the situation we are now in and it is not a situation from which I take any pleasure.

I commend the paper that I have tabled to honourable members. I ask all honourable members of this Assembly who have a genuine interest in this matter and who want to see justice done to read it as objectively as they possibly can, to stand it alongside the criticism that I made in this Assembly last year, to read the Behringwerke Report which is attached as an appendix to the Martin Report and to ask themselves honestly, even on a lay interpretation of

that report, whether Mr Martin's conclusions are not indeed 'preposterous', as Dr Andrew Scott has described them.

Mr Speaker, the fact of the matter is that the Northern Territory is in an extremely difficult position in respect of this matter. The reports are now in the public domain where they are being examined by all and sundry. I dare say that, in years to come, many learned papers will be written on this entire affair by legal academics. All I say in conclusion is that I ask all those members who took the trouble to read the Martin Report to give the same care and attention to this report which I lay alongside it for comparison.

Mr PERRON (Attorney-General): Mr Speaker, the actions of the Leader of the Opposition in tabling this report this afternoon further demonstrate his paranoia in the matter of the Chamberlain case. He well knows that the government has announced that an inquiry would be established into this matter. Indeed, I am sure that he is aware that legislation will be introduced into the Assembly...

Mr B. Collins: You have not even acknowledged the last 3 letters I sent to you over the last month.

Mr PERRON: One would have thought that perhaps he would decide that enough is enough: the Scott Report, the Martin Report and all the other reports.

Mr B. Collins: I would if you would answer your mail, Marshall.

Mr PERRON: No doubt the matter will be the subject of some scrutiny or at least presented to the inquiry. One would expect it to be anyway. Notwithstanding that he has that information, he feels that it is still appropriate to table the Scott Report in this Assembly. I feel that it is incumbent on me, even without much preparation, to say just a few words about the Scott Report and about the Leader of the Opposition's concluding remarks about the Solicitor General.

The Scott Report is now hailed as the be-all and end-all to overshadow all previous reports...

Mr B. Collins: Not by me.

Mr PERRON: ...by the Leader of the Opposition who tells us that here is the concrete evidence that the Martin investigation went astray. Here it is - absolutely. This cannot be questioned; only the items that it questions can be questioned. He said it here many times: 'This is the authoritative document'. He asked how we can possibly disagree.

Mr B. Collins: Rubbish. I have not said it here many times.

Mr PERRON: Mr Speaker, in his report, Dr Scott disagrees with Professor Boettcher on a major matter of principle in the forensic examination of blood and foetal haemoglobin. From recollection, Professor Boettcher was hailed by the defence at the trial as a man who is greatly eminent in his field. In the submission by the Chamberlains for an inquiry last year, Professor Boettcher featured very prominently as the main cause and authority upon which the submission was made to the Territory that the trial had erred and that a new inquiry should be established. Professor Boettcher has been afforded great importance in this exercise yet this latest expert, who was

reconsulted because he was a witness at the trial, disagrees with Professor Boettcher on a major blood-testing principle.

He also disagrees with Dr Baudner from the Behringwerke factory. We have heard a great deal from the Leader of the Opposition about the fact that, because of its involvement and the letters and reports from the Behringwerke factory, that also demonstrates that Mr Martin was quite wrong when he looked into it - he misunderstood it or he put a bias on it, but he got it all wrong because the Behringwerke people said so. Here we have Dr Scott, who is the latest guru put forward by the Leader of the Opposition as the be-all and end-all...

Mr B. Collins: You are so profoundly ignorant.

Mr PERRON: The professor disagrees with Dr Baudner from the Behringwerke factory in this report. Of course, he also disagrees with Brian Martin. Something has not dawned yet upon the Leader of the Opposition, and I guess it never will because he really is quite paranoid about this issue. He made up his mind a year ago and he allows nothing to interfere with what he has decided.

The Martin Report was written from the perspective that an application had been recieved which sought to substantiate sufficient new evidence that a jury trial and 2 courts of appeal either had been misled or had erred in the course of their activities. That is the perspective that Brian Martin took when he was examining the matter. That is what the Leader of the Opposition just cannot get through his head. It was not a retrial. He seems to think it was.

I notice that the Scott Report does not address the missing slide from Professor Boettcher's submissions either. It does not seem to mention that anywhere at all. That is quite surprising because it was a subject dealing directly with blood and that is what Dr Scott is on about.

I am dealing with a draft which was very conveniently sent to me by the Leader of the Opposition after he had done his round-Australia promotional tour on the Scott Report. He told us what a disaster it was for the Territory, but of course he did not give us a copy until he had arrived back in Darwin.

Mr B. Collins: You got it the same day I got it.

Mr PERRON: That was several days after the publicity had started about this disastrous report.

On page 4, in discussing testing of blood samples and the possibility of generalising in this field, Dr Scott says: 'This comes back to the competence of the operators which I am in no position to judge'. Of course, he does take a position in his report and judges the work of Mrs Kuhl. So in some cases he is not in a position to judge yet in other cases he is.

On page 5, Dr Scott says that the Martin Report was put together by clearly placing the onus of proof on the Chamberlains for the matters that they put forward. Again, I draw the honourable Leader of the Opposition's attention to the fact that the Martin Report dealt with a submission claiming that a trial process and an appeal process had erred. Surely, any party which is seeking to have a review of such an intrinsic part of our society should have the onus of proof placed upon it if it expects its arguments to be supported and an inquiry established.

On page 6, Dr Scott disagrees with Professor Boettcher on a fundamental principle in the testing of foetal haemoglobin in blood. I thought that was fairly interesting. On page 8, Dr Scott disagrees with the Germans from Behringwerke. I think that Dr Scott has probably confused the issue a little more rather than clarified it and shed light on the whole affair, as the Leader of the Opposition would have us believe.

Honourable members will recall that, in the former debate in this Assembly on the Martin Report, the Leader of the Opposition went on at great length about the importance as he saw it in the whole Chamberlain case of the blood under the dashboard of the car - whether or not there was blood there and whether or not that blood contained foetal haemoglobin. It is interesting to note that, on page 10, after a long section on the subject of the tests on blood from under the dash of the car, Dr Scott finally says: 'It appears to me that only one sample could be said to contain foetal haemoglobin'. Dr Scott seems to be concluding that, of all the samples taken from the car and tested by the Crown, there was only one spot of blood containing foetal haemoglobin from under the dash. If members link that conclusion with the attitude that the Leader of the Opposition took during the Martin Report debate, they will find it very curious that he hails this report as substantiating all his statements.

Dr Scott, after indicating that he feels Mr Martin took a one-eyed view of the whole affair, says on page 13: 'However, I believe that these are sufficient to show that Mr Martin is acting to some extent as an advocate for the Crown. This may well be justified'. I am very pleased that he qualified that. He is very wise in making that final qualification because, as Dr Scott says, he is not a lawyer. He feels that, if Mr Martin did in fact look at the matter from the Crown's point of view, then it may well be justified.

Let me conclude with the subject of the Leader of the Opposition's attempts to denigrate, and possibly assassinate, the Solicitor General of the Northern Territory through his calls for him to be stood aside because he is so biased. The Leader of the Opposition clearly misunderstands. He made up his mind last year. He was not content to await the findings of the Martin Report last year. He wanted an inquiry. Before the Martin Report was tabled in this Assembly, before he knew what was in the Martin Report, he decided...

Mr B. Collins: You had been leaking it to the Northern Territory News for a fortnight!

Mr SPEAKER: Order!

Mr B. Collins: And you know it.

Mr SPEAKER: Order!

Mr PERRON: ...that the Northern Territory should have an inquiry. He was not interested in any of what Mr Martin had to say. There is to be an inquiry now. The Leader of the Opposition knows it. He also knows that the inquiry is to be established on grounds other than those that he proposed. He is still not content. He does not want to await the outcome of an independent commission. The Leader of the Opposition wants some blood now. He has made up his mind and he is cranky that other people will not yet make up theirs. He wants the Solicitor General to be set aside because the Leader of the Opposition has judged him. His mind is made up. Certainly, nothing will change it. He has decided exactly what the inquiry should find. He wants the

Solicitor General to get it in the neck now. Thank goodness he is not the Attorney-General of the Territory. We would probably dispense with the inquiry altogether. After all, why let facts get in the way? Why not just sack the Solicitor General? That would ease his frustration - at least for a while. What about the Police Commissioner? What role has he to play? Surely he might be biased! Shall we remove him? What about the Crown prosecutors who were involved in the Chamberlain trial? They would be set aside because they might have some sort of biased view. What about the former Attorneys-General? Perhaps they have a role too. Perhaps we could set them aside somewhere so that they do not play any part.

If he casts enough mud around the place, he hopes some of it will stick. For some reason, he has homed in on the Solicitor General. If that were justice Collins' style, it would be a very sad day for the Northern Territory if we took any notice whatsoever of these ridiculous calls for the standing aside of the Solicitor General. It seems the Leader of the Opposition cannot comprehend what I told him in a letter when he was pushing for Brian Martin to be stood aside that, no matter where the advice came from, whether or not it came from a statutory or non-statutory office of the public service, the decisions on this case were made by the Attorney-General. The decision last year not to hold an inquiry on the Chamberlain submission was mine, purely mine. The Leader of the Opposition is not interested in that. He just could not care less. He wants to get...

Mr B. Collins: Have you read the recommendations in the Martin Report?

Mr PERRON: Many times.

Mr B. Collins: Obviously, you do not understand it.

Mr PERRON: I do not think there is much need for me to continue. I think it is unfortunate that the Leader of the Opposition introduced the matter. It was quite unnecessary. But, of course, he has all these frustrations. He simply wanted to get it into the Assembly to have another lash. If he will be a little patient, in a few more hours he will realise that the matter is to be examined quite thoroughly and he can play his role by sitting in the public gallery of the inquiry for as long as he likes.

Motion agreed to.

SPEAKER'S STATEMENT

Answers to Questions - Incorporation in Hansard

Mr SPEAKER: Honourable members, during the recess and the previous recess, a number of answers had been received to written questions which had, as attachments, voluminous tables, graphs and copies of reports. The wording of certain of the answers gave the impression that the attachments were part of the answer and, therefore, under normal circumstances, would be incorporated in Hansard. However, this cannot be done. In such cases, I have instructed that all material received be given to the member who asked the question but that only those parts of the answer which can be readily incorporated in Hansard should be so incorporated and that additional material, such as reports, graphs and certain tables, be excluded. I ask that ministers in having their answers to questions formulated take cognisance of the difficulties which are being experienced and the costs of attempting to overcome the difficulties in having such matter incorporated in Hansard. I suggest to members that, in many cases, the tabling of certain documents would overcome the problems presently being experienced.

SPEAKER'S STATEMENT
Appointment Of Deputy Clerk

Mr SPEAKER: Honourable members, I advise that, on 29 November 1985, His Honour the Administrator was pleased to appoint Mr Ian Bruce McNiell as Deputy Clerk of the Legislative Assembly. Mr McNiell comes from the Australian Senate in which he served for over 18 years.

PETROLEUM (SUBMERGED LANDS) AMENDMENT BILL
(Serial 159)

Continued from 21 November 1985.

Mr EDE (Stuart): Mr Speaker, as the minister stated, this bill is aimed at bringing Northern Territory legislation into line with that of the Commonwealth. We support this legislation which follows the federal legislation. All members are aware of the reasoned and enlightened legislation that has been emanating from that place during the last 3 years.

The Northern Territory government introduced this pursuant to an agreement between the Commonwealth and the states in respect of uniform legislation. The amendments are basically of a mechanical nature. In the main, they relate to retention leases, the transfer of mining rights and interests, and disclosure and confidentiality.

This bill contains detailed provisions on the procedures for applying for and granting retention leases in respect of areas where recovering petroleum is not commercially viable but is likely to be within a 15-year period. In recent months, we have seen the way that oil prices have moved up and down. It is very difficult for companies to be able to make the sort of judgments necessary to proceed to commercial production. This legislation will provide an ability for them to secure a lease for a period to determine whether it will become viable. The leases will be for 5 years and will be renewable. At any time, the minister can request a re-evaluation of the commercial viability and he can cancel it if he feels the lease is currently viable. This will overcome the problem of people who wish to gain super profits by holding off production on a lease which can be brought on line in a short period.

There are also lengthy provisions in respect of requirements to notify the minister of any transfer, variation or assignment of any right or interest in a lease or licence under the legislation. Such notice must be given within 3 months of the execution of the document and must be approved by the minister before it can be registered. Mr Speaker, it must be registered; it is not an optional item. These provisions also cover the granting of options, charges or debentures which note that the registration of the change will be at the rate of 1.5% of either the value of consideration of the transfer or the value of the title transferred, whichever is the greater.

There are exemption provisions in respect of an alteration of interest and rights where they represent a genuine corporate reorganisation rather than a transfer of interest or an attempt to avoid or reduce registration fees. Of course, this is very reasonable.

Mr Speaker, regarding the release of information, it says:

'The minister may release any information or samples submitted in reports and applications for a permit, lease or licence after

5 years. This does not include matters relating to trade secrets or which might adversely affect a person's business or affairs. A person may lodge an objection on these bases when the minister gazettes his intention to release the information or samples...'.

Again, that is not an option; the intention must be gazetted so people have the opportunity to see whether they believe their interests will be unfairly infringed upon. In respect of the period before the 5 years expires, the bill provides:

'The minister may release any information or sample to another state or Commonwealth minister, excluding concessions or opinions expressed in reports on the seabed, subsoil, petroleum and particulars of the technical qualifications or advice on the financial resources of the applicant. The minister may release any information or samples in the following time periods: (1) after 2 years of receipt, if there is a permit or lease in force, and the matter was submitted in respect of that or the preceding permit or lease; (2) after 12 months, if there is a licence in force and the matter was submitted in respect of that licence or the preceding permit or lease; or (3) immediately after a permit, lease or licence is surrendered or cancelled'.

Again, we agree with those provisions.

The bill introduces retention lease provisions into the legislation. The Northern Territory already has similar provisions in onshore petroleum legislation, and apparently they have been used as a model here.

The provisions in respect of registration and transfers will apparently clear up some existing uncertainties. Disclosure of such movement of interest is, we believe, in the public interest. Similarly, we believe that the freer disclosure provisions that have been introduced here are also in the public interest. The opposition recommends and supports this bill.

Mr VALE (Braitling): Mr Speaker, I wish also to speak in support of the legislation introduced by the honourable Minister for Mines and Energy. Some members would know the basis of this legislation goes back to the late 1960s when one hell of a brawl took place between the states and the then Prime Minister, the Hon John Gorton, concerning states' rights. It resulted in the demise of the former Prime Minister, and a subsequent High Court challenge, if my memory is correct, and was not resolved until the early 1970s. In fact, the legislation was not introduced into the federal parliament until the days of the Whitlam government. Of course, this complementary legislation before us today is a direct result of the 1967 states' rights fight, the subsequent High Court challenge and, ultimately, the federal legislation.

I guess I would probably place myself as a states righter. Having worked in the industry during that period of time with the various states, I have a great deal of sympathy for them. We found that, even though we were operating in the middle of central Australia, the states were much easier to deal with in terms of petroleum exploration than the federal government which, because of its enormous bureaucracy, made it difficult for the Joe Averages of the oil patch to make a go of it. Of course, that is very well illustrated by the fact that, in 1967, the companies that I worked for in central Australia proposed to build an oil refinery in central Australia and it was not until self-government that that moved from an almost disinterested status with the federal government to the front burners. The construction of the natural gas

pipeline and, in fact, the whole industry suffered as a result of remote control. But that is past history.

I am sorry to be in a position to say 'I told you so' but one of my major arguments over the years was that Australia should never have attached itself to the import parity oil scheme. I always argued with the following question: if the Arabs went ape and put the price up, what would happen if the Arabs went ape and put the price down? Of course, we are seeing the results of that in Australia today. Whilst the Australian motorist is certainly benefiting from the reduction in oil prices, the oil industry now is really staggering; it is in chaos. The economists are arguing that the reduction in oil prices will have a beneficial effect on the Australian economy with the exception of the oil industry. It is a very technical and sophisticated industry. It has a massive array of technical equipment which runs into millions and millions of dollars. If that industry is forced to wind down or partially shut down, which was the case in the early 1970s, then our self-sufficiency, for which Australia has strived for many years, will again be a long while coming.

I have never been opposed to a higher price than the ridiculously low price of \$2.80 a barrel which existed in the early 1970s. But I think Australian crude should have been priced independently in Australia so that, whatever the overseas nations did, it would not have had an effect on us. We are now seeing the hell of a mess that the industry can be brought into within a few short, sharp, shiny weeks. I just hope that some type of sanity will prevail within the industry. I note already that the Kingfisher platform in Bass Strait has been shut down. That is a dramatic step. I note that the Mereenie partners in central Australia must now re-evaluate whether or not the refinery in central Australia - which I always dreamt about - is now placed in serious doubt, even though the oil is being produced. That production is earning valuable royalties for the Northern Territory coffers. But projects such as this, which took such a long time to develop, are again placed in serious doubt.

Mr Speaker, I indicate my support for the legislation.

Motion agreed to; bill read a second time.

Mr PERRON (Mines and Energy)(by leave): Mr Speaker, I move that the bill be now read a third time.

Motion agreed to; bill read a third time.

PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH (NORTHERN TERRITORY) PROPERTY TRUST BILL
(Serial 166)

Continued from 21 November 1985.

Mr B. COLLINS (Opposition Leader): Mr Speaker, this bill is before the Assembly at the request of the Presbyterian Church to regularise its administration in the Northern Territory. The opposition supports the bill.

Mr D.W. COLLINS (Sadadeen): Mr Speaker, this is a non-contentious bill. There is an unwritten basic freedom: the freedom of worship. It is interesting that a so-called bill of rights which is before another place does not allow for this particular freedom. That is very much a misnomer in my opinion.

Certain people in the Territory have decided to exercise their right to worship in a manner which they see right and fitting. Some of these folk would not have joined the Uniting Church which was a Presbyterian, Congregational and Methodist union. Others may have tried it and decided that it does not suit their taste. Some of these people may have incurred a considerable loss of property when the majority voted to join the Uniting Church. This bill will make this group a body corporate and allow it to own property and involve itself in property transactions.

I am pleased to support the wish of these members to set up on their own. If they can take the charter of one of the first Presbyterians in the Territory, the Reverend John Flynn of the inland, and model themselves upon the work that he did, then a lot of things are possible. I wish them every success in the future.

Mr BELL (MacDonnell): Mr Speaker, I wish to make a few comments in relation to this bill, having had considerable association with the Presbyterian Church and with the Uniting Church. It is perhaps with a strange mixture of emotions that I place some comments on the record today. It would have been quite easy for me to have made no comment whatsoever. However, I read the comments of the Attorney-General in his second-reading speech in which he gave a potted history of the non-conforming Protestant churches in the Northern Territory from the time of the Reverend John Flynn. He said:

'The year 1977 saw the advent of church union between the Presbyterian, Methodist and Congregational Churches. For all practical purposes, the Presbyterian interests in Darwin ceased at that time. Despite the union of 1977, many members wished to retain their Presbyterian identity'.

The issue of continuing Presbyterian churches, particularly in terms of property settlement, has been bitterly fought out in various places around the country. We have been quite free of that in the Northern Territory for various reasons that would take too long to explain in the context of this debate. Whereas my personal allegiance has continued to be with the Uniting Church, I have considerable respect for the people who have regard for their Presbyterian traditions as they were and who desire to continue those in some sort of form because they relate not only to a present day faith but also to a sense of history and a sense of the part of the individual church member in history. Along with the Leader of the Opposition and the member for Sadadeen, I welcome and support this bill. I trust that it will fulfil for the continuing Presbyterian congregation the wishes that they have for it.

Motion agreed to; bill read a second time.

See Minutes for amendment to clause 26 agreed to without debate.

Bill passed remaining stages without debate.

CIGARETTE CONTAINERS (LABELLING) AMENDMENT BILL (Serial 167)

Continued from 21 November 1985.

Mr LANHUPUY (Arnhem): Mr Speaker, the opposition does not oppose this amendment. This bill merely seeks to provide for the health warnings on cigarette containers to be prescribed by regulation rather than by an act.

The Minister for Health explained that the government's reason for introducing this amendment is that there are likely to be various changes from time to time and that it would be impossible for the government to react rapidly to such changes if the health warnings are prescribed within the act. The approval of this Assembly would have to be sought each time a change is made. However, in view of the long debate that precedes any move on this issue, I would doubt that the need to 'react rapidly', as the honourable minister puts it, would arise. The opposition believes that the principle of prescription by regulation is generally sound and therefore it supports the bill.

Mr FINCH (Wagaman): Mr Speaker, I rise to support the bill. There is no doubt that the bill makes a great deal of sense in that it provides an easy mechanism for the Northern Territory to keep in step with national proposals to change the labelling of cigarette packets. This in itself is commendable. Scientists have clearly established the relationship between cigarette smoking and lung cancer and heart disease. There are also personal and financial problems which may be associated with cigarette smoking. One needs to consider any move that can be made towards reducing or eliminating this extremely heavy cost to society as both commendable and wise.

The particular target area of such warnings about the health problems associated with smoking is our young people. Anything that can be done to reduce the potential damage to people's health is to be commended. Being a supporter of civil liberties, I believe that what people do to their own bodies is really up to themselves. However, one has to temper that with the realisation of the cost to society as a whole. Certainly, any measure to reduce the massive cost to health systems is to be commended.

The bill provides for the minister to keep in step with proposed changes. Of course, he would have input into proposed national packaging trends. It would be useless for us to try to impose our own labelling design; national manufacturers would have difficulty in providing for that. As indicated in the minister's second-reading speech, the safeguard for people can be provided through the subordinate legislation committee processes. I commend the bill.

Mr EDE (Stuart): Mr Speaker, I commend this bill. I think that markings which advise people about the problems brought on by smoking tailor-made cigarettes are quite commendable. I myself gave up smoking tailor-made cigarettes some 18 to 20 years ago. I changed to rolling my own. I do not intend to table this packet, but it contains no warning at all about any health hazards and I believe that the same situation applies to other brands of roll-your-own cigarettes and also to pipe tobacco. I do not know whether this leads us to the observation that roll-your-own cigarettes are better for you than tailor-mades or better for you than nothing at all. I could possibly abuse statistics by stating that the incidence of lung cancer noted by the medical profession before tailor-made cigarettes became popular was remarkably low. It would be drawing a fairly long bow to say that the introduction of tailor-mades led to the increase in lung cancer but that may be something we could look at. However, I think I remember reading in a journal that there was a difference in the temperature at which the 2 types of cigarettes burn. The tailor-made was some 3 times the heat of a roll-your-own. Various elements in the tobacco which are converted into carcinogens at higher temperatures may not be converted at lower temperatures.

While I commend this bill and am happy to see that the warnings do apply to tailor-made cigarettes, I will be happy to be advised by the minister whether it is true that the only danger in rolling one's own cigarettes is

repetitive strain injury. I am pleased to hear that he has given up smoking himself - whether for good or for the duration of his stay in the ministry, I do not know. With those few remarks, I commend the bill.

Mr MANZIE (Transport and Works): Mr Speaker, I support the legislation. The Northern Territory is part of Australia and, obviously, we have to be able to comply with what occurs on the national scene. However, I am rather concerned with the philosophy of labelling cigarette packets and drinks in such a way as to infringe on the purchaser's ability to make a decision. I think that all people who smoke cigarettes, including people who partially eat them, like the member for Stuart, in order to obtain the double enjoyment known to those who have rolled their own, are well aware of the reports about dangers to health. Obviously, we experience certain physical sensations when we exert ourselves, which may indicate that there are some problems with tobacco smoking and health.

However, when I buy a packet of cigarettes and read, 'Warning. Smoking is a Health Hazard', the information is not new to me. I believe bigger and larger signs on cigarette packets will do nothing except cost the consumer more money. They are there as a result of pressure from minority groups who have involvements in defacing signs and that sort of thing. I think that the dangers of cigarette smoking are well-known and well documented. People are well educated about the problem. I believe that forcing business to incur costs for no proven advantage is a detrimental step.

Mr SMITH (Millner): Mr Speaker, I have been provoked to respond to the comments of the last speaker. The logical extension of his arguments is that we would not have any seat belt legislation, we would not have any legislation concerning people who drink and drive, and we would not have any other socially desirable legislation. The community has made decisions, through parliaments at various stages, that there are socially desirable pieces of legislation that should be enforced because they contribute to saving people's lives.

I think it is fair to say that it has been the judgment of the community, as expressed through its parliamentary leaders, that we have reached the stage where it is desirable and useful to have signs put on cigarette packets saying that smoking is dangerous to one's health. I do not think anyone can deny that that is true. In fact, medical evidence is now overwhelming that, if you are a heavy and a regular smoker, your life expectancy is shortened quite considerably.

I am sure that the situation we have reached now in terms of signs on packets is just a step towards a more stringent policy on smoking in future. We all know that there are other aspects of current legislation concerning smoking. For example, you cannot advertise cigarettes on TV. I am personally convinced that the tide of opinion will mean that, in future, we will have even more stringent restrictions on the use of cigarettes. That can only be good because, like seat belt and drink driving legislation, it gives a message to people and it will have the effect of keeping more people alive for longer.

Mrs PADGAM-PURICH (Koolpinyah): Mr Deputy Speaker, I was not going to rise to speak today but I feel that somebody has to speak for the non-smokers in this Assembly. I speak as somebody who has endured the health hazards of smoking for years and years, and it is only recently that I have begun to object violently. I now carry with me at most times something which usually inhibits people from smoking in my presence.

I regret that this legislation is necessary. However, I say with some seriousness that it is not all fun and games if you are a non-smoker sitting next to somebody who is smoking. I regret that this legislation is necessary but, when we have such selfish, smelly people in the community, I feel that words are not strong enough to describe my loathing of their personal habits. I believe that the health hazard does not only apply to people who smoke cigarettes. It applies to me because their smoking is a hazard to my health as a non-smoker. It is of no concern to me whether smokers smoke. They can do it over there and smoke their way to death. I do not really give a damn whether they kill themselves with cancer or anything else, but only as long as they do it over there and do not injure my health as a non-smoker.

I also feel very strongly about the personal inconvenience that I suffer when I am in the company of smokers. My nose is rather sensitive to smoking. I can detect small quantities of smoke and it is a gross inconvenience. Many times I have dressed to go out to a meeting or a dinner or social occasion, taking care with choice of clothes and perfume to look and smell my nicest. When I go out to enjoy myself and have to sit in the presence of smokers, I come home reeking of cigarette smoke, much to my dismay. This occasions me some inconvenience.

I think that gradually the message is getting across that the smokers in the community are infringing on my civil liberties as a non-smoker. I am very pleased to say that airlines are now restricting the actions of smokers to the betterment of non-smokers. Smoking is forbidden in the Assembly, and that gives me a lot of pleasure.

The imbibing of alcohol and other pursuits carried to excess bring down the results of these excesses only on the heads of those people who indulge in them. The drinker gets cirrhosis of the liver and subsequently dies, and good luck to him if that is the way he wants to die. The people who indulge in drug taking to excess usually suffer the dire results of their drug taking. Unfortunately for non-smokers, the person who indulges in cigarette smoking brings down the results of his excesses on my head, the head of a non-smoker. This is what I resent very strongly when I am in the presence of non-smokers.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I could name honourable members of my own political party in whose presence I have sat from time to time and who have been smoking to my inconvenience. Anything that inhibits these smokers from smoking, whether it is this legislation or legislation in the future, I will wholeheartedly support.

Mr SETTER (Jingili): Mr Deputy Speaker, in rising to support this bill, I do not do so as a macho Marlboro man and nor am I trying to beat my own drum. However, I do so as a non-smoker. I am sure that the honourable member for Koolpinyah will be pleased about that. I must admit that I have tried the odd cigarette or two. In fact, like most of us, my smoking career commenced down behind the shed puffing on crushed, dried paw paw leaves rolled up in newspaper. That was not very good for my health either because I understand that lead also does not do you any good.

Over the years, I progressed to having an occasional drag on the makings, as a hand-rolled cigarette was affectionately called around north Queensland at the time. In fact, rolling a smoke was quite an art in those days. While I speak, the honourable member for Stuart might be able to go through the actions. First of all, you pulled out your tin of Log Cabin, extracted a pinch of tobacco, placed it in the cup of your hand and then, with the other,

rubbed it around until it was fine enough to allow you to roll a fag easily. In fact, it had to be just as good as the ready-rubbed tobacco that was readily available but at a greater cost. Then, with some dexterity, whilst still holding the tobacco in one hand, you had to remove the packet of papers from your pocket. Having achieved this, whilst still holding the tobacco in the other hand, you licked the paper from the packet, leaving it sticking to your bottom lip. That was quite an art, I can assure you. The packet of papers together with the tin of tobacco was then replaced into your pocket. Once this exercise had been completed successfully, you then proceeded to roll a smoke. This was achieved by folding the paper to make a deep groove and then transferring the tobacco from one hand onto the paper. Then, with a rolling motion back and forth, the tobacco was formed into a cylinder until it filled the length of the paper. This was not an easy task because the shape was most important indeed. Unlike a parallel-sided cigar, the cigarette must be tapered. Some degree of skill is required. I must admit I seldom achieved the required standard. Nevertheless, upon reaching this stage of production - that is, rolled but not sealed - the cigarette was passed across the tongue in order to dampen the adhesive strip along one edge. A quick press with the finger and it was complete except for the final action to ensure that you had a first-class cigarette. That was to take out your tin of wax matches, extract a waxy and, using that, pack the tobacco firmly into each end. Within a couple of seconds, the cigarette was in your mouth, the wax match struck and you were puffing away and feeling pretty smug about it.

Well, you might ask, what has all this to do with the labelling of cigarette packets. I will answer that question. The experience I related occurred to me 30 years ago but what I have not told you is that I gave up smoking then because I could see what it did to others. In saying that, I do not mean any disrespect to the people who smoke - that is their right and their privilege. I can still clearly remember my father, who was a heavy smoker but who, I am pleased to say, gave it up, waking in the early morning coughing and coughing and coughing. The first thing he did each day was to have a cigarette. At least that settled down the coughing at the time. I can remember those people whose teeth and hands were stained brown by nicotine, whose breath smelled strongly of tobacco and the subsequent health problems most of them experienced - health problems like lung cancer, other chest complaints, cancer of the throat, larynx, mouth and lips and, wait for this, arteriosclerosis. They are all caused by tobacco smoking and they are all avoidable.

It is beyond my comprehension why people insist upon pursuing a habit which in the long term is most likely to result in permanent damage to their health or premature death. Having said that, I do not deny them the right to do so. Nevertheless, it is important that we as legislators ensure that those who do smoke, particularly the young, are fully aware of the potential hazard to their health.

Mr Deputy Speaker, this bill will allow for cigarette manufacturers to be compelled to market packaging with a warning message as prescribed. Because of the possibility of future change in the style of wording from time to time, it is impractical to amend the act to allow for each change. This bill makes provision for such changes to be implemented by regulations and ensures a much quicker and smoother transition to new regulations.

The Northern Territory decided to introduce this bill because of an agreement reached by health ministers that the warning labels on cigarette packets were inadequate and needed to be changed. I understand that there is

still some uncertainty with regard to the actual wording. However, whatever is agreed, it is essential that all details be uniform for all states and territories. It would be totally unreasonable to expect manufacturers to modify the warning message to suit each state's separate requirements.

I will not dwell on the detail of the various sections of the bill. Suffice it to say that they are quite straightforward and easily understood. I commend the bill to honourable members.

Mr BELL (MacDonnell): Mr Deputy Speaker, I wish to commend the previous speaker for a most extraordinarily well-researched, second-reading speech. In fact, it is the most extraordinarily well-researched speech I have had the pleasure to hear on a relatively uncontentious bill.

There is one point that I would like to pick up from what the honourable Minister for Transport and Works had to say. He seemed to be somewhat pooh-poohing the need for such warnings on cigarette packets. With respect to my electorate and with respect to the use of tobacco on Aboriginal communities, particularly among the young kids, I wish to commend the use of any legislation that will enable such warnings to be more easily placed on these products in the Territory. I might say in passing that it is a matter of considerable concern to me that, whereas the whole anti-smoking campaign has had considerable effect on the conscience of the English-speaking community in Australia and right around the western world, in most sections of the community where English is not the first language, I doubt that those campaigns have as much effect.

Frankly, it bothers me that cigarette smoking is regarded as such a universally acceptable habit when it is patently as dangerous as it is. I probably say that with the zeal of a reformed smoker, but then some people are so unkind as to say that I was never a smoker to start with so I could not possibly have reformed.

I wish to register my support for the bill and to place on record quite properly in the context of a second-reading debate like this the matter that we do perhaps as a legislature have a responsibility to ensure that such warnings are universally able to be understood by Territorians. Contrary to the thoughts expressed by the Minister for Transport and Works, I would like to see such warnings in fact emblazoned in even broader letters across the packets. I do not agree with him that this will add to the cost of tobacco products because I imagine that there is a flat rate for printing on packets and what is actually printed on them does not contribute to greater costs.

With those few words - and I notice the honourable Minister for Health clearing his throat over there - I register my support for the legislation.

Mr HANRAHAN (Health): Mr Deputy Speaker, such frivolous and, admittedly, not so frivolous comment, probably has amounted to one thing only, and that is that my dinner has been delayed by about half an hour tonight. It was not a bad effort from honourable members considering that it was to be a 1-line piece of legislation.

I will attempt to obtain the scientific details that the honourable member for Stuart mentioned and make them available to him. I think honourable members should be aware of one sad development. This campaign to change the warning notices on cigarette packets has been under way for 3 years that I am aware of. The 2 bodies involved are poles apart: the smoking lobby, or the

manufacturers of cigarettes, and the anti-smoking lobby. They have sought warnings that say that smoking kills, smoking causes road accidents, smoking causes planes to crash and so on.

I would like honourable members to have the benefit of some details that have flowed between consultants and committees over the last 3 years while they have attempted to come to some logical conclusion on this issue. The waste of money is horrendous. The Drug Strategy Council was formed a couple of years ago. It is comprised of the Prime Minister and the Premiers of Australia. They met and decided on a strategy to combat drugs. The follow-up committee involved the Ministers for Health in Australia and, in my view, that was the worst thing that could have happened because all they have done for 2 years is talk about cigarettes and alcohol. It is a fact that that has been at the expense of coastal surveillance, the Federal Police and the fight against hard drugs. It is a very simple issue to resolve. The reality is that we do not have any major manufacturers of cigarettes here in the Territory and we are passing legislation which, by way of regulation, will allow us to comply with whatever warning notice the committee decides upon. Ultimately, we do not have a say at all.

Motion agreed to; bill read a second time.

Mr HANRAHAN (Health)(by leave): I move that the bill be now read a third time.

Motion agreed to; bill read a third time.

ADJOURNMENT

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

Mr BELL (MacDonnell): Mr Deputy Speaker, there are a couple of matters that I want to raise particularly in this evening's adjournment debate. Honourable members will recall that I asked the Chief Minister when his government would appoint a member to the Uluru Katatjuta Board of Management that has yet to meet. In answer to that question, the Chief Minister undertook to make a statement in that regard. I look forward to a statement of the government's position hopefully during these sittings because, apart from sundry news items, it is quite clear that considerable confusion has arisen as a result of the Territory government's toing and froing in this regard. I do not wish to labour that point this evening because it would appear that it is moving to some resolution, judging from some of the public statements that have emanated from the Chief Minister's office in the last few months. However, I would like to place on record that matters have reached a critical state.

There are 3 areas that are of particular concern. Firstly, there is the problem of the day-to-day management at the park consequent upon the title arrangements that were made culminating in the grant of title and the leaseback arrangements in October last year. There has been considerable uncertainty about the continuing involvement of the Conservation Commission and of the continuing involvement of the Australian National Parks and Wildlife Service. As the local member for that particular area, I am concerned that the future of my constituents who are employed by the Conservation Commission at Yulara and who are working at Ayers Rock is in some considerable doubt. Certainly, there is a degree of urgency with respect to

decisions about day-to-day management of the park and the future role of Conservation Commission rangers in that regard.

I should place on record in this Assembly that both those services, the ANPWS and the Conservation Commission, have many excellent people working for them. The Conservation Commission, having been involved in day-to-day management of the park for many years, has built up a body of expertise and it would be to the country's detriment if new administrative arrangements were to lose that expertise.

There has been some cross-fertilisation between the 2 services and honourable members may or may not be aware of that. Mr David Dalton-Morgan, who has recently taken up the position of park superintendent with the Australian National Parks and Wildlife Service, was previously employed with the Conservation Commission of the Northern Territory and did some excellent work - as I am quite sure the Minister for Conservation and perhaps even the Chief Minister would be prepared to attest - in the arrangements that have been made for the Kings Canyon National Park. That is also subject to development, change and improved facilities for visitors. There has been consideration of certain aspects of Aboriginal aspirations in that area. There has been cross-fertilisation involved in both these services but, quite clearly, the current situation in relation to day-to-day management of the park is undesirable because there is considerable confusion about the future of the people employed there.

The second matter I wish to raise in this regard is the constitution of the board of management under Commonwealth legislation. There is to be an 11-member board of management for the national park. Six of those members are to be traditional Aboriginal owners for that particular area. Of the other 5 members, there is to be a nominee from each of the Ministers for Tourism, Aboriginal Affairs and Home Affairs and the Environment. There are to be 2 nominees from this Assembly. Certainly, the difficulty that the Northern Territory government has had in nominating somebody for the board has caused some problems. I trust that these can be resolved and I look forward to the Chief Minister's statement in that regard.

The third problem relates to the difficulties with respect to the road out to the Olgas. There have been various public statements in respect of very real problems experienced by bus operators running between Yulara and Ayers Rock, between which there is now an excellent bitumen road, and the 20 miles from there to the Olgas. Only in the last few years has there been a bitumen road out to Ayers Rock. Many honourable members may have made a trip out to the Rock in the bad old days when it was a real bone-shattering ride. There have been improvements both within and without the park in terms of sealed roads. The Petermann Highway was sealed some 3 or 4 years ago and the ring road around Ayers Rock and the road from Yulara to the Rock itself have been sealed also and that has made life somewhat easier.

However, the problem of the road to the Olgas still remains. It is badly in need of reconstruction. It has been the subject of representations from me to the federal government for some time now. I note that it has been a matter of particular concern to the Bus Proprietors Association of the Northern Territory. It has been forced to take the decision not to run buses over that particular stretch of road because of the damage experienced. Bus operators have been forced into the situation of having to give refunds to some international visitors and to cut that section out of the tours that they offer.

It is to be hoped that, in the near future, the difficulties can be resolved. I would suggest that those are the 3 particular issues of concern. Quite clearly, the issue of the road is a dollars and cents issue. As we all know, in these straitened times, public coffers are not universally full. The federal government has spent considerable sums of money in the national park, not the least of which has been on bituminising roads, but it is certainly to be hoped that that particular stretch of road can be improved so that coach operators can use it with confidence.

In the few minutes that remain to me, I would like to place on record my concerns about the infrequent sittings of this Assembly. This year, 23 sitting days are planned. That is the smallest number I can recall since becoming a member of this Assembly. As a conscientious backbencher representing my electorate and as a conscientious opposition frontbencher in the areas of lands, housing and transport and works, it is going to be very difficult to carry out my job of putting the government under scrutiny.

I would just like to run through a few of the issues - pages of them. They cannot and should not be conducted through the pages of newspapers, through press releases or just through correspondence with ministers. The Legislative Assembly exists as the final public forum in which such matters should be debated. Here, in no particular order, are some issues of concern. The Minister for Education's direction concerning the Caldicott visit to Alice Springs last week needs to be given some consideration. There is the question of caravan park surveys, of sorting out the problem of who are caravan tourists and who are permanent residents who are looking for permanent housing and cannot get it. We do not know whether this is because of federal or Territory government policies or for reasons of economic stringency. We do not know. There is the issue of the numbers of assistant teachers in Aboriginal schools in my electorate. There has been the active heightening of racial tension in Alice Springs by one of its less well-endowed local members. There is the question of the number of roads in my extensive rural electorate. There is the question of the Northern Territory government dragging the chain on the Alice Springs structure plan. There have been the strange, not to say bizarre, circumstances that have occasioned the decision to construct an aquatic centre on what was previously public-purpose land in Alice Springs. There is the question of drought relief policies and their impact on the severe drought in my electorate. There is the question of the Araluen Arts Centre and its administration and the minister's failure to nominate trustees. There is the question of continuing epidemic unemployment on Aboriginal communities in my electorate. There is the question of the Territory government failing to take any constructive steps with respect to the town bus service in Alice Springs. I could go on but I see my time is running out. I think I have made my point that these 5 days of Assembly sittings will scarcely present enough time for adequate debate.

Mr McCARTHY (Victoria River): Mr Deputy Speaker, I intend to speak only for a very short time. During question time this afternoon, I asked a question about the possible upgrading of the police presence in Batchelor. I was not particularly happy with the answer.

I raised the matter because I was handed a petition, unfortunately unsuitable for presentation to the Assembly, of 126 signatures from Batchelor - which is a pretty fair effort - all seeking the future presence of 2 policemen in Batchelor. The petition reads:

'The humble petition of the undersigned citizens of the Northern Territory and the Batchelor area in particular respectfully sheweth that, in view of the present workload and considering the potential for increase in workload, the Batchelor Police Station be upgraded to a 2-man station as soon as possible, that a 2-person station is essential to provide residents with immediate 24-hour access to law enforcement officers, that, in view of the professional implications for officers appointed to Batchelor, a 2-person station is essential'.

I strongly support those sentiments. Unfortunately, the petition missed out because 3 of the pages obviously did not comply and 2 pages were technically incorrect. I was not aware of the petition being circulated. Obviously, I was working elsewhere in the electorate at the time.

The Batchelor police area extends from Batchelor north to the Berry Springs road, west to Wagait and the sea, south-west to Channel Point which is on the mouth of the Daly River opposite the Peron Islands, and diagonally up to Tortilla Flats taking in the Marrakai Plains area east of the Stuart Highway. It includes a number of constituents of the member for Koolpinyah's electorate in the Darwin River and Berry Springs area. It is a very large region, and the Batchelor police station is often unmanned for fairly long periods. The single policeman has to go on patrol throughout that entire area on a regular basis.

I have seen in recent reports from people who should know better that the population of Batchelor is 300 persons. That is quite patently wrong. The permanent population of Batchelor alone, excluding those temporary residents who attend colleges there, is approximately 515 persons. The population of the college is a further 180-200 persons. The population of the surrounding rural area, which uses Batchelor for its services of school, health centre, post office, store and so on, is a further 150-200 persons. That totals in excess of 800 persons in the Batchelor area alone. The population of other parts of the police district of Batchelor extends quite far afield, into the very populous areas of Berry Springs, Tortilla and the Darwin River Dam area.

I intend to continue to seek to have the station at Batchelor upgraded to 2-man status because I think that the workload placed on the single policeman at Batchelor is simply more than one person should be expected to bear. There are call-outs at all times of the day or night. We have a fairly transient population and some of that transient population does not have the same regard for the peace and tranquillity of beautiful Batchelor as those who live there permanently. As a consequence, the police have a pretty heavy workload. That has been recognised in statistics that have been presented to the commissioner. The population increase in the area is quite dramatic, and it will increase even more dramatically when we finally convince the persons responsible that the road to Stapleton Park should go from Batchelor through to the park. I am sure that it is only a matter of time before we get that one worked out because it is obviously the only possible way to go.

The new hotel in Batchelor is about to be built. The hotel is worth about \$2.2m and that will obviously bring a lot of extra work for the policeman in Batchelor. There is a new caravan park due to be opened shortly, which is potentially a 120-berth van park. Currently, stage 1 will be able to cater for 30 caravans. I understand that bookings are pretty heavy for that place at this particular time. The Meneling abattoir has just been reopened as an export abattoir. As a consequence, new people are being brought into the

town. The Housing Commission has completed in the last 2 years a further 30 dwellings and that is an ongoing program. It cannot keep up with the need in Batchelor for housing. There has been a second caravan park and takeaway food outlet built in Batchelor and that is about to open. All of those things indicate that the place is about to grow further. Further interest is being shown from another group which will develop 8 shops in the town. With that sort of development, the need for a second policeman in Batchelor is very clear. As I said, I intend to continue to push for that.

The member for MacDonnell raised a point a while ago. It is a matter that really concerns me a great deal. It has concerned me a great deal for a long time. It is easy enough to throw this one out as a problem for government but then provide no answers. I would be very interested to know if the member for MacDonnell has answers to the unemployment problem in Aboriginal communities. I certainly do not have the answers and I have worked very closely in Aboriginal communities for a long time and have attempted to overcome to a certain extent the unemployment problems in Aboriginal communities. It is not an easy task. The need for employment in Aboriginal communities is obvious. In many communities around the Territory, and I can think of a number in my own electorate, at least 80% of the employable population is out of work. I quite frankly say that the chances of them ever being employed in a remote community are pretty bleak.

I cannot come up with the answers for the chronic unemployment problems that exist in most Aboriginal communities. It is something that I think everybody regrets. I know that many of the people there would like to work. They would like a job that would pay them a reasonable wage and that would afford them some pride and achievement. Certainly, the results of unemployment are the very serious problems of vandalism and violence that are occurring in Aboriginal communities right now. There is so much of it that does not get into the press. Quite clearly, if half the violence in communities were reported in the press, most people would be horrified. It is something that concerns and shocks me.

Last night, a group of people spent an hour telling me about the violence in their community. I was aware that there had been violent outbursts down there but some of the things that are happening are beyond the pale. Obviously, unemployment is one of the causes of that. There are so many causes but how they are to be overcome I do not know. I would really appreciate some ideas from the member for MacDonnell. If he has some ideas on how to overcome that problem, I would really be pleased to hear them. I am sure the ministers responsible for various activities in Aboriginal communities would like to have the same answers.

I can think of a few that would employ some of them. Probably the greatest potential employer of Aboriginal people is tourism, but there would have to be an interest in Aboriginal people to get involved in tourist projects and to take a leading role in tourism in their areas. But to compete with the outside world or with the community in general for employment opportunities while locked away in remote communities is just not likely. I cannot see it happening.

The tyranny of distance alone is enough. The lack of skills is another problem. How do we teach skills to people in remote communities? How can we teach people in a remote community to build a house adequately? It is not easy to do in an Aboriginal community. I have tried it. I have also tried it in an urban situation. I have brought people in and have found it much more

successful. I believe that Aboriginal people must consider leaving their communities for training and for some time after training. They should work at least for a period in the outside community in their chosen profession or trade so that they can build up skills that are just not available to them currently in their own communities. They are just not there. It is impossible for a government or for the people who are living there and who have some skills to be able to teach those skills properly because of the lack of opportunity for building on the skills that exist in communities. They cannot be built up because they are just not viable within the communities.

There are a number of projects that would employ people that may not pay very much and may not be terribly attractive. Again, I would say that, in many Aboriginal communities, tidiness leaves a lot to be desired. If we were to see this standard of tidiness in towns in other parts of the Territory, we would be rather shocked, but we seem to be able to accept it in an Aboriginal situation. There is no reason at all why people could not employ themselves at least in keeping their communities tidy. At least, planting trees and planting grass is an interest - that is, if they want trees and grass. I do not know. Of course, it means that they would need water. Those communities which have trees and grass seem to be tidier than those which do not have trees and grass.

There must be responsibility on both sides. There is no way in the world that a government or any individual can provide opportunities for Aboriginal people unless Aboriginal people are prepared to accept the responsibility of maintaining what they have and building on what they have. Unfortunately, that is not happening to the level that most of us, including many of the Aboriginal people in communities, would like.

The vandalism that we currently see, even in individual homes, is unbelievable at times. It happens in people's own homes. It is everybody's responsibility to keep a community in a reasonable state. It is just not happening in so many cases.

This must have an effect on health. It must affect the attitude of people. It must affect so many things for the people in those communities. Until the people in the communities are prepared to address these problems, I do not think the problem of unemployment will be overcome. There are so many things that can be done for which little or no payment can be made but, nevertheless, they are there to be done. If the interest is there and if there is a clear indication on the part of the people that they are prepared to do something for themselves in their own communities, then they will get a tremendous amount of support from this government.

Mr VALE (Braitling): Mr Deputy Speaker, in this evening's adjournment debate, I would like to pay tribute to a former resident of central Australia, the late Milton Liddle, who was born at Maryvale Station, then known as Mount Burrell, in 1912. He died in Alice Springs on Saturday 23 November, aged 73. He did so much in a busy and crowded lifetime that it is little wonder that he became well-known as a fighter for the rights of all people, regardless of their kith or kin.

I first met Milton Liddle almost a quarter of a century ago when the population of the town of Alice Springs was approaching 3000 and starting to grow. It was then a town where everyone knew everyone else and, of course, knew what everyone else was doing. Whilst times have changed, Milton Liddle then and until his death was a man of firm opinions, high principles and a

quick sense of humour. He was a man who did not seek to offer advice but, if it was sought, he gave considered and firm opinions. It was this advice that I was to seek, appreciate and respect over a period of many years.

Milton Liddle's life can be divided into 4 areas: his family, his community involvement, his association with sporting groups and his business enterprises. There is no doubt that his family came first and foremost. His love for his wife, Polly, and his children and his pride in their successes and worry over their failures were obvious to all who knew him. His pride in his pioneer pastoralist father, William Liddle, and his mother, Mary, daughter of the old Telegraph Station's first blacksmith, was obvious to his many friends and his associates.

In his business ventures, Milton Liddle had a long a varied career: returned serviceman with his late brother, Harold, pastoralist with his brother, Arthur, miner at Hatches Creek, taxi and hire-car operator in Alice Springs, transport and tourist operator and one of a number of men who constructed Alice Springs' first racecourse in the now suburb of Braitling, and for many years Alice Springs' only wood merchant.

Many years ago, Milton Liddle's son Mickey and I used to go into the hills during the drought years and load up a big flat-top truck with mulga that he had Aborigines stockpiling through the hills. We would haul it back into town. We loaded it log by log and then we would unload it log by log back in the woodyard on the flat south of where the motor registry is now. One night, I said to Mickey Liddle that this was a pretty detailed operation and that we ought to do something about mechanising the whole operation. I came up with the idea of laying cable on the flat-bed truck before we went into the hills. When we got up there, we would stack the mulga on it and then tie the mulga up. We were fit in those days because we played football. Of course, who would not be fit after loading 5 t or 6 t of mulga every Saturday before a game of football. It was no wonder the Aborigines in the hills could play football. They spent all week pulling these logs. This was back in the drought days when you could walk up and shake these mulga logs or hit them with a bull-bar and just knock them out. The Aboriginal people that Milton had working for him up in the hill were extremely fit. Anyway, I decided to mechanise the trucking operation. Milton Liddle's woodyard in the flat had a camp for some of the Aboriginal people - a toilet, a woodshed, saws and various other pieces of equipment. We devised a cable system that we laid on the flat bed of the truck. When we got into the hills, we loaded the mulga wood then tied the cables round. Mickey then drove the truck back into town. Even that was taking your life into your own hands because the truck was not exactly that flash. The clutch slipped, the brakes were not that good and the old road into the foothills in those days was pretty rough and ready.

Anyway, when we got into Milton's woodyard, we backed up and I said to Mickey: 'You know, this is what you do. You get another cable and you tie it round that gumtree in the riverbed there and you drive away'. In theory, the load was supposed to drop off. Well, the clutch slipped, Mickey took off and something snagged up. In the end, the wood came off. It flattened the camp, flattened the dunny, flattened the tree and wrecked Milton's truck. He was only a little bloke about my height - a bit smaller than I am. He came storming in. At that stage, he was chairman of the Pioneer Football Club selection committee. He said: 'That's it. You blokes are not going to get to the football this Sunday'. Mickey would walk into a football team anytime, but I had to battle to get a game. I lived in fear for the next 12 to 15 hours until the team was named the following day. I remember coming around

the flank late in the afternoon and drop kicking the ball into the forward pocket. It was one of my normal brilliant dashes down the flank to clear the ball out of trouble. Old Milton leant across the fence and said: 'And don't you smile at me young fellow. You still have to repair the toilet and the woodshed'.

But he had a real sense of humour. He never held it against me. I was still most welcome in his house for many years, right up until his death. But at the time it occurred, he was not very pleased about it. Needless to say, Mickey and I never applied for a patent on that trucking operation.

With his retirement in 1979, after 33 years in business in central Australia, he had established a record, which still stands, of being the longest-serving, self-employed person of Aboriginal descent in Australia. In the area of community service, Milton Liddle's abiding philosophy was community harmony. It was something that he practised as well as preached. He was foundation member of the National Aboriginal Conference from 1973 to 1976, founding member of the Central Australian Aboriginal Legal Aid Service and Central Australian Aboriginal Congress and the first Vice-President of the Central Land Council in Alice Springs. In 1948, he was commended by the then Welfare Department for caring for and feeding more than 150 Aboriginal people at Angus Downs through a particularly difficult period.

Many years ago in Alice Springs, I heard a story of a couple of fellows whose vehicle broke down. They cracked something in the motor and the oil drained out. The story as I heard it was that they killed a bullock, boiled it down and used the fat from the bullock to pour into the motor. Every night when they drove slowly back into town, they would have to drain the oil out because it would congeal when it went cold. The next morning they would pour it back in. I can remember the story. It would be over 20 years ago that I first heard it. I cannot remember who told me. A few months back, someone loaned me a book called 'The Winds of Change in Central Australia'. Quite a lot of the Liddles' family history is documented in this book. I was reading through it and discovered that the 2 people involved in the killing of the animal and boiling it down were in fact Milton Liddle and his brother, Arthur. But it was not a bullock; it was a sheep. Sheep were very common in central Australia in the 1920s and 1930s. They boiled the sheep down and used the rendered fat in the motor to get them back into town. Obviously, in central Australia in particular, the people are very ingenious.

Despite a high public profile over a long period of time and despite the high office he held, Milton Liddle always retained the common touch. His friends were always welcome in his home. He first lived in Lindsay Avenue which, from memory, was just opposite what is now the Eastside Self-service. He spent his remaining days with his daughter, Barbara, and son-in-law, Steve, in Jarvis Street.

Some members would know that I am a diabetic. Milton Liddle was a diabetic and his wife, Polly, was a diabetic too. One of Milton Liddle's abiding passions was cooking. He was an excellent bush and town cook. The rural health sisters used to visit him every morning to give him and Polly insulin injections. On odd occasions, I would get Milton's arm in a grip and say: 'You know, it is not as painful as it looks and I am not as nervous as my hand indicates'. These nursing sisters used to visit Mr and Mrs Liddle every morning for the injections. I remember being around there early one morning. Milton had just cooked a big bunch of scones, which are not too bad for diabetics. However, there was also hot billy tea with lots of sugar which is

a no-no, and added to the scones were lots of jam which is a real no-no. You could never faze Milton when you got into an argument or a discussion with him. He had more front than Johnny Martin's. The door opened and one of the nursing sisters walked in and said: 'Oh no!' I thought that we were for it - the 3 diabetics had been caught and were certain to be sentenced to 6 weeks in the Alice Springs hospital. Without batting an eyelid, old Milton looked up and said: 'Sister Eileen, you are just in time. Would you like sugar with your tea and scones with cream and jam?' He took the steam out of her sails and there was no lecture for any of us. I took off very quickly afterwards just in case.

Milton Liddle's prominence in community affairs has been followed by his son Bob, an alderman with the Alice Springs Town Council, and his daughter, Pat, Director of the Aboriginal Legal Aid Service in central Australia which Milton helped found more than a decade ago.

By far and away, Milton's proudest moments were reserved for the sporting arenas where all of his children - Barbara, Bob, Tony, Mickey, Pat and Karen - excelled, and excelled would be a modest way of describing their successes. In football, basketball, hockey and boxing, all of them during their sporting careers represented the Northern Territory in interstate or national competition. To add further to his pride, his grandchildren have also excelled, with grandson, Murray, being named as captain of the next Northern Territory Teal Cup side for the national competition in Adelaide in 1986. In fact, Murray Liddle is in Melbourne training with the Hawthorn Football Club which he is to join next year after he finishes representing the Northern Territory in the Teal Cup squad this year.

Milton was a life member of the Pioneer Football Club, an avid spectator and supporter of the many sports in Alice Springs. It is little wonder that the Liddle name is now firmly written in the sporting records across the Northern Territory. If someone were to ask me to write about one of the most unforgettable characters I have met, then Milton Liddle would surely be that person.

He was firm but considerate, careful and caring and with an impish sense of humour. Milton Liddle will be missed, not only by his family and his friends in central Australia, not only by his friends elsewhere in the Northern Territory, but indeed by his friends and associates right across Australia. The work that he did in the community will live long after him.

Mr SMITH (Millner): Mr Deputy Speaker, I never cease to be amazed, particularly at adjournment time, by the completely different types of lives that members of this Assembly live. Tonight I want to speak on a few parochial issues that concern me in the electorate of Millner.

I was just contemplating the first 2 speakers who spoke in the adjournment debate. When the member for MacDonnell spoke about a parochial issue that concerns him in his electorate, he in fact was talking about one of the great national issues of today: Uluru National Park and who is to control it and its future in general. When the member for Victoria River spoke, he too spoke about an important national issue of today: the treatment of Aborigines. I cannot pretend that the matters that I will raise are of national importance or even of Territory importance, but certainly they are of importance to my constituents and I do not apologise for spending the time of this Assembly in raising them.

There are 2 things happening my electorate at the moment. One is called Big Barc and the other is called Little Barc. Big Barc is the big pedestrian bridge to go across Rapid Creek mouth. I am pleased it has been put out to tender. If the announcement has not already been made as to who is the successful tenderer, I understand it will be made in the next couple of days. I am sure that members who have adjoining electorates will join with me in expressing their appreciation that it is to be built.

However, I was astounded the other day to learn that the bridge across the creek will not be lit and there are no plans at present to have a cycle path linking the bridge with either the Institute of Technology or Casuarina Beach. In other words, we face a prospect of people whipping over the bridge in darkness from the Rapid Creek side and then finding themselves faced with just a sandy track. I would think that that is a bit shortsighted. I think the bridge will be used quite extensively by people wanting to go to the Darwin Institute of Technology. As we all know, many lectures are held at night. I think it is very important that the bridge be lit to encourage that sort of use. I think it is equally as important that consideration be given to the provision of bicycle paths to Casuarina Beach and the Darwin Institute of Technology so that people are encouraged to make maximum use of that facility.

I am pleased that the Minister for Conservation is here because I understand the bicycle path part of the project falls into his portfolio area. I understand that the Conservation Commission has responsibility for that side of the creek.

Mr Hatton: Not that far down.

Mr SMITH: Not that far down? Who does? Transport and Works?

Mr Hatton: The Darwin City Council.

Mr SMITH: It would deny that. One of the problems is that government departments and the Darwin City Council have always denied any responsibility for that whole Rapid Creek area. Anyway, I have made the point and I would hope that the Minister for Conservation, who has some sort of electoral interest in that area too, would take up that point and ascertain who does have some responsibility and join with me in putting some pressure on them.

The second bridge, the Little Barc, is the subject of a petition tabled this morning. It is from residents of Millner asking for the provision of a much smaller bridge across Rapid Creek linking Millner with the Water Gardens. We all know that the Water Gardens has turned out to be a very useful and widely-used facility but there is a problem of convenient access from the Millner side to the Water Gardens. The provision of a simple bridge which would allow pedestrians and horses from the Craig Stables to cross the creek safely and conveniently would be of great assistance in advancing access for Millner residents. On the rough figures that I have, we are talking about \$40 000 to \$50 000, no more. No one is after a complicated structure. All we want is a simple, safe structure that can be put in place quickly and can be used effectively. I understand that there is a fair chance that the cost of the Big Barc at the mouth of the creek has been less than the anticipated price and the suggestion has been made to the Minister for Transport and Works that the money that is saved there could be diverted to the Little Barc. I would hope that he would take that matter up.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I would like to congratulate the Darwin City Council for the job it has done in upgrading the old speedway site. I think anybody who passes there will realise that it has been turned from an eyesore into one of the nicest parts of Darwin. It is showing the effects of quite a lot of money spent by the city council. It is now a nice green park area. The trees that were planted by residents in February last year have grown quite considerably and it is now a very pleasant place indeed.

The Darwin Amateur Cycling Club has done its part by doing extensive work to improve the surrounds of the velodrome area. Previously, that was a bit of an eyesore because of a 2 m fence in fairly bad shape surrounding the velodrome area. After discussions with the city council, it has agreed to take down the 2 m fence and replace it with a 1 m fence which is directly around the velodrome track itself. That work is well in progress. I think all of the 2 m fence has been taken down and work is well under way in putting up the 1 m fence around the velodrome. When that work and the landscaping associated with it are completed, the velodrome area will look much better and fit much better into the whole of the Bagot Park area. We will have a very good community asset right along that stretch of land.

Another small issue that caused great satisfaction to the residents has been the installation of a roundabout at the corner of Chrisp Street and Ryland Road. That intersection was a matter of major concern to residents who live in the area. A number of accidents - thankfully most of them minor, have occurred there over a period of years. It was through the efforts of residents, and particularly 2 residents, Lorraine Rose and Katja Cooper, that the city council was pressured into taking action. That resulted in the installation of a roundabout in January this year. It has had the desired effect of slowing down the traffic. There have not been any accidents reported at that intersection since the roundabout was installed. I think that everybody is very pleased with both the design of the roundabout and the action taken by the city council in approving the residents' requests.

I want to talk about a couple of matters concerning Rapid Creek School. Last year, discussions took place between the school council and the Department of Education about the prospect of the department's itinerant musicians moving from Nightcliff Primary School. In its negotiations, the school council extracted some promises from the Department of Education for the upgrading of facilities at Rapid Creek School. One of those promises was that the general purposes room behind the stage of the school would be air-conditioned. Again, I am sorry to single out the member for Nightcliff, but I know that the member, and particularly his wife, would have very hot impressions of the conditions in the general purposes room behind the stage at the Rapid Creek School. A commitment was given at that stage in those negotiations that that general purposes room would be air-conditioned. Unfortunately, it has not happened. The department seems to have backed away from its commitment. I ask the minister to look at that particular matter.

Another problem concerns drainage around the canteen area. I am not completely informed about it, but I understand written commitments that the problems would be rectified have been given to the school council over a period of years. I ask the minister to investigate that as well.

I conclude by congratulating the minister for his efforts in resolving the problems with the special school. I think everybody appreciated his personal interest when the matters were brought to his attention. Certainly, people who work in the special unit and the parents who send their kids there are

appreciative of the efforts of the minister and the Department of Education in improving the conditions under which they work.

Mr FIRMIN (Ludmilla): Mr Deputy Speaker, I also wish to speak about a couple of matters dear to my heart. As with the member for Millner and others before me, they tend to assume the dimensions of matters of national importance.

The first issue I would like to talk about relates to the composition of the board of AUSSAT Satellite Pty Ltd. Recently, I received a press release from the Minister for Communications in Canberra, the Hon Michael Duffy, to advise me that, as from 1 March this year, the makeup of the AUSSAT board was to change. Several people would resign, several people were being removed and the board was being restructured from 13 to 9. Ostensibly, the reason for this is that, after the launching of the first generation of satellites, AUSSAT will move into a totally different commercial phase.

AUSSAT's major claim to fame is that it exists to promote a general communications system, particularly for people in the outback and the remote areas of Australia. I will quote some of AUSSAT's corporate goals from its recent annual report:

'To make available to all Australians a broader and improved range of telecommunications and broadcasting services, with particular emphasis on those services and customers which will benefit most from the characteristics of satellite communications systems.

To provide a high quality service responsive to the full range of customer requirements.

To foster the concept and design and development of new types of telecommunications services making use of the special characteristics of satellite communication systems.

To develop a sensitive and responsible attitude towards the social needs and environmental issues of concern to the community'.

They are all wonderful corporate goals which would meet the requirements of outback dwellers. It was therefore with some concern that I read of the people who were being removed from the AUSSAT board and some of those who were being brought in. It was of particular concern to me and to the people in remote areas of the Northern Territory, particularly members of the Isolated Children's Parents' Association, that one of the most knowledgeable men in the early days of satellite technology, and certainly one of those who pushed very hard for people in the remote areas, Mr Rory Treweek, a New South Wales grazier and until very recently the federal President of the Isolated Children's Parents' Association, received a message from the minister just prior to the press announcement to advise him that his services were no longer required on the board of AUSSAT. It is of great concern to me that the board is now composed predominantly of people from merchant banking and large business enterprises or people involved in esoteric professional duties. I cannot see one person on the AUSSAT board who speaks for the people whom AUSSAT purports to serve.

There is another matter in relation to the delivery of telecommunications services to people in the remote areas of Australia, and Northern Territorians in particular. Some of those receiving the ABC broadcast service via

satellite report that they are suffering difficulties in 2 fields. The first relates to manufactured components, particularly the MAC-B decoder receiver. Unfortunately, the federal government, particularly the minister, gave a manufacturer the sole right to make and distribute the MAC-B throughout Australia. That company is Plessey. I do not believe that it is doing enough for people in the bush. At the moment, I am led to believe that there is up to a 50% breakdown in the communication receiver decoders in the bush. Plessey denies that. It says that there is possibly only a 10% breakdown. According to my information, that may indeed be Plessey's position but, in fact, many local distributors are attempting to make minor repairs when the faults are brought to them locally. For people like you and I, who mostly live in urban areas close to repair workshops, telephones and other services, this would probably be just a painful problem but not one of great magnitude. However, the people buying this equipment are doing so to obtain a service which is supposed to lessen the tyranny of distance by enabling them to join the rest of us in receiving the services provided by the Australian Broadcasting Service. Nine times out of 10, they are hundreds of miles away from a main road, let alone a service centre!

Plessey says quite readily that, if a unit is giving problems, the purchaser can send it back. That is very simple except where the purchaser cannot easily send the unit to a centre which will return it to the manufacturer for repair. Plessey also fails to address the problem of the purchaser having to pay for the freight in both directions. Thus, the people in the outback, who have only had this service officially since 26 January 1986, a matter of some 6 or 8 weeks, are already suffering up to a 50% disruption to their viewing opportunities from the ABC.

On a more positive note are the responses from remote area viewers to ABC services. People have told me that they enjoy the television programs and the radio services. Also, the clarity that they are receiving is probably better than some of the clarity in the Darwin radiated television service area.

However, one thing is still worrying them greatly. During the original trial period, everybody was looking at what would be made available. ICPA members in the north coincidentally had their Northern Territory conference in Darwin at the time when trials were taking place, and we arranged a satisfactory viewing for them to see the sort of service they would receive. During that viewing period, a wide range of services were disseminated via satellite on behalf of the ABC. Unfortunately, now that full-scale services have commenced - and I have been out to see for myself - several parts of the teletex services are missing. They are not being transmitted at all. There are no radio program schedules at all on the teletex service. This is not a problem for us in the cities. We can buy a daily newspaper to find out whether a particular program is on tonight or tomorrow. But there is no way for the people in the bush to find out. They have an opportunity to receive 3 services: radio 1, radio 2 and FM105, but they have no way of finding out what the programs will be.

There is also a small problem with the program guide for the television service. I suppose people can be thankful for small mercies. At the moment, they are actually getting a guide to the service on weekly changeover. During the program promotion period, however, it was a daily changeover with an update so that one could at least look 5 or 6 days ahead. Unfortunately, this no longer happens. The program guide service for the television comes out on a weekly basis, on Thursdays, and, if you happen to be viewing on the following Wednesday, for example, you have to plough through considerable

numbers of help pages to find out what on earth you might be able to watch that evening. Also, you have no idea, until the following morning, what the next week's programs will be. It is not really working as it was intended to work. In addition, the help pages are missing entirely from the teletex at the moment, as are the emergency warning pages. I do not know the reasons for these problems, but I would like to see the ABC address them.

By and large, the ABC service is brilliant. People in the bush are enjoying it immensely. It is the first opportunity that most of them have had to view television in their own homes, other than through video recordings, and they are making the most of it. They are looking forward to the commercial service when it finally comes on line, hopefully in another 10 or 11 months' time.

There is one other matter that I would like to address in relation to this service. I understand that, within the next few days, there will be a redirection of the signal that has been received by outback persons from AUSSAT 1 to AUSSAT 2. For the uninitiated, that might seem similar to our changing channels on the ground but that is not quite the case. The AUSSAT 1 satellite and the AUSSAT 2 satellite are some 8° apart at the moment. Those who looked at the service earlier in the year will understand that a minor earth station is involved which requires some attitudinal and directional pointing to ensure that a reasonable signal is received. I would have expected that, by now, there would have been constant notes interspersed with the ABC satellite-delivered service to consumers in remote areas that this change was about to take place so that there would not be a loss of signal on the date of the intended changeover. Not only that, viewers should be reminded how they should go about redirecting their satellite dish to pick up the new signal from AUSSAT 2. Of course, we must remember that, in another 11 months, they will be switched to AUSSAT 3 so that they can receive both commercial and ABC services off the satellite.

There is one other disturbing aspect of that scenario. I do not quite know why the intermediate change from AUSSAT 1 to AUSSAT 2 is taking place right at this moment. Whilst it is a simple operation for minor earth station users to redirect a dish to receive a strong ABC signal at the moment, it is not so easy for those communities that are receiving community broadcasts and rebroadcasting around their own area. To redirect some dishes that they have installed in their communities will probably require some professional assistance which has to be sought from a major centre at considerable cost. There will be some timing problems also. The change to AUSSAT 3 back in November will require further professional assistance.

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH (Koolpinyah): Mr Deputy Speaker, since this Assembly last met at the end of 1985, an event of some historical importance has occurred in the electorate of Koolpinyah. I refer to the formation of the Litchfield Shire and the election of officers to administer the newly-formed shire. One person was elected as president and 4 persons were elected as councillors. At the outset, I indicate that I am looking forward to legislation that the Minister for Community Development intends to introduce in these sittings to give the people in the rural area 2 things they have asked for in relation to the running of Litchfield Shire.

The first relates to nomenclature. In other local governments in the Northern Territory, the presiding officer is called a 'mayor' and the other members are called 'aldermen'. The minister has been told on many occasions, including by me, that the people in the rural area want the presiding officer

of the Litchfield Shire to be called 'president' and the 4 people elected to administer the shire to be called 'councillors' rather than 'aldermen'. Everybody believed that local government had to be conducted in a manner that was financially advantageous to the people. I am not knocking people from other local government areas, but we felt that the titles 'president' and 'councillors' would be much more in keeping with down-to-earth people who have to make their dollars stretch as far as possible.

Another important matter relates to the form of rating in the Litchfield Shire. I have spoken about this before but it is of great importance, both to me and to the 5 people who have been elected to administer the Litchfield Shire. Everybody in our area wants a differential flat rate between Rural Living 1 which is...

Mr D.W. Collins: How can you have a differential flat rate?

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH: The people in the rural area will know exactly what I am talking about even if some honourable members do not.

The differential flat rate will be between RL1, which is in the centre of the area and which comprises areas of 5 acres in a few places and less than 5 acres, and RL2 which is comprised mainly of blocks of 20 acres. I would hope the area will pay a rate of about \$100-odd. The people in the RL2 area would pay about half that.

What the people do not want, what I do not want and what the Litchfield Shire officers do not want is any hint at all of the introduction by this proposed legislation of unimproved capital value rating. I have heard rumours. I have asked if we will be getting something like a UCV rating introduced with this legislation. To date, I have not received any notice by letter or any other way in writing that this UCV rating will not be introduced. Therefore, it is doubly important that I speak now. I emphasise very strongly that nobody at all in our area wants a form of UCV rating.

There was an attempt by certain public servants to force it down our necks. Their excuse was that it was the most popular form of rating in other parts of Australia and what was good enough for the rest of Australia was good enough for us and other parts of the Northern Territory. But the people have stood strongly behind their views that a flat rating system is what they want. Whether it changes in the future and whether it has to change in the future are matters for the future. At the moment, they want a form of flat rating with differentials between the RL1 and RL2 areas.

The Litchfield Shire officers have been going about their business in a very conscientious and thorough way in the short time they have been operating. A point of interest is the fact that I was present at the swearing in of the 5 officers. I suppose it was rather typical of the rural area. I think I am correct in saying it took place under a stringy bark tree on Friday 13 December. I think that it is significant both for the date and the place.

The people who are holding office have set out in the right way to conduct their shire business, and that is by requesting people to tell them what they want in the rural area, having regard always to the value of the dollar. It has been made quite clear to people. I think most sensible people out our way realise that, if they ask for the moon, it will cost a fortune but, if they are prepared to moderate their demands, they most certainly will be able to live with the rating that will be levied on them.

I asked the Minister for Lands this morning a question on the proposed rural strategy plan. In the rural area, we are noted for agreeing or disagreeing very vocally with what the bureaucrats would have us do because they think it is best for us. I believe that it is one of the few places left in the Territory where free speech is welcomed. People speak their minds whether it is popular with the bureaucracy or not. One of the things about this rural strategy plan that is of grave importance to me and to the people out there is that this plan must give us what we want. I conceded some time ago that planning is necessary, that more and more people are living in the area and that there is less and less space between us. Therefore, certain rules of conduct must be introduced into our ordinary everyday living in the form of planning. However, the plan must be what we want. It must mirror our wishes entirely and it must not be foisted on us by the planners. My grave concern, and I hope that it is proved groundless, is that the planners will ask for our views, as the minister has said they would, then proceed to give us what they think we should have in the form of a plan.

There was a hint of this on one particular occasion. The planners knew my views quite clearly because I left them in no doubt about the representations that were made to me. It relates to a declaration of a district centre. The people in the area made their views plain that they wanted it on site A. The planners said it really should go on site B. Regardless of the fact that I was representing the people's views, I believed it should have gone on site A. Nevertheless, the planners struck out and said it should go on site B. It took about 3 representations to convince them that the people really wanted it to go on site A which is where it is now. I believe that was due to the good offices of the minister in recognising the fact that planners have to fulfil the wishes of the people. Planners exist for the people; the people do not exist for planners.

This rural strategy plan must take into account the people's wishes for the future and also their quality of living. The main point about the quality of living of people in the rural area is that we do not want to see continued subdivision down to smaller and smaller blocks so that we end up with another Darwin in the rural area with blocks of an eighth of an acre or less. The very thing that attracts people to the rural area is the amount of space that we have around our blocks. There are certain disadvantages too but space is becoming a rarer and more expensive commodity. If we are prepared to pay for this commodity, I do not believe our standard or our quality of living should be disturbed in any way by strangers who come in from the city and who wish to subdivide to smaller and smaller blocks. Our complete way of life will be changed in so many ways if this happens.

There are plenty of other places where these people can go if they wish to live on slightly larger than city blocks but certainly smaller blocks than ours. Cox Peninsula is yet to be subdivided. There is still land that could be subdivided in the Gunn Point area. There is still use that could be made of the 32-square-mile acquisition area round Yarrowonga where I live. There is still subdivision that I believe could take place around Palmerston. There is still subdivision that could take place between the Newtown area and Palmerston. There are still many areas where subdivision could occur without impinging on the lifestyle of the people already living in the rural area. I will not give up the fight in representing the views of the people in my electorate who do not want any smaller subdivisions.

I am not against subdivision per se. I am not against people making a few dollars from subdivision. However, when people have a quality of life which

they have established after some years of living in the rural area, I do not believe it should be disturbed. That is especially the case when there are other places where people can live on larger blocks than exist in Darwin but blocks which are still smaller than those in the rural area. I look forward to this strategy plan with some interest. The minister has assured me that there will be adequate time and opportunity for people to pass their comments to the planners.

There must also be provision somewhere for light industry because there is a strong call for light industry to be developed by different people in the rural area. I am never against people setting up their own small businesses. I believe that this has to be encouraged. There is a lot of it going on in the rural area. There are some light industrial businesses and there are some noxious industries that people have shown an interest in establishing. They must be directed away from the mainstream of rural life. I am looking forward to this strategy plan to see where these industries will be placed.

Also of grave concern to me is that, if subdivision were allowed continually, it would affect the agricultural land in the rural area. It might not be very good agricultural or horticultural land but any land can be made as fertile as one wishes by industry and a certain amount of financial investment. It would really concern me if the land is split up so much that the agricultural and horticultural potential of the rural area, which is pretty active at the moment, gradually wanes and dies. I do not want to see that.

Motion agreed to; the Assembly adjourned.

Mr Speaker Steele took the Chair at 10 am.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

Mr HATTON (Lands)(by leave): Mr Speaker, I was asked specifically by the Leader of the Opposition whether I personally had approached the Westpac organisation in respect of a matter associated with loan arrangements and guarantees to be provided by the Northern Territory government. I answered no. I answered that question honestly. I have absolutely no recollection of ever having made contact with Mr Cowan or Mr Moore or any other person in relation to this loan. I can only assume, and I am looking forward to seeing this document, that it is in error. I have been advised verbally, and I am seeking to confirm this, that there was apparently some document with my name on it. According to this advice, my name had been crossed out some time ago and replaced by the name of an officer of the Northern Territory government. I am seeking to have that confirmed. I suspect that the document referred to by the Leader of the Opposition was typed in error and has been subsequently corrected internally by the Westpac organisation. I am currently seeking to obtain a copy of the actual document to confirm that.

COMMISSION OF INQUIRY (CHAMBERLAIN CONVICTIONS) BILL (Serial 172)

Bill presented and read a first time.

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

Mr Speaker, on 2 February this year, a baby's matinee jacket and other items were found at the base of Ayers Rock not far from the place where clothing identified as that of Azaria Chamberlain was found in August 1980. On 5 February 1986, Mrs Chamberlain said that she believed the jacket was that worn by the infant at the time of her disappearance.

Much of the evidence at the trial of Mr and Mrs Chamberlain, at which Mrs Chamberlain was found guilty of the murder of her daughter Azaria at Ayers Rock on 17 August 1980 and Mr Chamberlain guilty of being an accessory after the fact, was directed to the condition of clothing. Mrs Chamberlain has maintained that the infant was wearing a matinee jacket at the time of her disappearance and it may be that the finding of the jacket and the other items in the place where they were found, and their condition, will throw additional light upon the circumstances of the child's disappearance.

After consulting with my Cabinet colleagues, I decided on 7 February 1986 that an inquiry would be held as to the relevance of the jacket and other items. Given other doubts and questions in the minds of some of the public, it was also decided that any inquiry should not be limited to that subject. At the same time, the balance of Mrs Chamberlain's term of imprisonment was remitted and she was forthwith released from jail so that she could have unfettered access to her legal advisers for the purposes of the inquiry.

No inquiry of this nature has previously been conducted in the Northern Territory and there have been few elsewhere. On occasions when a government has decided that an inquiry into the guilt of a convicted person should be held, differing procedures have been used. In some cases, such as Black in South Australia and Thomas in New Zealand, the powers under the general legislation relating to Royal Commissions have been used with the terms of

reference being determined by the executive. In others, use has been made of provisions in the criminal codes enabling a case or part of a case, the subject of a petition of mercy, to be referred to the Supreme Court of the state by a Crown law officer.

In New South Wales, there is a special provision in the Crimes Act which is not to be found elsewhere. It has been there for about 100 years and has often been used. It provides that, where a doubt or question arises concerning the guilt of a person, or any mitigating circumstances in the case or any part of the evidence thereon, the Governor, on the petition of the person convicted, or some person on his behalf representing such doubt or question, may direct any justice to examine on oath all persons likely to give material information in the matter suggested. The justice is directed to prepare a report to the Governor as to the conclusions to be drawn therefrom, and the matter is dealt with thereafter as appears to be just.

There is no Territory Royal Commissions Act. The Inquiries Act, enacted in 1945, is not entirely suitable for the purposes of the proposed inquiry concerning the Chamberlain case. Therefore, this bill is a special piece of legislation dealing only with the Chamberlain matter. It establishes a commission of inquiry, sets the scope of the inquiry, gives the commission adequate powers to perform its tasks in the Territory, and requires a report to His Honour the Administrator, and a tabling of that report in this Assembly.

Honourable members will note from the preamble in clause 4 of the bill that the nature and scope of the inquiry is modelled on section 475 of the New South Wales Crimes Act. It is as wide as could be. Unlike other inquiries into convictions for murder, it is not limited to terms of reference touching upon specific aspects of evidence. It is open to those assisting the inquiry, and any given leave to appear before it, to raise any relevant doubt or question for inquiry and report. Any limitation on the matters to be inquired into will be in the hands of the commission. The powers of the commission are detailed in clauses 5 to 25. These powers are taken directly from the Commonwealth Royal Commissions Act in so far as they are relevant to this inquiry, and include provisions enabling the commissioner to ensure the attendance of witnesses and the production of documents and other things.

As honourable members are aware, the witnesses for the Crown and defence at the trial came from all parts of Australia and from overseas. Assuming that the commission may wish to hear from some or all of them and perhaps others, I think it likely that the commission may wish to sit outside of the Northern Territory. The power to do so is contained in clause 5, but it raises legal problems concerning the coercion of witnesses and the usual protections given to a commission witness and counsel.

To obviate that problem I have sought and obtained an undertaking from the Commonwealth Attorney-General that, when the commission is established under Northern Territory law, the Governor-General of the Commonwealth of Australia will be requested to execute letters patent with identical terms of reference under the Commonwealth Royal Commissions Act. The flow of powers and protections then accrued will enable the commission to discharge its functions effectively when sitting outside of the Territory. The terms of reference under that commission will be the same as those in the Territory legislation. Honourable members should refer to the provisions of clauses 25 and 27 in this regard.

Mr Speaker, I am pleased to be able to announce that the Hon Mr Justice Trevor Morling of the Federal Court of Australia is prepared to accept appointment as the person to comprise the commission. His Honour's agreement to accept the appointment was with the concurrence of the Commonwealth Attorney-General and the Chief Judge of the Federal Court of Australia, and after consideration of this bill. I appreciate and acknowledge the assistance of the Commonwealth with thanks.

The finalising of arrangements for the conduct of the inquiry is well under way but has been complicated by the broad net of suspicion cast upon so many people who previously have been engaged in the matter on the part of the Crown. Whether or not the allegations giving rise to those suspicions are relevant to the inquiry and, if so, sustainable, remains to be seen. However, in order to avoid any further criticisms, I have decided that solicitors in Sydney who have never previously acted on behalf of the Territory in any matter shall be engaged at Territory expense as solicitors to counsel assisting the commission. Those counsel will be chosen by those solicitors in consultation with the commissioner. The Territory will engage such staff and provide such services as are required to provide the administrative support to the commissioner, but under his direction.

It is not possible to say when the commission is likely to commence hearings, how it will progress or when it will conclude. Those are matters properly left to the commissioner. I do not propose to say anything more concerning the reasons for the decision to establish the inquiry, nor regarding the matters which may be drawn to its attention. To do so would be quite wrong. Those matters will be in the hands of the commission, assisted by independently-instructed counsel and such other interested parties as may be given leave to appear.

I foreshadow that I propose that this legislation be processed through all stages during the course of these sittings and will seek the suspension of standing orders at an appropriate time. I commend the bill to honourable members.

Debate adjourned.

DISCUSSION OF MATTER OF PUBLIC IMPORTANCE Builders' Licensing

Mr SPEAKER: Honourable members, I have received the following letter from the honourable member for MacDonnell:

'Dear Mr Speaker,

I wish to propose, under standing order 94, that the Assembly discuss this morning as a definite matter of public importance the following: the inadequate protection offered to home buyers and reputable builders by the government's failure to introduce an effective builders' licensing and inspection system.

Yours sincerely,

Neil Bell
Member for MacDonnell'.

Is the honourable member supported? The honourable member is supported.

Mr BELL (MacDonnell): Mr Speaker, the subject of this debate is, to put it quite simply, the failure of the government to protect adequately Northern Territory home buyers and reputable builders because of the government's failure to introduce an effective builders' licensing and inspection system. The argument assumes that the government has a responsibility to ensure that the family home, which probably represents the major purchase a family will make, is built to a proper standard. It assumes also that rental accommodation is built to a satisfactory standard. I doubt whether any member could disagree with those propositions. It is easy to demonstrate that the government has failed in its responsibility. It is also evident in statements by the government and its public servants. I intend to introduce 2 examples, 1 from Alice Springs and 1 from Darwin, both of which have been the subject of interest in the media. These may be lengthy, but I believe it is important that the Assembly be informed on the nature of the problem. The member for Millner will outline solutions to the problem.

I shall refer to the first example as Perception Homes v Mr Elston of Alice Springs. To preface my remarks, I advise that I will be talking about a dwelling for which a certificate of completion had been issued; that is, I will be talking about a home which the owner would reasonably expect to be complete and without fault. Regrettably, that was not the case. Very many faults were evident. That was not simply the opinion of the owner, Mr Elston. It was substantiated by an independent firm of consultants which investigated the itemised complaints. Unfortunately, time does not allow me to focus on each of the 37 complaints. But let me just quote from the introduction to the consultant's report and highlight some of them. I quote:

'We have been requested by Mr and Mrs P. Elston to carry out an inspection of their property at 17 Partridge Court Alice Springs and provide a report on various items of construction and finish they are complaining about, following the construction of their home by J-Corp Pty Ltd trading as Perception Homes on contract. This inspection was carried out on Saturday 21 September 1985. We hereby submit the report showing the complaints of the proprietors, the remedy, and also our suggestion as to the solution to some difficult and costly remedies'.

Complaint No 1 of the 37 complaints relates to the carport and brick piers coming away from the carport wall because there are no hold-downs. I will read again from the consultant's report:

'The carport is constructed of a single-skin brick parapet wall on the boundary with single brick structural piers, laid in stretcher course stack and not brick bonded into the boundary parapet wall. While it is possible that some form of bonding may have been attempted by way of using metal frame-ties, if this was done at all, the single brick piers are coming away from the boundary wall. Additionally, following an inspection in the roof area, there is no evidence of any roof tie-downs where there should be, over the piers'.

The consultant goes on to offer a remedy: the demolition of the boundary wall and relaying with properly bonded piers laid in English bond, providing hold-downs from footing correctly fixed to frameworks. The consultant also offered an alternative solution to overcome major demolition: steel columns could be provided, fixed with chemical bolts to the concrete base alongside each pier, fixed also to the brick boundary, with bonding columns in

3 positions to the wall, and with the top of the column being securely fixed to the structural roof members. The columns could be painted to match the brickwork and make good the area around the ceiling lining.

In complaint No 4, we discover that there were gaps between the underside of the roof sheets to the fascia, allowing birds, wind and dust to penetrate roof space as well as allowing wind and dust to penetrate into the kitchen via the oven recess. Long gaps of up to 50 mm are evident around the full perimeters of the house. The roof battens are irregular and the fascia has been put on too low, resulting in gaps under the roof. The suggested remedy is to remove all roof sheets, fascia and eaves, bring the battens to uniform line, refix the fascia in its correct position, refix the eaves, and repaint as necessary. This solution would be costly and time-consuming and could involve having to replace a large amount of roof and eave sheets due to damage removing existing sheets. To overcome this, the consultants suggested that bird-proofing be provided and fixed to the fascia, covering the gaps. In order to hide the unsightly finish, gutters should be provided for the full perimeter of the roof. I would ask you to note, Mr Speaker, that the alternative solution involves hiding the problem.

Complaint No 5 takes up less space but it is nonetheless significant. In various locations, the eaves are not fixed, and they flap up and down in the wind - a serious shortcoming. One could reasonably argue that it could be easily fixed. That may well be true but it is not the point. Such a situation should not arise. I quote from the report again:

'On inspection, it was found that the fibro eaves sheets in various locations were sitting on the brick work with no fixing along the brick line. This allowed movement and noise, with the remedy being a provision of secure fixings of the eaves from inside the roof'.

Complaint No 7 is one which must have disappointed the Elstons immeasurably. Let us not forget that they had probably saved for years to buy their home which, conceivably, was to be their pride and joy and their family home for many years to come. It was intended to be a dwelling of which they could justifiably be proud. That, unfortunately, is not the case, and complaint No 7 certainly did not help. It reads: 'The front entry brick screen top 3 courses are different brick and no evidence of tie-down required could be found'. The remedy in relation to the wrong bricks was, not surprisingly, to remove them and replace them with matching bricks. The remedy in relation to the absence of a tie-down was to demolish the column and to rebuild it with an inbuilt tie-down. An alternative solution was posed; namely, to overcome demolition, a steel column tie-down could be provided in an inconspicuous position, chemically bolted to the concrete base and connected to the structural roof frame with the 3 courses of incorrect bricks removed and relaid with matching bricks. Mr Speaker, can you believe this? The builder ran out of the correct type of bricks and used different ones to complete the job. I am sure you will agree that that is just not good enough.

I have a considerable number of complaints. I will run through them as quickly as I can. They ought be put on the record of the Assembly because of the seriousness of this particular matter.

Complaint No 32: the steel lintels are rusting. The specification, good trade practices, calls for steel work to be primed before installation. This has not been done and, with water-based PVA paint being used for walls, and moisture from the showers, these lintels are rusting. Remedies are proposed.

Complaint No 20: the ceiling has been patched in several areas and left showing the patching. The ceiling has cracked in various areas. With the number of angles of the house, it is desirable to have expansion joints cut into the ceiling.

Complaint No 21: the window reveals are cracking at the junction with the aluminium joinery. There are cracks up to 6 mm evident in the majority of reveals.

Complaint No 30: the rear kitchen sliding door frame has not been securely fixed to brickwork and maintenance is being carried out to fix the frame to the brickwork. Unsightly angle screws have been used and are sticking out. 'This repair work has been done in a very untradesmanlike manner and alternative fixing is desired'. That is a quote from the consultant's report.

Complaint No 34: ceiling fans wobble and vibrate when operating. Upon inspection in the roof space, it was found that the fans had been fixed to pieces of pine timber, some 2 m long and 70 mm by 30 mm, with the pine to which the fan is fixed simply sitting on top of the gyprock ceiling, thus allowing much movement. I think it is fairly fortunate that a fatality did not occur.

Complaint No 37: the height of the floor level of the house was not as planned but well below street level allowing surface water to run down to the entry area and carport, and ponding occurred in these areas. In summary, the consultant firm concluded:

'After having looked closely at all the complaints herein listed, being items 1 to 37 inclusive, it is our considered opinion that, following the solutions suggested, rectification costs would be in the vicinity of \$7000. Item No 37, if proceeded with as suggested in our solution, excluding gutters and downpipes, this being incorporated in the above, would cost \$3500'.

Mr Speaker, that is a total of about \$10 500. The second example that I wish to refer to in the context of this debate received considerable media publicity in Darwin. In this instance, a Darwin couple engaged a consultant firm to investigate complaints in relation to their dwelling. The complaints included rainwater leaks, unsafe handrail fixings on a spiral staircase, warped wall linings, missing holding-down bolts, the absence of clothes drying facilities, waste left on site, incomplete plumbing, inadequate roof cladding fixings, a poorly located septic system, and many more. I will deal only with some of those noted and somewhat more briefly.

In relation to the rainwater leaks, there was evidence of substantial and recent rainwater penetration of the building at both ground and first floor levels. The building leaked from various locations. In relation to the staircase, some 40 screws were missing from fixing holes in the handrails, and the consultant concerned regarded the situation, to use his term, as 'dangerous'. In relation to the warped wall linings, there was insufficient framing and none of the linings was fixed to wall framings and support centres recommended by the manufacturers.

A major concern was the absence of holding-down bolts. I will quote directly from the consultant's report as it raises important and related issues:

'This is a serious defect affecting the integrity of the structure and a certificate of occupancy should not have been issued unless the inspector had satisfied himself that this was correctly done. Inspections are required at appropriate intervals of construction and it is the builder's responsibility'.

I stress, Mr Speaker, that it is the builder's responsibility to carry that out. That will become important a little bit later. The comments continue:

'There is no record of the inspector or the builder having done their job properly. The builder may have had a structural engineer inspect and certify the correct fixing but there is no record of such.

During inspection, it was observed that water was bubbling out of the septic tank in the disconnecter trap adjacent to the residence. This would indicate that the septic system overflows and is running backwards in wet ground conditions. The overflow then runs past the bore and could create a serious health hazard'.

That is a brief look at only some of the many faults in relation to that particular residence. The issue is one of responsibility for building standards. That is what this matter of public importance discussion is about. There are 2 issues that need to be considered: inspection and licensing. There is no point in licensing builders if inspection is not carried out adequately.

It is quite clear that responsibility for inspection is something that the government evidently does not want to know about. In relation to the example that I mentioned in Alice Springs, the Director of Lands in the Southern Region stated in a news broadcast that it is the responsibility of the home owner to have a house inspected during the stages of its construction. I submit that that is inadequate and inaccurate. Once again, I refer the minister to the comments from the consultant. If the Director of Lands in the Southern Region said that, let us examine what the honourable minister himself has said. He has said in this Assembly: 'I am advised by the department that the legislation does not require specifically that inspections must be carried out but that they may be carried out'. That is not adequate.

To turn to the question of licensing, I am aware that the government has addressed this issue in the past. In 1984, a working party was established under the chairmanship of the Secretary of the Department of Lands. I believe that the working party recommended some form of licensing of builders. I ask the honourable minister why such a scheme was not implemented at that date.

A further aspect I query is the fate of the proposed audit system which was also proposed in 1984. I well remember seeing a press release from the then Chief Minister, Paul Everingham, saying the solution to all these problems would be an audit system. I do not think that we have heard hide nor hair of it since. This system was to involve spot checks on building sites. The opposition and, I am sure, aggrieved home builders and prospective builders would be very interested to see what the government's response in that regard would be.

To sum up, I think I have fairly adequately outlined, in the time available to me, the serious difficulties that have been experienced by home builders. With due care on the part of this government, these need not have occurred. I trust that the minister has taken my words to heart and will be

able to provide an adequate explanation. My colleague, the member for Millner, will outline some solutions to the problems that I have outlined.

Mr HATTON (Lands): Mr Speaker, this matter deals with 2 points: the introduction of an effective builders' licensing system and an effective inspection system. The member for MacDonnell has raised a number of serious concerns in respect of 2 specific examples and he also quoted from reports. I hope the member realises that I have not learnt shorthand and, therefore, I was unable to keep a record of all the points that he made. Suffice it to say that most related to 2 issues: the standard of workmanship and whether any works were done in contravention of the Building Code, and whether subsequent inspections failed to reveal those violations.

Unfortunately, the member failed to advise us whether those matters were raised with the department or whether objections had been made. I simply do not know whether there has been a failure to follow up or if the matters had been referred to the department. However, rather than deal with the specifics, allow me to deal with the fundamental question that has been brought before this Assembly today.

I will deal first with the issue of effective builders' licensing. I am certain that the member for Millner - who, we have been forewarned, will give us the solution - will say that the government should introduce either a builders' licensing or a builders' registration system. He will go on to say that we should introduce an appropriate insurance scheme. I am presupposing that on the basis of press statements made by the member for Millner in February this year about standards of workmanship, particularly in relation to a very bad example in his own electorate where water penetrated a single-skin building.

Mr Smith: Have you resolved it?

Mr HATTON: I will deal with that in a moment too. The simple fact is that there is no evidence to support the view that licensing or registration of builders will go any way towards resolving the fundamental problems raised by the member for MacDonnell. Certainly, we can implement a system which stipulates that builders must have formal qualifications in respect of a trade or a certificate of completion of a building supervision course, but that would reduce dramatically the number of builders in the Northern Territory to almost none. Most qualified builders have trade qualifications or, conversely, they are companies whose principals do not themselves have trade qualifications but who employ qualified tradesmen and supervisors. It is an interesting bureaucratic exercise to work your way through that.

Nonetheless, let us assume that a person has the appropriate trade qualifications, obtains registration or a licence and constructs a building. Supposing that, in this hypothetical example, the purchaser is dissatisfied with the quality of workmanship or believes that the standard is below that which the builder contracted to provide, and the owner then seeks to have the builder correct that. If the builder denies responsibility or denies the claim, what action can that person take? The person may decide to take the matter up elsewhere or request government inspection which is possible now without registration or licensing. However, what if the builder still refuses to rectify the situation?

Mr Leo: He has his licence taken off him.

Mr HATTON: Mr Speaker, the member for Nhulunbuy says that he would have his licence revoked. The fact is that that tends not to be the case. We have some statistical evidence to support that view, which I will draw on later. There would have to be some sort of a legal process because the builder has a right to be heard too. It may be through an arbitral tribunal, an administrative tribunal or through the court system. As a contracting party, the builder has a right to put his case. The fact is that a person would still have to go to court.

In the Northern Territory, a person contracts to have a home constructed. He then submits his plans to the building controller who inspects those plans to ensure they are in accordance with the Building Code, a code that was approved by this Assembly in 1983 without any question about its adequacy. That is then checked and the plans approved. Construction is then required to be carried out in accordance with those plans. The responsibility of government is to ensure that our laws are enforced; that is, that the Building Code is complied with in the construction of dwellings. Our inspectorial role is to ensure that the standards of the Building Code are met.

Mr Speaker, I offer another example. Suppose people are in the market for a house. One contracts for the construction of a 12-square home of single-skin concrete block at a cost of \$50 000. The other person similarly contracts for the construction of a 12-square house of single-skin concrete block, but at a price of \$70 000. Would you assume, Mr Speaker, that the person contracting for a \$50 000 home would obtain the same standard of accommodation as somebody who is paying \$70 000? You would not. The fact is that, when you enter into a contract, you receive what you pay for. Many people choose, for whatever reason, to accept a lower standard of construction than others who have the capacity to pay considerably more for a significantly higher standard of construction. I do not suggest that that should mean that the work can be carried out in a non-tradesmanlike manner but I do say - and this is a fundamental problem with inspection and supervision - that, if you are requiring government to carry out inspection and supervision of individual contracts between 2 consenting parties who may have differing understanding about the standards, how is a government official to act as the arbiter of the various standards that can apply depending on the nature of the particular contractual relationship? We are not talking about supervision to police the Building Code or the structural standards of the building in accordance with the approved plans; we are now talking about the quality of the paint, the standard of fittings and a multitude of other matters that do not relate to the specific approvals for which we are required to carry out inspections. The opposition is asking that we be required to supervise the contract, to take the place of the principal in the contract and to supervise an individual contract on behalf of the principal, the eventual home-owner. Apart from that not being a function of government, it is fraught with danger and considerable expense.

If we were to do that, I would have no choice, as a responsible minister, but to insist that the principal would have to pay for the cost of that supervision. The capacity exists already for a particular principal to have that supervision, be that through the prime builder or through consulting engineers or architects who provide that service. Most people do not take advantage of it because it costs money. If we did it, we would have to charge people or add substantially to the taxpayers' bill to look after people's personal affairs.

I do not believe that is an appropriate course of action for the government to adopt. Our job is to ensure that we alert people to what they should take into account and, having alerted them, give them every opportunity to protect themselves from what can be a difficult situation. We can advise them on what they should be doing to protect what is probably the major investment they will make in their life. It is not the sort of investment that one would logically expect a person to make without giving consideration to the past performance of the person he is contracting with. It relates to substantial sums of money and serious consideration must be given to contractual conditions, particularly the protections that are contained therein.

In fact, we provide considerable information and support through the Department of Lands. Literature and other documentation is available to potential home-owners. I quote a note which goes on the back of the building approval:

'Important notice to home builders and important points to consider before you start. Have you selected a reputable builder? The Master Builders Association Home Ownership Plan Centre can assist. When considering quotes from builders, are any of the quotes considerably less than others? If so, why? Remember quality may vary with price. You are strongly advised to use a suitable specification such as the SSI Standards Specification produced by the Master Builders Association. You are strongly advised to use a suitable form of building contract and particular attention should be paid to the provisions within the contract concerning payment, deposits, progress payments, final payment, retention money, extras and variations, commencement and completion dates, including extensions of time, and the provisions concerning the resolution of disputes and the quality of workmanship, defects, liabilities and arbitration. If necessary, you should engage a competent consultant to assist you. Do not rely on verbal agreements or undertakings; misunderstanding can too easily occur'.

Mr Speaker, that is provided to the person when he receives his building approval. We are alerting people to the problems. There is a standard form contract available through the Master Builders Association and we recommend to every home builder that he take advantage of that contract. That contract is the protection. It can also provide for retention moneys. In fact, we know many people do obtain those contracts and then allow most of their rights to be scrubbed out by lines being put through conditions and signed away. After the event, we are asked to clean up their mess.

People making investments of this size should accept some semblance of responsibility for their actions. We are doing everything within our power to bring to their attention the protective measures they should take and we will continue to do that. In fact, I have asked the Department of Lands in the last month and a half to approach all of the financial institutions in the Northern Territory - the Housing Commission, banks, insurance companies and finance companies - that enter into home finance mortgages to see if we can persuade them to insist on a standard form contract and the provision of retention moneys for maintenance periods at the completion of the contract so that they can protect their mortgage investment and also protect the consumer. That would save considerable cost to the taxpayer. It would ensure effectively that, when things do go wrong, as the member for MacDonnell has outlined, they can be corrected by means of the contract.

Mr Bell: The Elstons have to cop it sweet?

Mr HATTON: In fact, the Elstons do not necessarily have to cop it sweet. Mr Speaker, I may just quickly note that I myself have been caught out. I am a mug like the Elstons. When entering into a contract for a home, I got my fingers burned by not following the instructions. I have taken that sweet. I have not complained about the government. I said: 'Well, you are pretty dumb, Steve. You should not have done that'. I learnt my lesson, I can assure you. Certainly, I sympathise with the Elstons because I know the problems. Legal protections are available unless a company has gone bankrupt, and that is a particular problem. If a company is in existence, there are remedies available through the courts, particularly in respect of breach of contract for work carried out in a non-tradesmanlike manner. That is an implied condition of contract that can be followed. In fact, Mr Speaker, that is how I won my case in court. The only trouble was the company went into liquidation and I still did not get any money. The point is that there are legal remedies available to people. Perhaps I can advise the honourable member later.

Mr Speaker, I am running out of time to deal with the other issue of inspection. Allow me to remind the honourable member of a statement issued in January this year by the Secretary of the Department of Lands in respect of upgrading inspectorial activities. This was before any complaints had been raised. I had a general concern to try to tighten up inspectorial activities. In-house training of building inspectors has been extended to cover non-structural as well as structural aspects. Training seminars have been arranged recently with the cooperation of manufacturers to improve the inspectors' understanding of manufacturers' recommendations with regard to the installation of materials. In particular, I note Wormald International on fire-rated materials and James Hardie on the installation of water-resistant plastic boards as well as other Hardie products. The focus of the inspection checklist currently being used by the building inspectors is being expanded to encompass non-structural aspects, including weather-proofing which was not included.

A building inspector has been given the task of carrying out spot checks of building sites to ensure satisfactory building practices are being observed. That is effectively a flying squad to avoid the allegations of somebody carrying out an inspection and the work being later removed and replaced with below-standard materials.

Home ownership guides have been improved and we are pressing the building inspectors not just to carry out a specific inspection but rather to carry out a global inspection at each stage, checking the building as a whole. There has been a tendency for inspectors to look at a particular aspect, such as the reinforcing of the pads or the insertion of bolts, leaving open the possibility that work would later be left undone. We now have follow-ups and a more global approach at each stage of the inspections. We also have a submission before us to upgrade the qualifications of building inspectors to the nationally-accepted standard.

Mr SMITH (Millner): Mr Speaker, we have definitely been here before on this particular matter. Unfortunately, we do not seem to have made much progress. It is interesting that, in the Northern Territory, we license electrical workers and contractors, and plumbers and drainers. In other words, we license the people who put the power on and we license the people who put the water on but, for some strange reason that I do not understand, we

are not prepared to license the people who build the house. Much more money is spent on the construction of a house than on putting the water and the power on. It just does not make much sense to me.

We would hope and expect that all builders in the Northern Territory share a genuine concern for workmanship. But we are not talking about minor matters in relation to workmanship; we are talking about workmanship which violates the Building Code and workmanship that is so bad that some people are unable to occupy their house after the contract is completed and have to spend thousands of dollars to remedy faults. That is what concerns us. The industry wants builders' registration, the home buyers want builders' registration and the government's own working party recommended builders' registration. Most of the states of Australia have builders' registration. However, for some reason that I do not understand, the Northern Territory government is not prepared to follow the advice given to it by interested groups.

The Minister for Lands said that the home buyer does not expect the work on a \$70 000 house to be as good as that on a \$50 000 house. I would have to dispute that as a matter of logic. In terms of the workmanship and fulfilment of the contract, the purchaser of a \$50 000 should expect to obtain exactly as good a job as if he were buying a \$70 000 house. I do not disagree with the Minister for Lands that people ought to be more aware when they do business with builders. They ought to look very carefully at contracts. I think the minister's own experience of building a house, which happened before he entered this Assembly, is a perfect example of the problems of consumers. The consumer is dealing with builders who build houses every day of the week. For the consumer, it is a one-off job and one cannot expect him to have the same expertise as the builder in terms of negotiating and enforcing the contract. The builder often relies on legal advice.

The balance is tipped against the consumer and the government has recognised that in relation to other matters. If you buy a motor vehicle, you are protected for a period, depending on whether it is a new or a used vehicle. Yesterday, we introduced legislation relating to cigarette warnings; we accept that consumers need guidance in that respect. We have protection from door-to-door salesmen in that there is a cooling-off period. However, when it comes to the most important purchase that most people will ever make, we offer them no protection at all.

Mr Speaker, the key point has been forgotten by the Minister for Lands: what responsibility does the government have to ensure that builders meet their obligations? We have had too many instances where builders have not met their obligations and where the home purchaser has suffered unduly. In our view, there have been so many examples that there is an undeniable case for the government to intervene and to ensure that there is greater protection for the home buyer.

In relation to the Elston example, the minister wrote to the member for MacDonnell and said: 'The matter of workmanship is one between the contracting parties for the building and it would be inappropriate for the Department of Lands to intervene'. The minister went on to acknowledge, however begrudgingly, that a roof inspection was not carried out. He further stated: 'While it is a desirable common practice for the Department of Lands to carry out inspections, these inspections are not mandatory'.

This raises 2 points. I would not have thought that an inspection of the roof - an essential part of the house - could be classed as a workmanship issue alone, one that could be safely omitted if the building inspectors were busy. A roof inspection falls quite clearly within the requirements of the Building Code, whether it is in Alice Springs or Darwin. I quote what the independent consultant found wrong with the roof:

'There were gaps between the underside of the roof sheets to fascia, allowing birds, wind and dust to penetrate roof space, plus allowing wind and dust to penetrate into the kitchen via the oven access'.

That is more than the workmanship, Mr Speaker; it is a failure by the builder to meet the requirements of the Building Code. That is what we are talking about. Too often, builders in the Northern Territory have not met the requirements of the code. If the inspections are not mandatory, why do we have the Building Code and why do we have inspectors? It is an absolutely absurd proposition to have the Building Code and building inspectors and not have mandatory inspections. The minister's letter continued:

'A temporary staffing shortage precluded the roofing inspection in Mr Elston's case. However, all other inspections were carried out, and the builder's established reputation in Alice Springs gave no reason for the department not to issue a certificate of completion'.

The minister says 'all other inspections were carried out'. I am very reluctant to criticise building inspectors because I realise they do a difficult job, but how could the building inspectors who carried out 'all other inspections' have done their job properly if an independent assessor was able to give detailed reports of 37 faults in that house? In that case, the building inspection system clearly had not worked.

While we are on the subject of certificates of completion, perhaps someone in the government could tell me how a block of 11 flats in Northlakes could be given a certificate of completion before a permit to build was issued? That happened within the last 2 years. Astounding, is it not? Surely it would have been simple, before a completion certificate was given, for the inspector to ensure that the house was complete. If he had actually gone out on the date the documents were supposed to be signed, he would have found the house was unlockable and there was no glass in the front window. That is just for starters.

We have concentrated on 2 particular houses in this debate but there are others of course. I am informed that, in Mr Elston's street, on 1 or 2 occasions, insurance companies have refused to insure houses which had certificates of completion because the certificates had been given before the houses had reached lock-up stage. Something is seriously wrong and needs addressing.

In his letter responding to the member for MacDonnell's comments, the minister said: 'I have no power to prevent any builder from pursuing his trade in the Northern Territory'. That, of course, is precisely the point of this exercise. We are saying, the public is saying, the builders are saying and the states have said that the minister should have such a power. He should have power to remove from the industry builders who cannot perform and to ensure that we have an adequate flow of apprentices through the building trade by giving them the certainty that, when they complete their training, they will not have to compete against any fly-by-nighter who wants to operate off

the back of a truck. Not only are we making it difficult for the consumer to ensure he obtains a good product, we are putting into jeopardy the standards that we expect in the building industry because we are providing no incentive for young people to take up apprenticeships and become qualified and licensed builders.

We are not talking about workmanship; we are talking about the establishment of procedures that will assist and enable house-owners and house-builders to be sure that their buildings comply with the Building Code. The Minister for Lands has said that, if one is not happy, one can go to the courts. Let me just tell members about the Turners, the Darwin couple. They have been involved in a dispute with their builder since 1982. It has cost them \$16 000 to rebuild their house after paying out \$40 000 to get a proper house. It has cost them another \$10 000 in legal fees and the matter is not yet in court.

That is how effective the court system is at protecting the interests of these people. It has put them through 4 years of hell. It has put them in a situation where not only have they had to take out a second mortgage, but also a third mortgage. Yet this government can sit here and say: 'That is too bad. They should have been more careful. It is their fault'. It is not their fault! It is the fault of the system. The system does not allow a consumer to seek redress in a proper manner without becoming involved in lengthy and costly litigation. It is an essential point of our argument that there is a better and easier way that would protect the interests both of builders and consumers: the establishment of a licensing system.

Mr FINCH (Wagaman): Mr Speaker, I have listened closely to both honourable members from the opposition in the hope that there might be some constructive advice or even a substantiation of why this should be raised as a matter of public importance. But, it was to no avail. I should say from the outset that, although I welcome the interest of members opposite, I know darned well that I will not be able to educate them in a 15-minute period. However, I would be quite happy to sit with them later and to go through the whole scenario, the licensing options and other related aspects, because I am quite sure that they need some valuable assistance.

Mr Bell: That would be much more interesting.

Mr FINCH: I listened to the member for MacDonnell. He was so short on examples that he could illustrate only one matter of real concern in Alice Springs. He had to reconstitute...

Mr Bell: I only had 20 minutes.

Mr FINCH:...the exact example which the member for Millner gave us back in March last year. It was word for word almost. That is how concerned he is about the matter. I will illustrate their lack of knowledge and understanding of these matters. I am quite happy to assist them after this debate is finished.

Two examples have been raised. One relates to Alice Springs. Certainly, we all understand the problem and the government is sympathetic. But let us have some constructive advice on solutions. We did not hear whether the example in Alice Springs had been resolved or was likely to be resolved. We did not hear whether the people entered into some sort of contract written on the back of a cigarette packet. There was concern about a ceiling fan

collapsing. Electricians in the Territory must be licensed, but did that prevent that problem? No, it did not. What we have are serious problems which arise from time to time, not just here but throughout Australia. The honourable member for Millner referred to the purchase of motor vehicles. The certificate of compliance that the purchaser receives does not guarantee anything other than that the basic safety requirements for that motor vehicle have been met. It does not guarantee that the upholstery has not been ripped or that the radio works.

Another example was the plumbing in a house in Darwin. Plumbers are licensed already. Did that prevent the problem? It did not. What we have to do is examine the problem and ascertain practical and reasonable methods of addressing it. This government is doing that.

Mr B. Collins: Tell us how.

Mr FINCH: I will get to that.

Mr Speaker, as I illustrated, there a number of matters to be considered here. Quite simply, it is the purchaser's right to opt for a less expensive, lower-quality product or an uncertain product, but the risk must be identified and made known to him. Matters that will affect quality control start with Building Branch procedures and proper specifications. If people want to pay for substandard documentation, then certainly they should be aware of what they are buying. People have the option of utilising the free services of the Building Branch through its inspection branch. In fact, the owners not only have the opportunity but the responsibility lies with them to call for regular inspections. These are laid down clearly in the guidelines that are given to people when they are considering building and certainly when they receive their permit. If they are not happy with the free services of the Building Branch, they are able to go to a private consultant.

Most disputes relate to the contracts. Once again, the minister illustrated quite clearly that the Building Branch takes a very responsible attitude and tries to steer people into using standard contracts. People who take it upon themselves to alter the standard documentation, or not utilise it, certainly should be aware that they do so at their own risk. If a person proposes to spend \$60 000 or \$40 000 on a new house, one would assume that the least he should do is to take an interest in the requirements and suggestions that are available.

We have heard examples of problems in regard to construction. What we have not heard is any practical suggestion as to how the problems might be resolved. Other states have builders' licensing systems, as was indicated by the member, but those systems have been found not to work. What is happening in New South Wales? The general public pays \$11.5m per annum to prop up a bureaucratic system to administer the licensing not only of the builders but of excavators, demolishers, painters and decorators and miscellaneous tradesmen. All this has achieved is to set up a closed shop of tradesmen and builders. This occurred also in South Australia in early 1985. There was a very slight upturn in the building market there, but they were locked into licensing procedures. They did not have sufficient builders on the ground and they could not license them quickly enough. The result was an overnight 11% increase in building costs. After Cyclone Tracy, we did not have enough builders in Darwin. This inflated building costs by about 60%. Supply and demand is what it is all about.

The opposition's proposals would lead to the locking out of a great many local builders. Some builders' interests would be promoted, but not all builders would like to see the advent of licensing. I am quite sure the opposition wants to lock out many of these very well-respected local business people, people from Kalymnos and Italy and other places, who have come here with their trades. Most of them certainly would not be able to meet the requirements of licensing which would include, as they do interstate, fairly sophisticated matters requiring a considerable command of English. Is the member opposite suggesting that we should wipe out 60% of the local builders for the sake of the honoured few in a closed shop arrangement? Will that not add another \$5000 to \$8000 to the cost of every home built in Darwin?

While we are talking about costs, let us talk about the cost of the licensing itself. Setting it up would probably cost about \$1m, given that it cost \$11.7m in New South Wales. That is \$1m to set up another bureaucracy to cover licensing, inspection and legal aspects. South Australia has 6 lawyers engaged full-time on disputes over licensing. New South Wales has a total of 14 people in its legal section. Someone has to pay, and that will be the home builder and the home purchaser. With 1200 homes built each year in the Northern Territory, that would be \$1000 per house.

The total number of disputes about house building, including renovations, is about 30 each year - 1 in 40. In New South Wales, they have encouraged the whinger. In that state, 1 in 7 home builders goes whingeing to the Builders' Licensing Board claiming to have been hard done by. Most people are hard done by because of their own mismanagement, despite the fact that the Building Branch gives them sound advice. If they then ignore that advice, who is to prop them up? The member for Millner expects us to hold their hand and go through the inspection procedures with them. That would add \$1000 to administration costs and there would be another \$500 to \$1000 to cover insurance. Most licensing procedures have insurance, almost solely to cover bankruptcy. Bankruptcy cases certainly are of concern to people. The problem should be addressed specifically and not tied in with some bulky bureaucratic exercise. People should be free to choose to spend or not to spend that \$500 or \$1000. They have to be sure that they want to pay an extra \$5000 to \$8000 for their house, in a closed-shop situation which would exclude half of our well-respected Greek builders. I would like to see the member for Millner address the next Kalymnian gathering to explain his position. Even with this total expenditure of \$8000 to \$10 000, what actually would be achieved? The product would still not be guaranteed!

What is required is quite simple: proper specification and proper supervision by people who are able to ensure quality - that is, utilisation of all facilities available already from the Building Branch and all facilities that might be available through a professional, at a cost ranging from \$1000 to \$4000. In that situation, you would have some guarantee of product. If not, you could sue the professionals. It is simple.

The options are: licensing and setting up a closed shop; setting up a simple insurance system against bankruptcy; or implementing a proper contractual system whereby people would be almost forced to go to the finance companies. Most situations would be covered by those options. Maybe the imposition of a contractual system is the way to go. These are constructive suggestions. We have had none of them from members opposite. It should be noted that the opportunity is there, not only for them but for other people, to put submissions to a new committee of inquiry which has been instituted by the Minister for Community Development in relation to consumer affairs

matters. I have already earmarked some of the matters I commented on earlier. If honourable members are so intent on looking after the interests of home buyers and builders in the Northern Territory, they could contribute to that inquiry. They failed to contribute to an earlier inquiry that the Building Branch ran.

Put simply, what has been put forward to date is a rehash of old whinges and complaints. This government is providing an adequate service on behalf of the public to ensure that it is well aware of the pitfalls and the means of overcoming those pitfalls. We have a Building Branch that has a higher ratio of inspectors to population or houses built than anywhere else in Australia. We have 9 inspectors in Darwin. We now have a fully-manned office in Katherine and we have 1 inspector in Alice Springs. People have access to any number of consultants who could assist them. Most of the services provided by the government are free. Even before people start building, they can go to the Building Branch to seek advice on procedures. They can even inquire about progress payments during construction. This government has already put in place procedures to ensure that people are protected.

The matter of public importance raised relates to protecting reputable builders as well as home buyers. That is probably the only true aspect of it - not so much reputable builders, but the closed-shop boys. This government is determined to work in the interests of every Territorian. It wants to ensure that unnecessary costs are not imposed on people. It is concerned also with minimising bureaucracy. We know what bureaucracy has done in the states. This government is about free enterprise and about looking after the interests of the people in the best possible manner.

TABLED PAPER

Letter from Westpac to Chief Minister

Mr HATTON (Lands) (by leave): Mr Speaker, I table a facsimile letter from Mr A.B. Cowan, Group Executive Manager, Westpac Banking Corporation, Brisbane, to the Chief Minister dated 19 March 1986. Attached to it is a 'with compliments' slip from the Westpac Banking Corporation, Darwin. The name typed on it is Lyal MacIntosh, Regional Manager.

Mr Speaker, I seek leave of the Assembly for you to take that letter into account in your deliberations on the matter of privilege raised by the Leader of the Opposition.

Leave granted.

ESSENTIAL GOODS AND SERVICES AMENDMENT BILL (Serial 171)

Bill presented and read a first time.

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

Mr Speaker, the Essential Goods and Services Act provides for the control and management of prescribed goods or services during periods of shortage. The act has been invoked twice to date. On both occasions, fuel supplies became sufficiently low to require regulation of supply. Section 5 of the act provides that the Administrator may declare that a shortage of specified goods or services exists if he is satisfied that their supply is or could become less than sufficient for the reasonable requirements of the community.

Section 7 of the act provides that, when the Administrator's declaration of shortage is gazetted, the minister may, by instrument in writing, take such action as he thinks fit to ensure that the goods or services are available and, further, that they are used in a manner calculated best to service the interests of the community. The minister's powers in this regard include issuing written directions, prohibitions and requisitions.

Section 16 of the act presently requires that the minister's directions, prohibitions or requisitions must be served personally or by registered post. At times of fuel emergencies, this is an extremely cumbersome requirement. During the last fuel shortage, the minister was required to issue approximately 70 individual directions to oil companies and service station proprietors. The present position is undesirable and it is considered necessary to amend the act in order that the administrative burden of issuing ministerial directions etc at short notice during an emergency is reduced to a minimum.

Mr Speaker, this bill will remove the requirement for personal service by amending section 16 of the act. The effect of the amendments will be to deem publication in the gazette to be sufficient service with respect to a person or specified class of persons. I would point out, however, that the existing provisions for personal service will remain. The amendment will therefore provide an option which the government could exercise in times of emergency where large numbers of distributors are involved. It should also be noted that sections 42 and 43 of the Interpretation Act give authority for a notice to be restricted in effect to defined geographical areas.

Mr Speaker, an example of the net effects of the amendments on the existing provisions of the Interpretation Act would be to allow the minister in times of a fuel shortage in Katherine, for example, to issue, by a simple gazettal notice, a direction to the owners, operators and employees of each service station in Katherine to regulate fuel supplies.

I point out to honourable members that it is also proposed to exclude the operation of section 30(3) of the Criminal Code. This provision is designed to protect the public against conviction for breach of provisions contained in little-known statutory instruments not subject to closer parliamentary scrutiny. However, in this case, it is likely that section 30(3) could provide a technical defence against that prosecution. Mr Speaker, in the present instance, the public interest will not be adversely affected by the exclusion. Any restrictions imposed will be known as it is proposed, as an administrative measure, to ensure that the restrictions receive adequate media coverage. In any event, it is in the nature of things for headline treatment to be accorded to the implementation of restrictive measures affecting the supply of essential goods and services to the public. A further safeguard is contained in section 13 of the Essential Goods and Services Act. This section provides that prosecutions under the act cannot be commenced without the written authority of the minister.

Finally, I wish to emphasise that the proposed amendment will not supplant the existing provisions for individual advice or direction to be provided to suppliers in times of declared shortages. Such individual advice will continue to be given except in the most dire circumstances. Prosecution will be undertaken only in cases of blatant disregard of directions given under the act. I commend the bill to honourable members.

Debate adjourned.

DENTAL BILL
(Serial 158)

Continued from 21 November 1985.

Mr LANHUPUY (Arnhem): Mr Speaker, I wish to advise that the opposition does not oppose this bill. This legislation will replace the Dentists' Registration Act of 1953. The opposition believes that the existing legislation is certainly in need of review. The bill appears to have been developed in consultation with the Australian Dental Association and the existing Dental Board. The bill provides the Dental Board with various powers and functions, including authorisation and registration of practitioners, setting conditions of registration and issuing directions for the conduct of the profession. It is also responsible for the prosecution of offences under the legislation.

Registration will give full protection to practitioner groups such as dental hygienists, dental specialists, dental therapists and dentists. Registration is at the board's discretion only and there is no requirement for it to give reasons for its decision. When registration is authorised, a practising certificate will be issued which will be renewed annually. The opposition welcomes the much-needed updating of the act.

Mr DALE (Wanguri): Mr Speaker, a major feature of this legislation is recognition for Aboriginal health workers. The Health Practitioners and Allied Professions Registration Act, which commences on 17 March 1986, provides for the registration of Aboriginal health workers. This bill will enable those Aboriginal health workers who have gained basic skills in dentistry to practise certain dental skills. These specifically-trained workers are allowed to provide services to relieve pain and prevent tooth decay. The work they are allowed to do is detailed in schedule 3 of the bill and will surely improve the quality of life of a large number of people.

The Aboriginal health workers have received training in dental techniques through the aegis of the Department of Health and therefore can be identified by the Chief Medical Officer who can then give his approval to the Aboriginal health worker to practise preventative dental care and emergency relief of pain under clause 44(1)(c) of the bill.

Clause 18(2) provides that the minister may specify a part of the Northern Territory where an Aboriginal health worker may not practise. That negative tack in the drafting of the bill has been made simply because there are far too many areas to list where in fact they may practise. The clause is a draftsman's solution to the requirement that an Aboriginal health worker practise dentistry within his own community. It is not the government's intention that Aboriginal health workers will practise dentistry outside rural areas. However, the difficulty in defining an Aboriginal community legally is understood by all members. It is not envisaged that an Aboriginal health worker would seek to practise outside his own community. However, if that were to be the case, and he moved from his community to seek to establish a dental practice in competition with a fully-qualified dental practitioner, then the provisions of this clause would be invoked. It is hoped that the action will never be required. I commend the bill.

Mr EDE (Stuart): Mr Speaker, I rise to support this bill. I would like to raise a concern that I have with what was said by the previous speaker regarding areas within which people can work. During my period as Director of

the Central Australian Aboriginal Congress, we set up a dental section in that organisation. We had dental health workers working there assisting the dentist. At one stage, a person who had been training as a dental assistant at Yuendumu came to work for us. That person showed very real skill in dentistry. In fact, I went to him to do some work on my own teeth once when we were particularly short of dentists in Alice Springs. He was excellent. It worries me that there is a possibility of dispute over a person's ability to obtain registration under this bill. I hope that the broadest interpretation of a community will apply so that a person working in an Aboriginal organisation which is set up primarily to service the Aboriginal community in an urban area will be acceptable under this legislation.

It is obvious that the legislation was in need of review. This legislation has been drawn up in consultation with the Australian Dental Association and the existing Dental Board. I am particularly pleased to see that the provisions applying to the registration of Aboriginal health workers are being extended to cover dental workers. This recognition is long overdue. There are now trained dental health workers who are carrying out basic procedures. This delivery of paramedical services in the Aboriginal communities overcomes a fairly major culture gap. It overcomes problems in actual delivery because often it is very difficult for fully-qualified people in the Department of Health to go out bush to carry out the service. In the past, it has meant that people in rural areas have received a second-class service.

I hope that this legislation will redress some of that imbalance. Obviously, it will not be completely redressed until we have a professional service able to provide equality of service to urban and rural areas. But at least this move can be seen as a step in the right direction. For that reason, I commend the bill.

Mr PALMER (Leanyer): Mr Deputy Speaker, as someone who has had a long interest in dental matters, though rapidly diminishing with every visit, I rise to commend this bill. In doing so, I think attention should be drawn to the fact that the current act does not include the power to make regulations. Clause 53 allows the Administrator to make regulations specifically to regulate the professional conduct of registered persons in the practice of dentistry. It should be stressed that, even if regulations are not made, the board may inquire into the professional conduct of persons registered under this bill.

Part IV deals with the questions of discipline by the board. The Dentists Disciplinary Tribunal established by clause 32 is similar to that provided in the Health Practitioners and Allied Professionals Act.

Dental health over the years has been of great concern to many people. Aboriginal dental health workers will go a long way towards alleviating dental problems in Aboriginal communities. I would be the first to seek the assistance of one of those persons if I had a toothache at a place like Yuendumu.

People's attitudes towards dental health have changed dramatically in the last 30 years. By way of illustration, I have a copy of a Centralian Advocate from 1952. Here is an advertisement featuring a smiling, toothy, 10-year-old boy who is about to have his teeth demolished. The little lad is saying: 'Gee whiz, the dentist told my mum I should chew Juicy Fruit'. Underneath it says: 'Healthful Juicy Fruit polishes teeth, helps develop growing jaws,

keeps up the good work of the toothbrush all day'. If that were to appear in the Central Australian Advocate of 19 March 1986, I am sure the opposition spokesman on health and the opposition spokesmen on everything would be jumping up and down. Our Minister for Health would certainly have things to say. I think the Trade Practices Commission would be interested. However, Mr Deputy Speaker, I commend the bill to honourable members.

Mr HANRAHAN (Health): Mr Deputy Speaker, I thank members for their comments. Just to allay the fears of the member for Stuart, in using the power that I have to gazette restricted areas, it is certainly not my intention to overlook those urban populations such as Alice Springs or Tennant Creek which are served by independent health services nor to restrict Aboriginal dental workers from performing their duties with those services. I commend the bill.

Motion agreed to; bill read a second time.

In committee:

Clauses 1 to 4 agreed to.

Clause 5:

Mr HANRAHAN: Mr Chairman, I move amendment 63.1.

This amendment provides that the Secretary of the Department of Health shall be the chairman of the Dental Board. Previously, this clause did not require the secretary to be a member of the board. The clause as it stands provides only that the senior dental officer of the department will be a member of the board. It is considered appropriate that this board conform with the requirements of the majority of other boards, and that the chairman shall be the secretary of the department. The next 5 amendments relate to the same matter.

Amendment agreed to.

Mr HANRAHAN: Mr Chairman, I move amendment 63.2.

Amendment agreed to.

Mr HANRAHAN: Mr Chairman, I move amendment 63.3.

Amendment agreed to.

Clause 5, as amended, agreed to.

Clause 6 agreed to.

Clause 7:

Mr HANRAHAN: Mr Chairman, I move amendment 63.4.

Amendment agreed to.

Clause 7, as amended, agreed to.

Clauses 8 to 17 agreed to.

Clause 18:

Mr HANRAHAN: Mr Chairman, I move amendment 63.5.

In the expression 'under the supervision of a dentist', we are inserting between 'the' and 'supervision', 'direct or indirect'. It will therefore read: 'under the direct or indirect supervision of a dentist'. This is done to accommodate the wishes of the Australian Dental Association.

Amendment agreed to.

Clause 18, as amended, agreed to.

Clause 19:

Mr HANRAHAN: Mr Chairman, I move amendment 63.6.

This will correct a typographical omission in clause 19(2). After the word 'restriction', the word 'until' is to be inserted.

Amendment agreed to.

Clause 19, as amended, agreed to.

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

Bill passed remaining stages without debate.

POLICE ADMINISTRATION AMENDMENT BILL
(Serial 157)

Continued from 21 November 1985.

Mr LEO (Nhulunbuy): Mr Deputy Speaker, the bill replaces references to 'Sergeant First Class' with the words 'Senior Sergeant'. This is because the ranks of Sergeants First, Second and Third Class have been replaced by a 2-tiered ranking structure: Senior Sergeant and Sergeant. One reason for this change was that the middle rank had created a bottleneck in promotions to the highest class of Sergeant First Class. There were only a small number of second-class positions and no Sergeant Third Class could directly become a Sergeant First Class. This approach to selection, by seniority rather than efficiency, is against the general philosophy of the government and, I am sure, the Commissioner of Police. The rank of Sergeant Second Class is thus abolished because of its effect on the administration of the police force. Officers currently holding that rank will continue to do so until they vacate it through termination, promotion or demotion. The necessary amendments to the regulations, giving effect to the change in ranks, were gazetted on 11 December last year.

The Police Association supports these amendments in principle. I understand that there are some problems associated with the means by which this is to be achieved, particularly the preservation of rights and rank for current Sergeants Second Class. As I understand it, negotiations are being held between the association and the minister. If the negotiations have been concluded, I ask the Chief Minister to indicate that in his reply to the second-reading debate. If not, I hope that they are concluded successfully. With those few comments, Mr Deputy Speaker, I indicate the opposition's support for this amendment.

Mr DALE (Wanguri): Mr Deputy Speaker, I would like to speak briefly on this bill because, as a past member of a couple of police forces, I can understand the impact that this will have on some of the members. I certainly support the abolition of Sergeant Second Class for the reasons given in the Chief Minister's second-reading speech and repeated by the member for Nhulunbuy.

I must say, however, that the change will cause some heartache for a small number of members of the police force. They are the 15 who now hold the rank of Sergeant Second Class. One of those sergeants has his 25th anniversary in the Northern Territory Police Force coming up very shortly. He has been a very good and faithful worker within the ranks of the Northern Territory Police Force, a person who is deserving of all consideration. I remember the situation in the Victorian Police Force when the rank of Station Sergeant was abolished. A couple of the older brigade, who were maintaining that rank through to retirement or resignation, found themselves put away into little pockets and given mundane jobs simply because their outdated rank caused them to be something of an embarrassment in so far as the pecking order was concerned. This happened in relation to distributing jobs and allocating levels of responsibility. One way of avoiding that problem here would be to promote the 15 men to Senior Sergeant. That would cause some problems also. I hope that, in the administration of this change in rank structure, consideration will be given to the 15 people who maintain the position of Sergeant Second Class and that their welfare in no way will be affected by the change.

Mr SETTER (Jingili): Mr Deputy Speaker, in rising to speak to this bill, I would like to pay tribute to the Northern Territory Police Force. Over the last 5 or 6 years, I have had the opportunity to meet many officers of the Northern Territory Police Force. This has happened because my son is a police officer. I have met these fellows socially and have had the opportunity to discuss their work in general terms with them. I have nothing but admiration for the way in which they approach their jobs. They are truly professional people who often work under extremely difficult circumstances. They deal with a whole range of problems in the community and I do not need to name them today because I am sure members are all very familiar with them. They work throughout the Northern Territory, not only in places like Darwin, Alice Springs, Tennant Creek and Katherine, but out at Yuendumu, Hooker Creek, Groote Eylandt and other remote places where there are many difficulties from time to time. They have an extremely difficult task.

I was very pleased to see the setting up of the cadet system 5 or 6 years ago. This system was introduced to solve a number of our recruitment problems. Regrettably, it has been discontinued this year. But the commissioner has told me that, hopefully, the deferment will be temporary.

However, let me come to the point of the bill. For some time, the Northern Territory Police Force has had a 3-tiered structure for promotion through the ranks of sergeant. At the date of introduction of this bill, there were 94 Sergeants Third Class and 15 Sergeants Second Class. I am not aware of the number of Sergeants First Class. However, one could safely assume that there are fewer than 15. Although there is a high turnover of police officers in the Northern Territory, this mainly occurs within the lower ranks. Officers holding the rank of Sergeant Third Class and upwards seem to be less inclined to look for greener pastures. As the ranks go higher, the attrition rate declines. This has the result of creating a bottleneck, particularly at the ranks of Sergeant Second Class and Sergeant Third Class.

Because of limited opportunities, officers in these ranks can remain at the same level for a number of years regardless of their abilities. This bill seeks to eliminate the rank of Sergeant Second Class and restructure the ranks to allow for a 2-tiered structure - Senior Sergeant and Sergeant. This will serve to allow for promotion directly to Senior Sergeant from the lower rank based on ability and not necessarily seniority. While doing this, it will preserve the existing rank of Sergeant Second Class so as not to disadvantage those who currently hold that rank. This situation will continue until all those officers retire, resign or are promoted.

Mr Deputy Speaker, the policy of this government is that people should be promoted on their merits. Under the existing system, promotion is determined by seniority in many cases. I understand there have also been cases of members working in specialist areas achieving rapid promotion over officers employed in other areas.

Since the introduction of this bill, I have discussed the abolition of the rank of Sergeant Second Class with a number of police officers. Without exception, they all supported the move in the belief that it will create greater opportunity for the promotion of younger officers to the rank of Sergeant Third Class based on their skills. In the long term, this change can only enhance the quality of officers within the Northern Territory Police Force and I commend the bill to honourable members.

Mr TUXWORTH (Chief Minister): Mr Deputy Speaker, there was extensive discussion between the Commissioner of Police and the Police Association on this matter. I recall having a discussion with the commissioner and he assured me that any problems had been resolved even before the bill came before Cabinet.

I accept the point raised by several speakers that some people may be disadvantaged but the bottom line is we have to try to organise the management of the force for the benefit of all its members and the public as well. This is exactly what the legislation is about.

Motion agreed to; bill read a second time.

Committee stage to be taken later.

LAW REFORM (MISCELLANEOUS PROVISIONS) AMENDMENT BILL
(Serial 164)

Continued from 14 November 1985.

Mr B. COLLINS (Opposition Leader): Mr Speaker, this is a technical bill which brings the Northern Territory into line with the states. The opposition supports the bill.

Motion agreed to; bill read a second time.

Mr PERRON (Attorney-General)(by leave): Mr Speaker, I move that the bill be now read a third time.

Motion agreed to; bill read a third time.

ADOPTION OF CHILDREN AMENDMENT BILL
(Serial 134)

Continued from 14 November 1985.

Mr LEO (Nhulunbuy): Mr Speaker, there are 4 areas of amendment in this bill. Firstly, provision is made for the minister to gazette criteria for eligibility as adoptive parents. This means that those who do not meet the gazetted criteria can be removed from the waiting list. To remain on the list, a couple must, in the opinion of the minister, satisfy, or be within, the criteria. Such a mechanism will provide some certainty in terms of eligibility at the cost of a possible loss of flexibility. Given that welfare departments often work on undeclared criteria, there is probably more advantage than disadvantage in this proposal.

Secondly, there is provision for recognition of foreign adoptions. The act is to be amended to remove the requirement that the adoptive parents must have been resident in the country of adoption at the time of adoption. This will facilitate overseas adoptions which have become much more common in recent years. It is the result of a recommendation from the Standing Committee of Attorneys-General, and it is desirable that all states and territories achieve uniformity in this area.

Thirdly, the bill also makes provision for welfare supervision of children of an adoption of less than 12 months duration where the adoptive parents were not citizens of the country of adoption. This is to protect children adopted overseas through an expedient procedure where the adoptive parents would not have had to undergo the fairly rigorous screening undertaken in Australia and possibly do not meet the Australian criteria for eligibility. The supervision may last up to 12 months and that period is reduced in proportion to any period of similar supervision already undergone in another Australian jurisdiction.

Fourthly, the reference to the Director of Child Welfare is replaced by reference to the minister. This is necessitated by the repeal of the Child Welfare Act which made legislative provision for that position. That repeal took effect on 28 November 1983. As the minister pointed out in his second-reading speech, that is perhaps one reason why this bill should be considered with some urgency.

I understand that a number of amendments are proposed to this bill. I hope that the minister will give the opposition ample opportunity to scrutinise those amendments before we move to the committee stage. With those comments, I indicate the opposition's support for the bill.

Mr FIRMIN (Ludmilla): Mr Speaker, I rise to support the bill. In so doing, I would like to make a couple of general comments in relation to the Adoption of Children Act. The decision leading to the adoption of children by a married couple is usually attended by a long period of soul-searching and, in many cases, anguish on the part of those persons unable to bear children by natural means. The usual scenario is for one or both of the partners to have a physical impediment to the procreation of children or a medical condition which may preclude the mother from safely carrying or giving birth. Attendant on this discovery is a period of some redefinition or reassessment of their role in life. Whilst most overcome this, nonetheless it leaves a zone of sensitivity around both partners which not only needs to be identified in dealings with them but exercised in discussions with them as well.

I have had many representations made to me over the years in various positions I have held to provide references, guidance and sometimes counselling to friends and acquaintances for assistance with applications for adoption. In many cases, I have been asked to undertake follow-up action with the bureaucracy following the final decision by these couples to take the step of adoption. Some of the people I have assisted have had an easy time, more by good luck than anything else I sometimes think, and others have had considerable extra trauma added to their difficulties by insensitive and, to express it charitably, unintentional bungles.

Imagine the trauma of a couple known to me who visited medical practitioners for some 10 years in the hope of having natural children. Eventually, they decided to adopt. They waited for some 6 years to reach the top of the adoption list and a further 6 months for a child to come up for adoption. The mother had geared up her household in the way that a pregnant woman would, albeit after a 6-year gestation period. She expected her little bundle of joy to be only a few weeks away. However, an official letter arrived to inform her that, due to the fact that she had just attained the age of 40 years, she was no longer a suitable candidate for adoption and her name had been removed from the list. I have never seen a woman closer to suicide than when she received that message.

The point I am making is that this woman suffered doubts about her role in life for such a long period. She applied to adopt a child, met the criteria and suffered the long wait, only to be dashed down at the appointed hour. During those years, she had no recourse other than to the same bureaucracy which had dealt insensitively with her at that time. Ministerial delegation would at least allow a different level of assessment in borderline cases.

In respect of the amendment to remove the domiciliary principles embodied in the original act, I have no problem but, once again, I draw the minister's attention to the need to deal sensitively with the inspection provisions. In my electorate, I have a couple who have adopted a child from overseas and satisfied the assessing officers of their stability, their financial ability and their caring environment for the child. For several years now, they have had an application in train for a brother or sister for that child. The amount of intrusion into their lives, the continued reassessment, documentation and reinterviewing each time a new staff member takes over the case and the general slowness of the process would make most people wish to commit mayhem. It really says something for those prospective parents that they have remained relatively calm during the period of intense frustration that they have experienced. I do not blame any current departmental staff handling the case as they are doing their best under a difficult workload. But to require a 40-page reassessment of the parents' situation, including some details of a particularly sensitive and personal nature, especially on a second application, is difficult for these people. When they have successfully concluded the adoption, there should be no further pressures placed on them by over-zealous inspection personnel.

Apart from those few points, I believe the bill provides the machinery for sensitive protection of the rights both of the children and their adoptive parents. I support the bill.

Mr SETTER (Jingili): Mr Speaker, I rise to support this bill. In view of the comments that have been made this afternoon by various speakers, I thought it might be appropriate to read a letter which appeared in the Northern Territory News recently. It is headed, 'Differences in Opinion':

'Sir, Children around the world in need of families are being severely discriminated against by the 8 differing sets of regulations applied to the prospective adoptive parents across Australia. Each state and territory has constructed criteria that, for no logical reason, demand that applicants be of a specific age group and fit within emotional, financial and marital status requirements. Overseas countries have their own laws which are ignored by our state welfare departments. It is possible for single persons to adopt in more than 20 countries. A dozen countries will allow persons up to 55 years to adopt and half a dozen up to 65 years. A few countries do not demand that a couple be married. The countries require only that Australian authorities provide a home study, health reports and police clearances so they can know the couples making application to that country have a basic capacity to provide a worthwhile home.

It seems absurd that we are helping children who need families to reach those families in Europe, Canada and North America, where approved couples are able to be assessed as fair and reasonable persons without being judged as too old, too young, married too long or for not long enough etc, but not Australia.

Graham Orr
Honorary Coordinator
Inter-country Adoption Agency
Port Melbourne'.

I do not necessarily agree with all of the views put forward in that letter but I thought it was of sufficient interest to raise it here today. However, the adoption of children is a sensitive and emotive matter which touches the hearts of us all. I say 'sensitive and emotive' because, in most cases, it involves at least 4 people and, in some cases, 5. There is the mother of the child, who most probably is a young single woman who found herself carrying an unplanned child that she cannot afford to keep for reasons personal or financial. Perhaps the mother already has a number of children who tax her strength and her capacity to support them. For this reason, in spite of the love she as the natural mother might feel for her infant, she chooses to offer the child for adoption, doubtless in the hope that the adoptive parents will provide a better lifestyle and greater opportunities for its future. This is certainly the case with the majority of adoptions which occur from overseas in the poorer countries to our north.

The next person involved in this process is, of course, the child, this little person who, in most cases, is not yet old enough to have any understanding of what is happening but who is caught up in a web of torn emotions and legal technicalities and whose very future and well-being depends on the decisions of others. It is therefore essential that we as a legislature ensure that, in the Northern Territory, we provide adequately for the protection of a child's interests and welfare during the adoption process.

The third group of people involved are the adoptive parents. These are generally people who, as married couples, have been attempting for many years to have a child in the normal manner. However, because of an act of God, the mother has been unable either to conceive or to carry a foetus through a normal pregnancy. The reasons for this are many and varied, and we all know that enormous advances have been made in recent years in overcoming these problems. Nevertheless, there are still numerous couples who cannot have a child of their own by the natural process. These are the people who seek to

adopt an infant. They do this because they desperately wish to have a complete family, to be able to lavish their pent-up love and affection on an infant. I am also aware of instances where couples, who already have children born to them naturally but who no longer are able to avail themselves of that method because of health or age, desire to increase their family by adoption. It is common for these people to seek children from overseas because they wish to provide an opportunity for a better life for a disadvantaged child.

Mr Speaker, I have described to you the circumstances which create the need for the adoption process. I am sure we all understand and agree on the need for legislation to allow for this particular process. I am sure we all understand and agree on the need for legislation to allow for adoption to occur with the minimum of emotional discomfort to all involved. Having said that, I also acknowledge the importance of protecting the rights of all individuals concerned.

The Adoption of Children Amendment Bill is designed to implement an agreement reached with other states and territories regarding inter-country adoption, and to provide assistance to prospective adoptive parents. I am sure that it is agreed without question that, in such a matter as adoption of children from overseas, it is important that uniform legislation be enacted by all states and territories of Australia. Considering the mobility of people in this vast country, anything less would create all sorts of bureaucratic chaos and not be in the best interests of those involved.

A full review of the principal act will be undertaken at some future time. However, these proposed amendments are necessary now because the repeal of the Child Welfare Act and the abolition of the statutory office of Director of Child Welfare have created an anomalous situation. The responsibilities previously held by the Director of Child Welfare will be transferred to the minister by clause 9 of this bill.

Clause 6 will require that the criteria used to assess applicants be published in the Gazette and this will clarify for all prospective applicants the requirements to which they must conform and should eliminate any misunderstanding and uncertainty. This clause also creates the power for the removal from the list of people no longer considered eligible.

The issue of inter-country adoptions has caused concern and difficulty in the past. Clause 7 will result in the repeal of those provisions which required prospective adoptive parents to be resident or domiciled in the country in which the adoption is to take place. This means that adoption will be able to be arranged without the necessity for the adoptive parents to leave Australia for a length of time in order to qualify as suitable adoptive parents.

Having made the adoption of children from overseas easier, it is important that, after their entry into this country, their welfare be closely supervised to ensure that their best interests are protected. Clause 8 of the bill will require that a child be supervised for a period of 12 months after its arrival in Australia, regardless of where it is domiciled. This illustrates the strength of having uniform legislation with the states.

Clause 9 is for the purpose of housekeeping, and eliminates reference to the term 'director' and, where necessary, substitutes the term 'minister'.

Mr Deputy Speaker, we live in a multicultural community where, apart from the normal adoption of children born within this country, we could have a higher proportion of overseas adoptions per capita than most states. This bill addresses that need and I am sure we will have much support within the community. I commend the bill to honourable members.

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH (Koolpinyah): Mr Deputy Speaker, in rising to speak to this legislation, I will say at the outset that, when I first read it through, I had grave reservations about certain parts of it. I have consulted with the minister and he has reassured me. No doubt, in his summing up at the end of this debate, he will reiterate his assurances in the form of a public statement. The minister said in his second-reading speech that there is some urgency in relation to this legislation. I will not argue with that, but it is of some concern that a major review is planned of the Adoption of Children Act after this proposed change in legislation. No doubt, the minister intends that any changes effected by this legislation will be carried over into the new legislation.

This legislation relates to people's lives; children's lives could depend on it. Whilst teenagers may be adopted in certain circumstances, the main thrust of the bill is towards young children and babies. In some cases, the life of a child adopted from overseas may depend on that adoption because of the risk of disease or starvation in the country of its birth. I have quite strong views on the extent of Australia's immigration policy and the numbers of certain migrants from certain countries. However, I regard the adoption of children from overseas by childless couples as the ideal way of increasing our population if this is really necessary. It will also fulfil a primal parental drive which some people have and cannot fulfil, despite their best intentions, either naturally or through adoption in Australia.

Parents who have adopted children overseas have visited me in my office. A couple who came to see me not long ago had adopted 4 children from different countries and a brighter, happier, more well-adjusted family of children, I have yet to see. These children were of different colours, different ethnic origins, different ages and different sexes. I would say without fear of contradiction - and I said it to the parents - that those children did not recognise any difference in ethnic origin. It is a pity that legislation has to be introduced in other places to ensure that there is no racial discrimination.

Children who mix with other children of different colours, shapes and sizes see each other only as children. All of them grow up with a much greater understanding of people as people regardless of what they look like. This is borne out by the educational practices in Darwin when my own children went to school. Children of different ethnic origins attended St Mary's Convent where my children went to school. They did not recognise differences in other children. Friendships have been maintained over the years without any change from when they were children. I think that adoption of children from overseas is a great way to ensure racial harmony in the community if the ideas of children persist into adulthood.

Mr Speaker, I have grave concern in relation to clauses 6 and 7. Clause 6 refers to a 'married couple'. Clause 7 refers to 'the adopter or adopters'. Does this legislation cover married couples only or does it cover single parents wishing to adopt children from overseas? Single parents, perhaps widows or widowers or divorcees of either sex, have adopted children. It is fitting that they do so in situations relating to the death of relatives. It

is right that the children should remain with the family even though a single parent may be adopting them. I do not suggest that married couples always do the right thing by children. However, to allow single parents to adopt children willy-nilly in Australia or from overseas could result in abuse of the system. I will not elaborate any further but I think all honourable members know what I am speaking about.

The minister has assured me that he will maintain a high level of discretion in all matters relating to adoption and that the interests of the child will be paramount. He will also look at such things as blood relationships and the previous history of the adopter if only 1 person is involved. No doubt, when the minister sums up, he will reiterate what he has told me both in writing and verbally. At all times, the interests of the child, especially a child from overseas, must be looked after. I know the current minister will have the interests of the children at heart.

I have heard derogatory remarks by some people in Australia about the undesirability of adoptions from overseas. Anglo-Saxon paternalism is mentioned in relation to people who adopt children from third-world countries. Such views come from narrow-minded people who disregard completely the interests of the people who wish to adopt children and also the interests of the children to whom this sort of legislation is directed.

I support the legislation, Mr Deputy Speaker, but I would like to hear from the minister again that he has the interests of the adopted children at heart, especially when he is exercising his discretion to allow single parents to adopt children from overseas in certain situations.

Mr MCCARTHY (Victoria River): Mr Deputy Speaker, I had the same concerns as the member for Koolpinyah when I read that clause 7 refers to 'an adopter or adopters'. In any legislation dealing with the adoption of children, protection for the child is of paramount importance. Abuse of children is, unfortunately, a fact of life in Australia and in our Northern Territory community. Abuse ranging from physical beating to mental torture and sexual molestation exists in this community to an extent every member would abhor. The causes can be attributed to a series of things, including extreme mental and physical strains placed on parents. I can speak about that with some authority because I have a large family. That strain would be even worse for a single parent. There is also drunkenness, uncaring attitudes and unsuitability of persons to be parents. Unfortunately, there are people who have uncaring attitudes and it is very hard for a minister to be able to judge whether a person is likely to be an uncaring parent. Of course, there are those people who want children for reasons that most of us would be totally against; I am talking about perverted reasons.

For some time, I worked with St Vincent de Paul on a part-time basis visiting families in Darwin. I saw the particular stresses that were placed on single parents. That causes me concern about making adoption available to single parents. Certainly, the majority of single parents were good parents, but they were placed under terrific strain. The pressures on them had to be more than 100% worse than they are on a normal family. The stresses were monumental. I would be very concerned if they were included among those eligible to adopt children. I think we have to be very careful of that and not just because of the stresses placed on the single parent. There would be stresses on society in the long run. Already there is stress on this society because of the \$1200m social security bill for single parents. That is growing at an enormous rate every year. It is not that I think adoption would

increase that to any great extent; I just do not think that it is acceptable. Certainly, persons who are adopting children should be taking on the responsibility for those children themselves. I am sure the minister does not have the intention of allowing every single person to adopt a child but it is something that we have to keep in mind.

I can see the necessity of repealing the section of the act that made it difficult for parents to adopt children from overseas. Like the member for Koolpinyah, I think it is a tremendous idea that children from overseas can be adopted, provided the adoptive parents are suitable. I am sure that that will be the case. I suspect that the only instances of single adoptive parents would involve people who had adopted a child while living overseas and who then came to this country.

I wonder about the 12-month supervisory period of the adoption in the mail order-type arrangement. I have a problem with people just wandering in and keeping an eye on a family at any time. I know it is necessary. I know that, in some cases, that 12-month period may not be long enough and I wonder if there is provision to extend it if necessary. With that, I commend the bill.

Mr COULTER (Community Development): Mr Deputy Speaker, I thank members for their contribution to this debate. There have been a couple of points raised today that I am a little concerned about. I would like to address those first.

Firstly, comments were made by the member for Victoria River and also the member for Koolpinyah. Whether a person is a happily married or a single person is not necessarily within his or her full control. Being married does not make a person necessarily better than a single person. I am the sole guardian of 152 children in the Northern Territory. The reasons why they have been brought under my control are amazing. Some of the incest offences and sexual abuse that children have suffered at the hands of happily married couples would open the eyes of the members for Victoria River and Koolpinyah. Marriage is no guarantee that those types of offences will not be committed.

This government has prided itself on being very flexible on a number of issues. It is not dogmatic and does not have everything written down in a book like the Australian Labor Party. There have been excellent examples of adoption by single parents. For example, a tragedy might result in the death of a single person's close relative and his or her partner. That single person might elect to take the children of the deceased in charge. I believe we should have the option in the Northern Territory to ensure that orphaned children may be raised by somebody in an extended family situation. That is one of the reasons for that clause.

I agree with members that it must be policed and scrutinised carefully. The inter-country adoption criteria are quite specific in terms of the type of person who may be approved. These approvals are not given lightly. One of the benefits of the amendment is that it gives the discretion back to the minister. I have given a pledge to the member for Koolpinyah that all cases will be assessed very strictly. If there is any reason at all that a person is not deemed a model person to bring up children, then the adoption application will not be successful. I share the concern of members that we should not open up a mail order adoption list whereby anybody can adopt a child from overseas. That is the reason for the 12-month supervision period. It is possible for the minister to be assured that that child is in a caring, loving home and that its general welfare is being looked after.

This legislation will give the opportunity to many people to adopt children and have the responsibility and the wonderful loving experience of raising children. There has been a loophole in the present system anyway. In some cases, it has only been a matter of staying 27 days in a particular country, obtaining residential status and then adopting a child. Various countries have become more lenient over the years. We have seen countries establish different criteria to enable children to be adopted into Australia. I believe that this is a far more suitable way of going about the adoption business. The Attorneys-General in conference in 1978 are to be congratulated on the move to do away with that particular criterion.

The whole question of adoption is under review. The act itself will undergo a major review by my department. I hope to be able to advise members of the results of that review in the near future.

Motion agreed to; bill read a second time.

In committee:

Clauses 1 to 7 agreed to.

Clause 8:

Mr COULTER: Mr Chairman, I move amendment 64.1.

The clause is amended by omitting subsection (2) from proposed section 48 and inserting in its stead the following:

'(2) Where a child whose welfare and interests may be supervised by the Minister under subsection (1) has, after being adopted but before arriving in the Territory, been resident in another state or a territory, the period during which the child is subject to the supervision of the minister is reduced by the period of such residence in the state or territory'.

Amendment agreed to.

Clause 8, as amended, agreed to.

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

Bill passed remaining stages without debate.

ADJOURNMENT

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

Mr B. COLLINS (Opposition Leader): Mr Speaker, I rise briefly in the adjournment. The Chief Minister of the Northern Territory gave a commitment in question time yesterday that he would provide me with some information in respect of a question asked. Does he have it?

Mr Tuxworth: Do you want it now?

Mr B. COLLINS: Please.

Mr TUXWORTH (Chief Minister): Mr Speaker, I apologise to the Leader of the Opposition. I had the information this morning, but certain events in question time led me to lose my concentration.

Yesterday, the Leader of the Opposition asked: 'Can the Chief Minister inform the Assembly exactly the form of security that the State Bank of South Australia sought in support of its lending \$28m? Is that security a mortgage document and does that document value the hotel at \$48m?' The matter relates to the security for the loan from the State Bank of South Australia to Investnorth.

The answer is as follows. Investnorth has pledged to the State Bank not to encumber the Alice Springs property on which the Sheraton is built. Thus, there is no mortgage document or valuation as suggested in the question. The security for the State Bank loan was the formal undertaking by the government of the Northern Territory that it will extend finance by way of loans to Investnorth when its revenue derived from the hotel is insufficient to meet its commitments.

Mr B. Collins: What about the Berlin trip?

Mr TUXWORTH: Mr Speaker, I investigated the Berlin trip because I was a bit worried about you. I am happy to say that I have no paperwork concerning anyone asking for a trip to Berlin.

Mr LEO (Nhulunbuy): Mr Speaker, I have a couple of matters which I will briefly address to the Minister for Primary Production. I have had representations made to me by a number of fishermen and a fish processor in Nhulunbuy concerning the Fish and Fisheries Act and some of its provisions. I believe other processors are also concerned because I have had indirect representation from them. They are concerned about the penal provisions in the Fish and Fisheries Act and the way that those provisions are currently being pursued by the Northern Territory Police Force. I am sure that all members are aware that, some years ago, the Northern Territory fisheries inspectors were amalgamated with the Northern Territory Police Force.

Fishermen lead a fairly difficult life at the best of times. They wander around the high seas catching fish wherever they can.

Mr Tuxworth: Wherever they are.

Mr LEO: That is generally where they catch them. They can only catch them where they are.

However, this does not always allow them to adhere to all of the specific requirements that are placed upon them by the regulations under the act. Some of those provisions, such as the labelling of products, are not always achievable at sea. Fishermen run out of labels, and they run out of the necessary documentation. Under the requirements of the act, this can lead to the abandonment of their cargo when they reach port. Processors face a similar problem if they purchase product from the fishermen. Most processors are very skilled people when it comes to buying fish. They can tell a fillet of barramundi from a fillet of threadfin salmon just by looking at it. I am told that any skilled eye can detect the difference between fillets from different types of fish. They are caught up in the problem because of the necessity for documentation.

A number of fishermen presently operating from Nhulunbuy face prosecution. They have been charged and will have to appear in court because of the requirements of these regulations. A fish processor in Nhulunbuy is also being charged because of the inadequacy of his documentation for the product that he had in his freezers.

This is of some considerable concern to me. Ever since I came into this Assembly in 1980, I have been stressing the necessity to diversify industry in Nhulunbuy. We have a fledgling professional fishing industry under way there, and it is being jeopardised. I have been told by the processor that he is pulling out because he has had enough. He will leave his container on the wharf and the fishermen will unload their cartons of fish straight into it. It will then go to Cairns where he will open it without restrictions. Alternatively, he may move to Karumba and the fishermen can go there to unload their product.

The problem is not just with the actual provisions of the Fish and Fisheries Act. I have some sympathy with the minister in his view that there are requirements which fishermen should fulfil. The problem is also with the way the provisions are being policed. They are being enforced by policemen and not by fisheries inspectors. There is a distinct difference. There was once an association between those participating in the industry and those whose task it was to administer the various regulations and laws. An association existed between producers, wholesalers and the inspectors. That has now been lost. Instead of that association, we now have a much more clinical, stringent and legalistic approach which is causing fishermen who use Nhulunbuy quite some concern. It is causing the processor such concern that he has indicated to me that he can no longer live with it. He says - perhaps unfairly, because I believe policemen do their job very efficiently - that the laws are being enforced to a pedantic degree.

I asked the Minister for Primary Production yesterday whether submissions could still be made to his review of the Fish and Fisheries Act, and when legislation resulting from that review would come before the Assembly. The minister indicated to me that the review had been completed and that the legislation had been given some priority by the Executive Council. The fishermen have been assured in writing that the department will accept submissions until the end of this month. I was therefore somewhat surprised when the minister told me that the review had been concluded. Be that as it may, I ask him whether he can confirm with the director of his department that fishermen have been given assurances that submissions will be accepted until the end of March. In fact, because of the emphasis that my community places upon this fledgling industry, I would ask him to accept submissions for another month. The matter is of considerable importance.

That concludes my remarks, except that I ask the minister to reply to the matters I have raised in this evening's adjournment debate because there are a number of people within my community who are very concerned about them.

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH (Koolpinyah): Mr Speaker, I have a couple of things to say about situations to which I object. I hope they will be remedied in the near future. One objection I have is to the attitude of certain public servants and the other is to certain advertising that I have seen recently.

My first objection concerns the attitude of certain public servants who appear to think that their views are the be-all and end-all of everything. They believe they are the most important people in the scheme of things and,

by golly, they set out to make everybody know it. I am not talking about directors and secretaries who make executive decisions nor about the lower grade people employed by the public service. I am talking about certain people in middle management. I could name 3 sections of the public service, and no doubt there are others, where these people are apparent. I will not mention their names because I do not believe that is the right thing to do. I believe, however, that these people are acting not only to the detriment of their own calling as public servants but also to the detriment of people in the community whom they purport to serve.

I refer firstly to certain dispositions of land by certain officers in the Department of Lands. I am not talking about dispositions of land to people who ask for blocks and expect to be given them. I am talking about farming people who have asked to buy blocks and who have had such difficulties put in their way that it is a wonder they are still working here. They have waited long enough for the grant of land. I can recall 4 such cases immediately. I will not mention people specifically and I hope my mentioning these cases will not work to the detriment of the people applying for these blocks of land. If anything, I hope it will jog the public servants to live up to their calling.

There is one case where a person has applied for a certain area of land for the purpose of cultivating a 'certain' crop. He has waited an inordinate length of time for land. We are not talking about thousands of acres; we are talking about less than 10 acres. This person is not a 'gunna' man. He is a doer who has proved himself agriculturally; he knows exactly what he is doing and is an asset to the Northern Territory's agricultural development. This man still has not had a clear go-ahead to cultivate his block. He has not waited. He has gone in and started to plant his crop without having clear legal tenure. Morally, I believe he is right, although perhaps legally and according to the public service he might have jumped the gun.

Another case was brought to my attention. It again concerned a practical, proven farmer who applied for a block of land in the rural area. He made his intentions clear. He has worked for a number of years. I know his record and so does everybody else who buys his product. Difficulties were put in his way. However, these were resolved and he will have the land soon if he does not have it already.

There are another 2 cases where people have proved themselves but, for some reason, cannot convince 1 or 2 people in the Department of Lands. I do not know what the selection criteria are, but I think some people in the Department of Lands make up their own minds whether people will get blocks of land immediately or otherwise. The point I am making is that these bottlenecks have to be done away with. Perhaps a better way to describe these people is 'the corks in the bottles'.

There was another instance relating to the Conservation Commission. I will not elaborate further except to say that this concerned me personally inasmuch as the person was known to me. I do not know why it occurred but it has been straightened out now to everybody's satisfaction. However, it was unnecessary in the first place. This cork should not have been in the bottle. There are other corks in bottles around the Northern Territory. There are corks in bottles in the Department of Primary Production and I would like to see them come out of the bottle. I will not name any names, not even to the minister, but I believe that it should be made clear to these people that they exist to serve the public and, if the public has a legitimate call on their services, they should do their utmost to facilitate any action demanded of them.

I have a second point to raise this afternoon. No doubt, many of the male members of the Assembly will intimate by their interjections that I am flogging a dead horse or speaking out of turn or they have heard enough about my views. Nevertheless, I believe that this has to be said and I will say it again. I am comforted by the fact that I have been congratulated on my stand by other women who are also objecting to this form of sexist advertising which I thought was fading from our newspapers and our magazines but is alive and kicking in the Northern Territory.

I refer to an advertisement which appeared recently in the Northern Territory News, in the Australian, in the Bulletin and in at least one paper in South Australia. No doubt, it appeared in newspapers in other states. It is an advertisement asking for patronage of our very newest, high-class, 5-star hotel - the Beaufort Hotel. For those male members who have not seen this advertisement, it depicts a very nice pair of young female legs.

Mr Palmer: Very admirable legs.

Mr D.W. Collins: Lovely petticoat.

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH: I knew members would interject with those sorts of remarks. They are a very nice pair of young legs, topped by a very nice and very expensive short petticoat, going upstairs. The implication is that, if you pay your money for accommodation in this hotel, these legs can be yours. The double meaning is very obvious; the implication is very obvious. The advertisement is not directed at women.

I consider myself as a woman of substance in this community and the Beaufort Hotel offers the class of accommodation that I would patronise. However, it makes me angry that the advertisement is not directed to my future patronage of that hotel.

Mr Bell: What about escort agency advertisements?

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH: The interjections that I am receiving are what I would expect from male members of this Assembly. I cannot see why such a high-class hotel should stoop to such cheap, sexist and obviously unsophisticated advertising as this. I contacted the manager of this hotel and he has assured me that this advertisement is only the first in a series and, for my satisfaction, I will be seeing male legs in an advertisement which features the pool. He thought that would allay my fears that the advertising is sexist.

While I am on the matter of sexist advertising, I think our Northern Territory Tourist Commission runs a pretty close second, if not neck and neck with the Beaufort. A calendar was put out by the Tourist Commission depicting very nice young female models. Only one picture depicted a male model. For those of you who did not see this calendar, it depicted beautiful photographs of the Northern Territory which in themselves are enough to promote the Northern Territory. It appears the advertisers and the Tourist Commission believe that people cannot think for themselves. They certainly do not believe in sophisticated advertising.

I have nothing against people selling their bodies for whatever reason. We all sell ourselves in one way or another. I have nothing against the female form as such but what I do object to is the fact that all of this advertising is directed at a male market, the implication being that women are

beneath consideration in any market situation. Their business is not sought, their consumption of the services offered is not sought and they are beneath contempt in any of this sexist advertising.

I also contacted the casino when it was operating more noticeably than it is now. It too used a sexist advertisement to encourage people to use either the gambling or the accommodation services of the casino. The advertisement featured a young, reclining female body. Again, I found it most inappropriate for a high-class, sophisticated establishment to stoop to such old-fashioned, cheap advertising. I think the time has come for our government departments, our 5-star hotels and other sophisticated establishments to use more sophisticated advertising. To me, this advertisement was about as subtle as a strip before you have your weekly bath on a Saturday night. That is how much it appealed to me. It may have appealed to some blokes. I would class many of those blokes as would-bes if they could-bes.

I might sound rather one-eyed but I feel that I am putting the point of view of many other women. It makes me think that, if somebody patronises these establishments or comes to the Northern Territory after seeing the Tourist Commission calendar, one will expect what is portrayed. That sort of advertising must stop.

Mr BELL (MacDonnell): Mr Deputy Speaker, I wish to raise a couple of matters in this adjournment debate. The first follows an important question asked by the member for Braitling of the Chief Minister. He asked the Chief Minister whether he was aware of the widespread concern in central Australia about the apparent dramatic increase in alcohol-related accidents and, if so, what steps the government is taking. That represented on the part of the honourable member for Braitling a rather more measured attitude to the associated difficulties than that which regaled the population of central Australia when they looked at the front page of their local paper on Friday 28 February. The citizenry of Alice Springs was confronted with a mishmash of argument and opinion that was so designed to incite racial hatred that I can only compare it with the advertisement that the erstwhile member for Elsey displayed outside his electorate office some years ago and which was similarly designed to incite racial hatred.

Allow me to say that some of the problems raised are serious problems, in the same way as the problem raised in question time this morning was a serious problem. So concerned was the member for Braitling about my reaction to this that I understand he was a little reluctant to approach me immediately afterwards. As the member for Braitling will recall, both he and I were guests at a function on the following day, Saturday 1 March. There in front of me were 2 empty seats one of which was to be occupied by the honourable member. I was most surprised when an office holder in that particular organisation approached me and said: 'You are not going to be too tough on Roger, are you? He is a bit afraid to come and sit down beside you'. That is the sort of intestinal fortitude of people who are prepared to make comments like this that I find worthy only of contempt.

I will deal with the substance of the comments themselves. I am tempted actually to read the article in full into the Hansard but it is fairly lengthy and I really do not think time permits. I am not sure whether standing orders permit that to be included but I think it ought to be given due consideration by all members of this Assembly. Let us just look at some of the mishmash of attitudes and ill-considered thoughts that force one to the conclusion that, for spurious political reasons, the honourable member for Braitling decided to

make a public statement in this way. For example, the honourable member for Braitling gave the impression that all people who live in fringe camps are inveterate alcoholics - a fairly evil implication.

'Many of the fringe campers had been expelled from their own community where there had been crackdowns on grog and troublemakers'.

We are talking about fringe camps in Alice Springs. That sort of comment is completely wrong. I do not believe the member for Braitling has one ounce of evidence to support that contention. I do not know of one person who has been expelled in either a formal or informal sense from the communities. I hasten to add that I know a tragically large number of traditionally-oriented Aboriginal people who are inextricably caught up with alcohol. In fact, a most difficult part of my job is watching those people, month by month and year by year, pass away in circumstances to which they have perhaps contributed. Essentially, I see them as victims.

For the member for Braitling to respond in this fashion is quite evil and reflects a disinclination to seek any solution to the sorts of difficulties that face us. He went on to say: 'There is nothing to show for the huge amounts of money channelled through Aboriginal organisations and a lot of bush Aborigines are worse off'. That sneer and accusation looks terrific on the front page of the paper. The people who will not accept Aborigines on any terms think: 'Good on you Roger, you are doing exactly what we want you to do for us'. It is evil and it is designed to incite racial hatred - nothing more and nothing less. It is to be condemned by anybody with half an ounce of brains.

Let me turn to another example. The member for Braitling said: 'Law breakers should lose their vehicles immediately if they are unroadworthy'. That is an absurd statement, Mr Deputy Speaker, is it not? I would like to ask him if he is about to introduce a private member's bill called 'The Confiscation of Motor Vehicles Bill' so that all law breakers will lose their vehicles if they are unroadworthy. That is the sort of lack of objectivity and foolhardy public comment that this Assembly and the people of the Northern Territory do not deserve.

He went on to say that we tie up police in paperwork because to take one car off the road involves hours of paperwork. That is false; it is absolute nonsense. People who have had defect notices slapped on their motor cars have come to see me because they do not know what to do.

The member for Braitling then went on to make a blanket assertion: 'When cars aren't effective and a sticker is placed on the windscreen, the window is smashed and the car is still driven because it takes a while for paperwork to catch up'. I challenge the member for Braitling to produce any evidence of a single instance where that has occurred. If he is able to do so, I think he should have given that evidence to the police. Quite clearly, smashing a window and driving a defective vehicle under those circumstances is an offence under the Motor Vehicles Act. He should know that because he has been a member of the Legislative Assembly for 10 years.

Mr Vale: Nearly 12.

Mr BELL: He condemns himself out of his own mouth. You would think he would know better after 12 years.

He went on in this extraordinary article, which occupies about 2 columns, with the startling revelation that overcrowding cars is also dangerous.

Mr Vale: Don't you reckon that 30 per car is too many?

Mr BELL: Of course overcrowding cars is dangerous.

This mishmash of accusations about fringe camps is associated with a photograph. I do not know if it is from the tip. There is a use...

Mr Vale: Illegal squatters.

Mr BELL: I do not know where that is from. It is really quite an extraordinary juxtaposition of photographs and incoherent accusations, none of which is supported. I think the honourable member is to be condemned in the roundest possible terms because he cannot - and I challenge him here and now - produce evidence in any form whatsoever to support the accusations that he has made in this article. I know he will not be able to do it.

Having said that, Mr Deputy Speaker, let me say that I know there are problems in this regard. I am prepared to tackle them in the coherent fashion that was referred to this morning. I am prepared to tackle, for example, the problem of car thefts. Magistrate Barrett said in Alice Springs that car thefts are stirring up racism. That is a matter for concern if it is the case. That issue needs to be debated publicly.

Equally, I think it is about time that the member for Braitling and his cohort, the half-wit from Sadadeen...

Mr VALE: A point of order, Mr Deputy Speaker! The comment made by the honourable member for MacDonnell concerning the honourable member for Sadadeen is unparliamentary.

Mr BELL: I withdraw that unconditionally. The composition of the wits of the honourable member for Sadadeen pass my understanding.

As I say, Mr Deputy Speaker, I am prepared to become involved in serious debate about these issues, provided that they are approached in a sensible way and not in the manner in which they were addressed in this particular article.

Other issues need to be given consideration: the poverty of Aboriginal communities, the effect of alcohol abuse and the problem of littering within the town planning area of Alice Springs. Nowhere does the member for Braitling mention the fact that the people involved in these motor vehicle offences live in an area where there is no public transport. They are perhaps the poorest people in this country. The only way they have of getting from A to B is to buy the cheapest and oldest vehicles. For somebody in his position to ignore that fact entirely is hypocrisy of the highest order.

Let me put forward a couple of constructive suggestions. As I have said, I am quite prepared to make a constructive contribution to this debate, but the honourable member for Braitling and the honourable member for Sadadeen make it pretty hard to do so. In relation to drink driving problems, I am quite prepared to be involved in a face-to-face, multilingual campaign stressing the problems in communities in central Australia.

Secondly, with respect to the littering problems in the town planning area in Alice Springs, I think that there are circumstances under which community service orders could be used to overcome such problems. Identifying the specific groups of people who are involved in littering under those circumstances is quite feasible, but I really do not believe that the member for Braitling is interested in constructive solutions like that. His only interest in this particular problem is to obtain a bit of political kudos. His essential interest in this is to further his own political career and, given the quality of the Country Liberal Party, I have no doubt it will.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I abhor that sort of incitement to racial hatred. I believe I have put forward a couple of constructive suggestions and I am quite happy to become involved to whatever extent may be deemed necessary.

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

Mr EDE (Stuart): Mr Deputy Speaker, I do not intend to reiterate the statements made by the member for MacDonnell except to point out that it is extremely easy for people in our position to make statements to the press or in public where we simply refer to problem after problem after problem. It is much more difficult to move from the problem towards a solution. It is not at all becoming of the member for Braitling after nearly 12 years in this place, all of which time as a member of the government, to be still utilising the tactic of pointing to a whole series of problems without coming up with any proposals for solutions. We on this side of the Assembly pride ourselves on our attempts always to suggest some solutions to problems when we raise them. As the member for Braitling knows, I wrote to the newspaper in response to his article pointing out that, while he is very good at talking about problems, he does not have the inventiveness of mind or real concern for the problems to suggest any solutions beyond a hit squad of police to hound people around the town.

For his benefit, I will refer once again to some of the solutions that I proposed to him at that time. For example, he could be lobbying his own colleagues on the frontbench to provide better facilities for itinerants. He could be lobbying for the return of the \$30 000 which was cut from Tangentyere's clean-up gang. He was very keen to criticise Tangentyere for a lack of effort in cleaning up those areas but he did not mention that it had had \$30 000 lopped off its budget by the Northern Territory government. He did not point out that the area he was talking about was not within a lease and that Tangentyere has no ability to spend funds provided for work within leases on areas outside of leases. If it had cleaned up that area, the Minister for Community Development would have been quite within his rights to cut its funding by the amount expended on the work. He could have also accused it of misappropriation of government funds. But these sorts of things do not impinge on the member for Braitling. He is quite happy to make off-the-cuff statements which are full of half-truths that do not go anywhere near addressing the issue.

He did not say anything about the CEP program which could be utilised in some of those areas. He did not talk about the very positive moves being made by Aboriginal groups to try to set up taverns. I will be talking about that at another time. He has not taken any active role in the latest moves to reduce the number of take-away liquor outlets although I believe he did assist with one in his own area 2 years ago. That is how long it is since he last showed his conscience. He has not mentioned to me that he has been lobbying to have the Liquor Commission conduct a review of the number and type of take-away liquor outlets appropriate for a town like Alice Springs.

I wish that members like the member for Braitling would think a little before they leap into print on these types of issues. These are very complex issues which do not lend themselves to simplistic solutions. I know it is very easy to trot out a list of problems; it is much harder to find solutions. If the member has any desire to some day grace the frontbench of this Assembly, I think that he has to demonstrate that he has the ability to think through and find some solutions to these problems.

That was not actually the issue that I rose to speak on tonight. I wanted to talk about some education issues and I am glad to see that the minister is here tonight. The first one relates to housing for Department of Education staff in rural communities. I am identifying a problem which, I acknowledge, has no easy solution. I wish to make it clear from the outset that I am talking about areas of the Territory where there are the most severe housing shortages. These are not places where there is a pool of housing so that a person can have a reasonable expectation of being allocated one within a year of arriving. I believe, however, that the current policy on allocation of government housing, and the way the housing is treated in communities, shows scant regard for the government's investment. It also shows scant regard for the government employees themselves and scant regard for any logical method of utilising existing resources.

I will demonstrate this with a scenario in which an Aboriginal person has left his community, obtained teaching qualifications and returned to that community to teach. He is replacing, let us say, a non-resident of that community who had occupied a house there. It is true that, in the past, there have been occasions when the department turned a blind eye to the problem. It allowed that person to move into a Department of Education house in that community. This has often been done because people have seen the house standing idle and they have not had a use for it. They felt, because that person did not have any ability to obtain accommodation in the community, he should be allowed to move into it and pay rent to the department.

However, because the department was not accommodating a person who had a right to be there, it stopped undertaking maintenance on the house. If you do not keep up maintenance, the house gradually deteriorates, to the extent that it starts to become very difficult to return it to its original state. In some instances, the government says that the house is surplus to requirements. It transfers it to the land trust which cannot retain it and it ends up with the local housing association. The housing association, however, already has a program of maintenance for that year and, because funding is always very tight, is unable to undertake the fairly high expenditure required to bring the house up to scratch. The house deteriorates further, and not only the Northern Territory government but the Northern Territory itself loses an asset which it went to great pains to obtain originally.

That is one angle to the problem. There is another one, where the letter of the law is applied ...

Mr Harris: What would you prefer us to do?

Mr EDE: I am talking about the situation where the letter of the law is applied. I am doing this to point out the difficulties to the minister. I will talk about solutions later.

Let us look at the same situation, of a person returning to his own community to replace a non-resident of that community. Under current policy,

that person should not move into that house. Thus, the qualified teacher returning to the community is unable to be housed. The house is left vacant and vandalism occurs. In most cases, it is the vacant houses which cop the most vandalism. Eventually, we have the situation where, at the end of the year, that particular trained teacher, a resident of that area, decides that he can transfer from Yuendumu to Lajamanu for example. Lajamanu is still within his linguistic area and he has many relations there. He will then not be a resident of his own community and therefore can obtain a house there. The government then has to turn around and spend considerable funds upgrading the house to return it to a standard where somebody else can be placed in it. Alternatively, the department may transfer the house to the local housing association. It then has no house to allocate to the new teacher. What does it do? Does it build another house or does it say the community cannot have a teacher there because no housing is available? That is the problem, Mr Deputy Speaker.

My solution is to take a broader look at the whole problem of housing of public servants who achieve a level equivalent, say, to that of a band 1 teacher. In that situation, if the government has surplus housing available, it would accommodate the staff member even though he is a resident of the area, given that he will be required to pay full rent. That will overcome the problem.

Mr Harris: They do that now in some cases.

Mr EDE: It is not the policy of the department. When it does happen, it is a local arrangement which the principals adopt on their own account.

Mr Harris: It meets the need, doesn't it?

Mr EDE: Mr Deputy Speaker, I do not want to conduct this matter across the floor of the Assembly. I would like to discuss it further with the minister outside the Assembly or have him address this Assembly about how he will circularise teachers saying that my solution is quite okay. I am most happy if it is.

On the basis of a question that was phoned through to me today, I wish to ask the minister if he will advise tonight on the readiness of the old Community College at Anzac Oval in Alice Springs to be used in 1987 as a junior high school. If it is not ready, the only government high school operating in Alice Springs will be the Alice Springs High School. I am told that, if that happens, the students in that school will number over 1000. I have been told by many people who have experience of such situations, and I have read in a number of reports, that enrolments of over 700 students in a junior high school present all sorts of management problems. These problems make it extremely difficult for the schools to operate and they will jeopardise the junior high school concept - a concept which I support. I believe that, if the high school at Anzac Oval is ready in time for the 1987 school year, we will be able to divide student numbers between the 2 schools to avoid having more than 700 students in either.

Mr VALE (Braitling): Mr Speaker, I would like to reply to the remarks made by the honourable member for MacDonnell. I have been in some fear for my political safety and life and limb in recent weeks because the member for MacDonnell said that he would really get stuck into me in the Assembly. I have been sitting in my office in Alice Springs shivering in my boots wondering how savage an attack it would be. As I expected, it was basically

as per the norm. If anyone other than the member for MacDonnell or the member for Stuart dares to make any remark related to Aboriginal issues, he is slammed as being racist.

But let me take the first issue first. What amazes me is that, in recent years, man has walked on the moon and travelled into outer space. The member for MacDonnell still appears to be living in another world. He inferred earlier that I was reluctant to sit at his table at the Verdi Club. I had not intended to raise that issue tonight but I will because he has mentioned it. He will hear exactly what he said to me in front of other witnesses.

I was at a working bee on the Saturday. The member for MacDonnell has a radio program where he goes on with a stutter and stammer - 5 minutes of 'er, er, er, er. This is...um, er, er...'. It is about two and a half minutes of stutter and stammer and one and a half minutes of utter baloney followed by 'at the same time next week'. The member for MacDonnell went on radio and got stuck into me boots and all. That is his right; he can do it any time. But when I went to an official function where His Honour the Administrator was part of the official party, and I thought the member for MacDonnell might stir something up, rather than my being the cause of embarrassment to the president of the Verdi Club and His Honour the Administrator, I decided to sit at another table. What did the member for MacDonnell do? Halfway through the night, he walked across to me, put his hand on my shoulder and said: 'Giddyay, you prick'. I was not going to embarrass the Administrator and I certainly did not sit at the other table because I was scared of him. If he had said that out on the flat, I would have knocked his block off.

Mr Bell: Step outside now, go on.

Mr VALE: I will when I finish my speech.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order!

Mr Bell: If you were 10 years younger and a foot taller, I would do it.

Mr VALE: Racial hatred, he says. Racial outburst. Racial, racial, racial. Let me say that, by far the strongest comment and support concerning my statement, and what in fact led to that statement, has come from Aboriginals, both those living in Alice Springs and those visiting Alice Springs. I would suggest that the member for MacDonnell get off his hobbyhorse and start to talk to people other than the radicals he tends to associate with in central Australia.

If he does not think that Alice Springs is being overrun by a large number of vehicles that have been deregistered and driven off the road and have had windscreens smashed or the yellow stickers removed, then I suggest he talk to the authorities...

Mr Bell: We want evidence! That is what we are interested in.

Mr VALE: ...who have been complaining about this issue. I would suggest that he also get his head out of the clouds and look around Alice Springs.

Mr Bell: Smears! Not a shred of evidence!

Mr VALE: I do not want to raise this issue too widely because it is the subject of a court case, but one recent fatality in central Australia involved

a deregistered vehicle and a person who was well under the influence. It is continuing to occur. I was run off the road myself about 2 weeks ago in Alice Springs and also about 6 weeks before that on my way back from Finke. Do not say that it is an isolated occurrence. It is occurring day in and day out.

Do you know who is more embarrassed than anyone else about it? It is not the Europeans in the community but the Aboriginals in the bush who come in to town. They are utterly ashamed and amazed that we are so soft on the people that they have kicked out of their communities for anti-social behaviour. We end up with them in central Australia and continue to tolerate them. The member is living in another world.

Let me turn now to the Centralian Advocate photograph that was taken in an illegal camp.

Mr Bell: What has that to do with defective motor cars?

Mr VALE: I heard you in total silence, frustrating though it was.

That photograph was taken in an illegal camp on the outskirts of a fringe camp in central Australia. The photographer has already been accused of mocking it up. It is a fairly moderate photograph when one considers some of the illegal camps - not fringe camps - in central Australia. When most people in central Australia create rubbish by having a barbecue at night or whatever, the next morning they clean up their rubbish. At the back of Yirara, from one end to the other, there is mile after mile of cans, broken bottles and smashed glass. They camp, smash, despoil and move on.

More money is apparently the magic answer. More than 10 years ago, we were told that the Aboriginal Land Rights Act would do a number of things: give Aboriginals back their dignity; go a long way towards solving their unemployment problems; and help solve their liquor problems through education. Most people of reasonable mind in the Territory and elsewhere in Australia would have accepted that. But I put it to honourable members that an almost unending source of money has been poured into Aboriginal organisations - be it congress, Tangentyere or whatever. Let me ask this question: is the health problem, education, housing and accommodation any better? In each respect, the answer must be no. It has continued to worsen. I do not think anyone in the community would mind these projects being funded if they could see any long-term solution to what has occurred. That is all.

Mr Ede: That is palpable nonsense.

Mr VALE: If the member can say to me that the number of drinking Aboriginals around the town has reduced considerably in recent years, then I will stand corrected. I believe the number has gone from the sublime to the ridiculous. In respect of the fringe camps themselves, I believe there are a number of Aboriginal people living in a dual situation, with a house in the town area and a house in the bush. I have no objection to that, provided they are kept clean and, when they enter the Alice Springs community, they observe the rules and regulations of the town. That is what I do and what the member for Stuart probably does when he visits a bush community. I remember one instance where he camped on the edge of the Ti Tree new camp because he had liquor on board. I also heard rumours that he...

Mr Ede: What a load of rubbish!

Mr VALE: ... has been challenged up at Willowra for the same problem.

Mr Ede: What a load of rubbish!

Mr VALE: What impression do visitors to Alice Springs - I am not talking about the tourists; I am talking about residents of Alice Springs' friends and relatives...

Mr Ede: Repeat that outside!

Mr VALE: What impression do they get when they arrive in town on the new Ghan? They will see litter for the first 6 km or 7 km. In fact, a few weeks ago, the Ghan was stoned and a window was broken.

For the benefit of the member for MacDonnell and the member for Stuart, I will read excerpts from my letter to the Chief Minister, copies of which went to the Minister for Community Development and the Minister for Transport and Works:

'Dear Ian,

I have been concerned for some time about a number of issues in and around Alice Springs pertaining to illegal camping, unroadworthy vehicles, the number of resident cars with interstate registration plates, the number of vehicle accidents and, last but not least, the question of Aboriginal drinking in this area. I realise that a number of these issues cross into other ministers' portfolios and I am copying Daryl Manzie and Barry Coulter with this letter.

Illegal camping: There are a number of areas, particularly to the south and the west of town, where Aborigines have camped, consumed liquor and moved on leaving an absolute mess comprising broken bottles, wrecked cars and other rubbish. Because of the broken glass, large areas of this land are probably ruined for any future possible use'.

Typical of that is the area opposite the Stuart Highway emporium, along the Charles River, where there is buried acre after acre of broken and smashed glass. That occurred of course before the 2 km law. There is little or no chance of that ever being used as a recreation reserve because that glass will continue to move to the surface for years to come. The letter continues:

'It would seem to me that, having fouled one area, these people simply uproot and move on to fresh, unspoiled areas. A classic example of this is the land behind the drive-in picture theatre and Yirara College. It is quite obvious from the remains of these campers that much of the drinking is either beer or flagon wine. I can assure you that the impression gained by visitors to Alice Springs arriving by train is not a pretty one and, in fact, several weeks back a passenger train was stoned, resulting in broken windows.

It is of little use Aboriginal organisations yelling about the need for more camping areas and it would appear to me the more camping areas we allocate the worse the situation becomes. It is also noted that, in recent days, the Tangentyere Liquor Committee have lodged objections to the renewal of many take-away outlets in Alice Springs but, at the same time, the Aboriginal organisations are now

campaigning for Aboriginal drinking clubs. Given that alcohol is a problem with certain Aboriginal drinkers, I believe that these organisations' time could be better spent on an education program with their own people rather than trying to shut down one outlet and then proposing to open others.

I am now firmly convinced that many of these illegal campers have been expelled from their own communities for their anti-social behaviour, associated with alcohol consumption, and I do not believe that any resident, black or white, in Alice Springs should be forced to tolerate this behaviour in either the township of Alice Springs or the surrounding areas'.

Every member is able to judge whether a public stance he or she takes is popular or unpopular. I would be the first to admit that some letters to the editor have attacked my statement, but let me assure all members that dozens of people of Aboriginal descent in Alice Springs have phoned me to say that it is about time because this problem is now out of hand.

Item 2 in the letter is the basis for the member attacking me on racial grounds. He never goes a little bit further; he never sought a copy of the letter. I do not know whether he is illiterate or not. Certainly, he could have had a copy or I would have read it to him. The next item is unroadworthy vehicles and vehicles registered interstate. This is an issue that has been of concern to me for some time and one which I have taken up with ministers on a number of occasions:

'Both of these items have long been a problem in central Australia and, in some cases, are correlated, particularly those vehicles that dealers are bringing across the border and selling without having undergone roadworthiness tests'.

Is that worth a pat on the back from the member for MacDonnell or another brickbat?

'I believe that the legislation governing this is in need of urgent and complete revision. Concerning unroadworthy vehicles, I have been made aware of a number of users where vehicles have been inspected and ordered off the road by midnight, and the certificates pertaining to the defects fixed to the windscreens, only to have the motorist drive into the scrub and smash the windscreens'.

I suggest that all honourable members in central Australia check with both the police and motor registration officials to see if that is true or not.

'I now believe that legislation covering roadworthiness checks should be much tougher and vehicles so inspected and decreed unroadworthy be towed away. I am certain that the paperwork associated with these checks is fairly cumbersome and should be investigated with a view to simplifying the procedure for inspecting officers.

On another point, but related to these vehicles, is the number of passengers being carried in some vehicles. From a safety point of view, I believe that, in many cases, the number of passengers in sedans and other vehicles is way over the safe driving limit.

Concerning people who have taken up residence in central Australia but continue to drive the vehicles with interstate registration plates, I believe a publicity campaign advising motorists of their legal standing concerning registration and insurance should be mounted prior to a crackdown and registration checks by authorities. I am of the opinion that, in many cases, motorists are deliberately maintaining interstate registration to avoid roadworthiness checks and, in some cases, business companies are utilising interstate registered vehicles. Quite apart from the legal aspects, this is costing the Territory a loss in revenue.

One question arises concerning accidents involving those cars whose owners are now Northern Territory residents, and I would appreciate your advice concerning the legal status of both parties involved in these accidents.

I am certain you realise the importance of the issues raised in this letter and I await your reply'.

The editorial in the Centralian Advocate commented on some of the items in my letter to the Chief Minister. In essence, it said: 'A good slice of the community would share Mr Vale's anger at the smashed flagons and illegal campers around the town area and it is about time something was done?'

Let me finish on this note. I have lived in central Australia longer than the member for MacDonnell and the member for Stuart combined, and I have spent a great deal of that time amongst Aboriginal communities. My concern is not only for the whites in central Australia but for a large number of Aboriginal people, both those in the bush and those in central Australia. Many years ago, I played football for Pioneer Football Club. In those days, 6 full-blood Aboriginal fellows came from Hermannsburg every weekend to play football with us and, believe me, they were top footballers. Today, sadly, only one of them is still alive. The other 5 are dead as a result of alcohol or alcohol-related accidents. It is a sad reflection on the community but it is an issue which I first raised with the Chief Minister on 19 February and one which I will continue to raise.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION Member for Stuart

Mr EDE (Stuart): Mr Deputy Speaker, the honourable member for Braitling stated that I had camped on the outskirts of Ti Tree new camp because I had alcohol on board and had been chipped for this matter, I believe his words were 'at Willowra'. I would never take alcohol into a dry area. For the benefit of the honourable member, I have never camped on the outskirts of Ti Tree new camp. As is the case elsewhere in my electorate, I have a particular camping area there, one which I have arranged with the people as being a place where I should camp while I am there so that we can meet to discuss issues.

Concerning his remarks relating to Willowra, I do not even know what he was talking about. If he wishes to repeat those remarks outside the Assembly in front of witnesses, I will take the appropriate action.

Mr SETTER (Jingili): Mr Deputy Speaker, I felt it appropriate tonight to inform the Assembly of some of the issues of concern to me in the northern suburbs of Darwin and, in particular, in my electorate. It is particularly appropriate that I speak on this matter because it is relevant to the

discussion earlier this evening. However, I will address several issues separately.

We heard the member for Arnhem advise us at an earlier time of the large number of Aboriginal people involved in the outstation movement - people who are moving away from settlements into the bush. I do not doubt for one moment that that is true. However, let me assure the honourable member that a large number of Aboriginal people, in fact I believe just as many, are now moving into our major townships. They are doing this without having arranged for suitable accommodation before they come. There are those of us who hold urban electorates who would be well aware of the difficulties that are created. Let me acquaint members with some of the issues which I have to address continually. These are facts.

There are a number of well-established Aboriginal camps around the major towns. In fact, around Darwin there are probably 10 or more established town camps, as they are called. I understand that these are occupied by people from different settlements and perhaps different clan groups. I think I am right in saying that people from a particular clan group tend to go to a particular town camp when they visit Darwin, for example. They do this because they find that they are not compatible with people from another clan group, and I can understand that. However, the result is that some people who come to town and who do not identify with an existing town camp find that they do not have any accommodation. They then visit a friend - and I will come to that in a moment - or they find a suitable site on which to camp. That is exactly what happens. Sometimes they impose themselves on friends or relations who occupy Housing Commission homes. I do not have any problem at all with friends or relatives visiting somebody in the town and staying with them. That is not a problem; other people do it all the time.

However, in recent times, I have had numerous complaints regarding transient Aboriginal people camping along Rapid Creek. Perhaps the honourable member for Millner has had similar problems. They are camping along Rapid Creek adjacent to the Water Gardens and also in the ablution blocks located behind the ovals in my electorate. I have had complaints from local residents. In fact, I have checked it out and discovered that a number of Aboriginal people from time to time camp in the ablution block behind the Moil shopping centre. That is a fact of life.

Apart from the health hazards created by people camping in such areas, there is the debris that they leave behind - empty beer cans, empty flagons and other associated debris. This situation is totally unacceptable to our community and causes problems for residents and law enforcement officers alike. When I say this, I am not blaming the Aboriginal people. I am saying that this is the situation.

Mr Deputy Speaker, there is another matter to which I draw your attention, and that is the abuse of Housing Commission houses. Many of these houses are occupied by Aboriginal people. Let me point out that I have no problem whatsoever with Aboriginal people or anybody else occupying Housing Commission homes. However, I am acutely aware that the majority of complaints I receive from residents emanate from disturbances that occur in the houses, particularly Housing Commission houses, occupied by Aboriginal people. Again, that is a fact.

The nature of these complaints includes drunken fights and brawls, damage to Housing Commission property, local residents being threatened and visitors

numbering up to and in excess of 20 persons. They arrive from bush settlements and descend upon their friends or relatives who are currently occupying a Housing Commission home. The house is designed for an average family of 5 or 6 or thereabouts. Suddenly, there are 20 or 25 people staying in the 1 house. The facilities cannot cope.

In one case, I received a complaint from residents who drew my attention to a Housing Commission house which had been vacant for 6 weeks and was being used by transient Aboriginal people who camped there at night but who moved off during the day. I inspected the house and found it to be an internal wreck. The grass was 0.5 m high, vines were growing through broken louvres, tiles had been removed, the stove had been busted etc. I complained immediately to the Housing Commission which advised me that, as far as it was concerned, the house was still occupied by an Aboriginal family to which it had been rented except that that Aboriginal family had not occupied the house for 6 weeks. The Housing Commission also informed me that the rent was paid up until the following Friday. As far as it was concerned, the house was still occupied. As soon as I drew the matter to its attention, the Housing Commission was very prompt. Men were out there the next morning and had the yard and house cleaned up and repaired. They did an excellent job in a very short time.

Mr Deputy Speaker, subsequent inquiries revealed that the rent was being paid by a welfare organisation despite the vacation of the house some weeks before. Nobody had notified that welfare organisation nor the Housing Commission that the house was vacant. Because it was vacant, other people moved in. How one addresses that sort of problem, I really do not know. However, it does highlight that a great need exists for the establishment of additional facilities in which transients who come in from the settlements can be accommodated and are not forced to impose themselves on other people or find a suitable camp somewhere along the creek or in an ablution block.

Given the number of complaints I have received, it is obvious that a major problem exists which must be addressed by the responsible authorities. I believe that the Housing Commission must develop a system of monitoring its rental housing in order to more easily and quickly identify problem areas. Government welfare organisations must upgrade their controls over payments of rent on behalf of disadvantaged people so that they can quickly identify situations where they are making welfare payments for no reason. These problems must be addressed quickly as taxpayers' money is being used to fund these abuses.

Let me move on to another matter. Following my representations to the Darwin City Council regarding the appalling condition of the area around Moil oval, it agreed to carry out the work and, subsequently, the area was grassed and a number of new trees were planted. The area is beautifully green, a significant improvement on the moonscape which existed beforehand. I take this opportunity to thank the Darwin City Council for its cooperation and for its excellent work in my electorate. However, as a result of the actions of others, all is not rosy.

Moil oval is used by quite a number of sporting organisations virtually every afternoon and on Saturday and Sunday. It is used for sports training and, from time to time, other matches are played there. That is what suburban ovals are all about. However, a problem arises when people drive their cars to the oval. Instead of parking in the car park, which is conveniently provided about 20 paces from the oval, they choose to drive straight across

the gutter and up to the oval fence. The problem is that they are driving across newly-germinated grass and, particularly in periods after rain, they tear up the grass. They run over new trees which the council has planted and which the community has been looking forward to for some time. The community had become very frustrated by the condition of that area, and I have had some very complimentary comments made to me regarding the work that has been done there. It is very frustrating for local residents to find that unthinking people are destroying the good work that has been done. It would not matter if the grass had had the opportunity to consolidate. This grass is struggling to establish.

There have also been instances of vandals - louts, I would call them - deliberately breaking off new trees. There were some lovely trees about 1 m or so high which the council planted on a desolate area between the shopping centre and the toilet block. They had been growing there for probably 2 months. Someone came along and snapped them off. I really have great difficulty in understanding such mindless vandalism, particularly when local residents have waited so long to see their area beautified.

Since this problem arose, I have taken the matter up with the Darwin City Council verbally and in writing on several occasions. I refer particularly to the parking on the grass. The council has instructed its inspectors to check the area regularly. However, it is impossible for them to monitor the area 12 or 18 hours a day, and infringements are still occurring. There is only one answer and that is for the Darwin City Council to install log rail fencing around the grass area adjacent to the roadway to prevent vehicles crossing the kerb. A few unthinking people are destroying the good work of others and the Darwin City Council. Local residents should not allow that to happen. Let me assure the residents of Moil that I will continue to work with the Darwin City Council until the problem is overcome.

Mr Deputy Speaker, let me now turn to another issue involving the Darwin City Council. I am not having a gripe at the Darwin City Council; I think it has done quite a lot of good work in my area. I refer to the pedestrian crossing on Lee Point Road adjacent to Parer Drive. Recently, a public meeting was convened by the Moil Primary School Council which was attended by parents, aldermen and MLAs. The meeting passed the motion calling on the council to leave this particular pedestrian crossing in place and in fact upgrade it by the installation of pedestrian lights.

The matter first arose to prominence late last year when a young girl was knocked off her bike when attempting to negotiate that crossing. At the time, it was poorly marked because the paint had worn off. I was approached at the time by concerned parents. I inspected the crossing immediately and was able to confirm that it was inadequately identified. When I approached the council, I was advised that its intention was to remove the crossing because it did not meet the national standards for the average number of vehicles and pedestrians. That is nonsense because that sort of criterion cannot be applied to urban roads in the northern suburbs of Darwin. The criterion must be the safety of pedestrians and, in particular, of our children.

Mr McCARTHY (Victoria River): Mr Deputy Speaker, this morning, in answer to a question from me regarding the digital radio concentrator telephone service to Port Keats via Peppimenarti and Palumpa, the Chief Minister was able to enlighten the Assembly on the reasons for the delay - and it has been a very long delay. I have been aware of the reasons for some time. I refrained from saying anything about them previously because I thought it

might jeopardise the fairly sensitive negotiations that were under way between Telecom and the Northern Land Council. The reason behind the failure of Telecom to provide this facility is the avaricious and obstructive attitude of the Northern Land Council in relation to this development, and any other development that comes before it for consideration. With the Northern Land Council, this is an attitude which reflects its very nature. No matter what development is to take place on Aboriginal land, the land council's attitude is to rip off the developer - in this case, the Australian taxpayer - for every cent it can get.

Telecom has been trying to reach an agreement with the NLC to secure 6 sites en route to Port Keats for 3 whole years. The problem has not been with the Aboriginal people who live in the area - not at all. All 3 communities have begged in writing for the service and I have seen those documents. Telecom has numerous requests for the service in its possession. No Aboriginal person who will benefit from the service has sought compensation in any way for the 6 sites that Telecom seeks.

I might ask where the money would go if Telecom should be foolish enough to pay the demanded price. Certainly, it would not go to the traditional owners. They do not receive money for anything, including the royalties on cattle that have been collected down there over the years. They do not receive the money. More likely, it would go towards salaries for those highly-paid people in the bureaucracy of the Northern Land Council. They seek that money in order to justify their very existence.

What is the price that is being demanded for those 6 paltry sites? It is no less than \$30 000 per site. I think you are probably aware of the size of those sites, Mr Deputy Speaker. They are minuscule. \$1500 is the maximum price that Telecom will pay for such sites. Many of the stations that are receiving DRCS say: 'Forget about that. We do not want the money. Just provide the service as quickly as you can'. The Northern Land Council is asking \$30 000 a site. Originally, it asked for \$25 000. Of course, that was not satisfactory to Telecom because it normally paid \$1500. After some time, in sheer frustration and with a desire to get the service up and running, Telecom offered \$6000 a site. The NLC said: 'The price is now \$30 000 a site'.

All of those minuscule sites have been approved by the traditional owners. They have put no obstacle in the way of the service which they have asked for and which they desperately need. They are running businesses down there. There is Palumpa Station; Peppimenarti is trying to establish a tourist industry. There are many things happening. They need the service but the Northern Land Council says that it must have some money first. It recognises the service is being installed for its own benefit and that is why it is morally wrong to demand payment from the supplier. I can imagine what Telecom would say if I said that I wanted some money for the line to run across my frontyard. It would say: 'We do not need to give it to you. You need it'.

Over the 3 years that Telecom has been negotiating with the NLC, it has outlived a number of NLC negotiators. Each new negotiator has started his negotiations with: 'Who says the Aboriginal people want the service anyway?' It happens every time because the new bloke does not even bring the files. If they did their job and talked to the Aboriginal people, they would know that people definitely want the service. They would not have to ask the question. The NLC attitude is to screw the Aboriginal people and to screw the developer.

Over the years, I have heard much criticism of the various church missions for the paternalism that they have shown to Aboriginal people. I say this to those who make that criticism: the paternalism of church missions pales into insignificance when compared to the paternalism of the federal government. I refer to both the present and previous federal governments. The paternalism of the federal government pales into much greater insignificance when compared to the paternalism of the Northern Land Council and all other land councils for that matter. They rule the roost. They decide what will happen and all the people who own the land have to say is: 'We will do what you say'. They have no option. The land council does not show any recognition of the wishes of traditional owners and the land trusts that they form. It pays no attention to consultants employed by Aboriginal people to prepare development proposals.

I have had some experience in this. After years of trying to get the NLC to become involved in negotiations between a number of Aboriginal people in the Daly River-Port Keats area regarding development proposals for cattle, I was partly responsible for bringing all of the groups together and obtaining signed agreements. For most of the lengthy discussions, we were told to stay out. When they got down to the final negotiations, they asked us to leave so that we did not interfere. After all that was done and signed agreements had been obtained, the Northern Land Council told us that that was not acceptable because it did not do the negotiating. It said that we had no right to talk to Aboriginal people. We were told to forget about the fact that the Aboriginal people paid for consultants. We had no right to talk to them. It was not their business to employ us; it was NLC business.

After a further 3 years, to the detriment of the 2 major Aboriginal cattle enterprises in the area, the NLC failed to obtain any new agreements. It has failed to achieve agreement. It does not know how to achieve it - or maybe it does not want to. I suspect that that is more likely to be the case because, in the meantime, it is building up royalties collected in the area for cattle at \$15 per head, and collecting interest on that too. Who knows how much that amounts to now? Where is it going? None of the Aboriginal people there has seen any of it. It appears to me and to many Aboriginal people that the main task of the NLC, as perceived by the NLC, is to obstruct development, whether it be Aboriginal development or any other development, including the improvement of facilities to service the very people it is appointed to serve.

I trust that Telecom will not give in to the avarice of the NLC, even though I know that that will mean that the people of Peppimenarti, Port Keats and Palumpa will not obtain the service that they have asked for and which is essential to their continued development. I understand that the equipment that was set aside to complete the DRCS to Port Keats by June this year is to be installed elsewhere because of the delay created by the Northern Land Council. I have been aware that that was likely to happen. I have been talking to the Territory manager of Telecom on this matter for a good 18 months and he has been saying to me: 'Just hold off a while. Negotiations are at a very sensitive stage. We hope to reach a reasonable solution before long. Do not upset the applecart'. It has gone beyond that. Telecom had hoped to have that agreement completed by 1 November 1985 or it would consider transferring the equipment elsewhere. That was delayed until March 1986. It still does not have the agreement and is not likely to get it. Consequently, that equipment will go elsewhere and the people of Port Keats will not get the service.

These people from the Northern Land Council are the ones the Northern Territory government is expected to negotiate with in order to get services across Aboriginal land. We are aware of the problems of getting water, power and a road across Arnhem Land. These services across Aboriginal land are required by the people of the Northern Territory. These are the sorts of people we have to deal with. The chances of obtaining any reasonable agreements are almost nil. These are the same people that the miners have to negotiate with in order to develop the resources of the Northern Territory. There is little chance that they will have any success, particularly with the recent noises coming from the federal government in its attempts to appease Aboriginal people following its withdrawal of land rights proposals for the states. Mr Deputy Speaker, the actions of these pretenders to the chair of government in the Northern Territory must be controlled. The Northern Land Council has to be brought to heel if we are to see any sort of continued development for all Territorians.

Mr FIRMIN (Ludmilla): Mr Speaker, I want to respond to an inference made this morning by the member for Stuart. In his question to the Chief Minister on the attitudes of the Northern Territory government to telephone services to the remote parts of the Northern Territory, he inferred that the government did not have the people's best interests at heart, and that we are taking a course which would cause stress to all Territorians beyond the major trunk routes. Nothing could be further from the truth.

The member for Stuart has an electorate which is enormous in size. It is probably one of the least-served areas in the Northern Territory in terms of telecommunications. It is a remote area and he knows the difficulties of communicating with the people in it. He has heard constant debate in the Assembly about the problems of providing services to the remote areas. He has also served on a committee of this Assembly which gathered evidence on this matter over a long period. He received evidence about the problems connected with that sort of service in the bush, and he knows of the problems we have faced in trying to deal with Telecom over its attitudes to a terrestrial-base system. He also knows of the problems we are having in the northern half of the Territory, particularly at this moment. I suspect they may even occur in the southern region now that Telecom is to redirect its attentions there. In dealing with the Northern Land Council to obtain sites for the microwave bearers, after 2½ to 3 years of negotiation, Telecom has been unable to obtain one site on Aboriginal land in the northern part of the Territory. It has now officially decided to disband its activity in the north and head for the southern region to try to negotiate with the Central Land Council to continue with the terrestrial-base digital radio concentrator system.

The member for Stuart is also aware of discussions that took place with Telecom over a long period. The aim was to get it to see reason in relation to a mix and match. From memory, it was one of his ideas that a mix and match service - terrestrial and satellite based - would be a very good method of overcoming these problems and servicing the whole of the Northern Territory. Telecom is not prepared to talk to us about this mix and match service. It does not really want to know that there is an alternative to a terrestrial-base service. It does not want to consider a satellite service unless it is provided by its very expensive ITERRA system whose costs are far too great for a service of the type required. When discovering the issues of terrestrial versus satellite systems, Telecom continues to maintain that a terrestrial-base service is the best service. It argues this on the basis of cost, and on the basis of technology. It continues to adopt the stance that it does not wish to be involved in a satellite operation because it does not

meet Telecom's high standards of service. It says that, if it put a satellite service into place, it would cause continuous problems for consumers at some time in the future. It believes there would be a minor distortion in the voice level because of the variation in the distances from the earth stations to the satellite and return. What it conveniently forgets is that its sister service, the Overseas Telecommunications Service, was asked to look at a satellite service to supply telephones to Christmas Island, Cocos Island and the Antarctic bases of Casey, Mawson and Davis at the same time as Telecom was looking at the terrestrial DRCS program for remote Australia.

It is interesting to note that this did not seem to worry OTC one iota. OTC maintains the overseas telecommunication links via INTELSAT for Telecom, and provides the Australian gateways for the International Subscriber Dialling Service, terrestrially organised throughout Australia on the Telecom service, and linked by a satellite overseas which most of us have used at some time and find no problems with. Yet OTC can turn around and say that a satellite service does not serve the best needs of territorial Australians, but can serve offshore Australians quite well.

Timing in relation to the Cocos and Christmas Islands service was also interesting. In 1984, a tender was let for a service to Cocos and Christmas Islands. Only 17 months elapsed - covering design, purchase, installation, proving and setting - before that service was operational. Only 17 months was required to establish a complete service through 2 island areas and the Antarctic bases. It serves them extremely well and it has the features we would like to see in the Northern Territory and which would solve our problems.

It is interesting to read some of the information from the studies made into that region because it parallels aspects of our remote areas of the Northern Territory. We can relate to 1 area that has 1 telephone channel part-time, 3 telegraph channels part-time, and a leased telegraph channel full-time. What sort of service is it? It has poor quality transmission and it is congested. This is the present HF radio service that used to exist in one of the islands. The other island had an HF service similar to that in the Northern Territory. It had 2 telephone channels part-time, 2 telegraph channels part-time and a reasonable transmission quality, but it was congested all the time.

What is new, Mr Deputy Speaker? That is exactly the situation that we have within the Northern Territory at the moment with our present HF radio services. It was no problem to OTC which, apart from running the INTELSAT service, sits on the International Standards Board. It is quite happy to accept the standard provided for the Christmas and Cocos Islanders but does not consider it to be a reasonable standard of service for the outback of Australia, particularly the Northern Territory DRCS-type service. It is amazing that this type of service, which is quite acceptable to OTC, is unacceptable to Telecom.

Mr SMITH (Millner): Mr Speaker, I wish to raise 2 matters tonight. The first concerns the recent furore over the government's appointment of a director to the Office of Equal Employment Opportunities. At this stage, I certainly do not want to become involved in the matter of who was appointed to the position, but there are a number of general concerns that I have about procedures followed in the selection of that person for the job.

When the matter was referred to him by an unsuccessful applicant, Commissioner Palmer rejected the application to overturn the decision. In so doing, he said: 'The EEO opportunities are not as modern in the NTPS as in state public sector organisations'. Judging by his comments after that, the Chief Minister accepted that there may be a problem with our existing procedures and undertook to review the general orders of the public service to ensure that our EEO procedures are equal to those in the states of Australia.

Two matters relating to general orders were of specific concern in this matter. I am advised that no duty statement or job description was made available for this EEO position. The only official information made available to prospective applicants was an advertisement placed in the newspaper. I understand that some of the applicants were given a copy of the speech made by the Chief Minister in this Assembly. No detailed duty statement was made available to the applicants. Secondly, no selection criteria were prepared for the position by the interviewing panel which would have given it some objective criteria against which to measure candidates.

In the past, the government has talked, at some length and with some pride, about the fact that promotion in the Northern Territory Public Service is based on merit as opposed to more traditional systems in which promotion is based on seniority. There is a major difference between saying that promotion is based on merit, and espousing that as a principle, and making it work in practice. An essential factor in making it work in practice is to have detailed selection criteria for interviewing panels to use. In other words, an interviewing panel needs to come up with a set of criteria relevant to the job against which a candidate's strengths and weaknesses can be measured. It needs to be a consistent set of criteria so that applicants have an equal chance to impress the selection panel on the criteria which have been judged essential for that job.

Without that, you cannot have promotion on merit on an objective basis. What you have instead is promotion on merit on a more subjective basis, the basis perhaps of how a person generally presents at interview or on how a person generally appeals to one person or another person on an interview panel. We all know that some people present better than others. Some people come over well in general terms whereas other people may not have the same capacity to sell themselves in that particular situation. You can only get beneath that surface gloss and get to the real merits of a person if you have selection criteria. There must be a well-thought-out and detailed set of questions that get to the point of what the job is about and measures each candidate up with the job.

I am advised that that did not happen in the selection of the Director of Equal Employment Opportunities position. It probably does not happen in relation to many other positions as well. What I am talking about is an extension of the principle that everybody has accepted: you should select people on merit; you should be into equal employment opportunities in a meaningful way. People addressed their minds to the matter of how to make it meaningful. The concept of selection criteria is the result. The government needs to address this because it is in everybody's interests to have the best people promoted to positions in the public service. To promote the best people effectively, there must be an objective set of criteria against which they can be measured.

The more general issue that has come out of the filling of this position is the concept of government in the Northern Territory. I guess governments

generally are heading more and more in the direction of taking power away from the essential employing body - for example, the Public Service Commissioner - and giving more power in return to separate authorities and departments. It is a world-wide trend at present, and there is nothing wrong with it in theory. But the problem is that, the more you weaken central controls, as defined in the old concept of a central public service, the greater the chance that centrifugal forces will start to pull the administration apart. In other words, a balance needs to be struck. There are certain essential core issues that are necessary to be maintained for the effective running of the public service and for the public service to be pulling in the same direction. I know that the government, particularly under the regime of the new Chief Minister, is intent on a decentralisation process. Again I say that I have no objection in principle to that, but it must be done carefully, otherwise you will find that, instead of having a coherent public service with a coherent set of values, you will have a set of independent fiefdoms which are pulling in separate directions and not working for the common good of the government and the people of the Northern Territory.

One of the areas in which that is important is equal employment opportunities. I cannot see how you can avoid having a central core of values on that question, determined centrally by the Public Service Commissioner's Office and then spread out amongst the departments for their guidance when they are implementing EEO programs. I would be most disturbed if the Public Service Commissioner hived off that important area and left it to the discretion of the individual departments and authorities. That would not work; you would have different authorities and departments interpreting what EEO means in completely different ways. That would lead to chaos and a considerable step backwards in the concepts of EEO that have been advanced so far in the Northern Territory.

Mr Speaker, some problems have come to my attention in the Motor Vehicle Dealers Act. I am sure that the government is aware of the problems that I am going to talk about because, in November 1984, the then minister announced a review of the act. In fact, in March 1985, the consumer affairs newsletter stated that legislation would be introduced late in 1985. However, we have not seen that legislation. I am not sure what has happened to it. I am not aware of any such legislation being introduced at these sittings.

In terms of the Motor Vehicle Dealers Act, there are problems with warranties. The increasing trend that was remarked on in the annual report of the consumer affairs section was the way several dealers have asked consumers to forgo their rights to warranty in return for an alleged cash consideration on the price of used vehicles. Many consumers sign away their warranty rights because they do not read the contract - and those contracts are sometimes quite difficult to read - or they do not realise its significance. Again, I do not have any problem with people who, having read the contracts, are prepared to sign away their warranty rights but, quite clearly, there have been occasions where consumers have not realised what they have done. I think it is important that the government seeks ways in which consumers can be made to understand clearly that, by signing away their warranty rights, they are in fact missing out on considerable protection.

A way that it could be done would be to prepare a separate piece of paper, not attached to the contract, that a person would have to sign at the time of signing the contract. That paper would spell out very simply and in clear language that, by signing that piece of paper, a person was forgoing his warranty rights and what that meant.

The second problem in the act is that, at present, a motor vehicle dealer who does not want to fulfil his warranty requirements basically gets off scot free. There are no penalty provisions within the act to cover that situation. A person who wants to make a warranty claim against the motor vehicle dealer who is not prepared to accept that claim has to take the matter to the Small Claims Court. I would point out that that is a difficult and, for many people, a time-consuming exercise. There are better ways of ensuring that warranties are enforced. It concerns me that, in that situation, there is no provision for a motor vehicle dealer to be fined or have his licence suspended or, in extreme circumstances, have his licence taken away completely.

It seems to me that there is a serious weakness in the existing legislation in those 2 areas. I hope that the minister who, unfortunately, is not present tonight will address those 2 problems.

Motion agreed to; the Assembly adjourned.

Mr Speaker Steele took the Chair at 10 am.

MATTER OF PRIVILEGE

Mr SPEAKER: Honourable members, yesterday the Leader of the Opposition raised with me a question of privilege, alleging that the Minister for Primary Production had misled the Assembly in an answer he had given to a question during question time. Mr Collins requested that I refer the matter to the Committee of Privileges pursuant to standing order 84.

I have examined the documents tabled by Mr Collins and have taken note of his statement. I have also noted the rebuttal made by the honourable minister in his personal explanation following question time and I have considered the letter tabled later by the minister from a Mr A.B. Cowan, Group Account Executive of Westpac, in which Mr Cowan states that the recording of events by Mr Moore is inaccurate to the extent that he had never been contacted by Mr Hatton and, in fact, was contacted by Dr Richard Madden on the matter. Mr Cowan further states that, at the time of receipt, he manually corrected the copy of Mr Moore's memo sent to him. With these facts in mind, I do not propose to refer Mr Collins' complaint to the committee.

Mr B. COLLINS (Opposition Leader)(by leave): Mr Speaker, I have carefully read the document tabled in the Assembly yesterday afternoon that you referred to in your finding. I note that the document was transmitted from Brisbane at 12.30 pm; that is, during the luncheon adjournment yesterday. I note also that it is page 3 of the material that was sent to the honourable minister and, presuming that page 1 is the cover note that goes on the FAX machine, page 2 has not been tabled in the Assembly. Obviously, it is a piece of correspondence that the minister has not disclosed and I will pursue that at a more appropriate time.

I simply draw members' attention to paragraph 3 of the letter from Westpac which in fact attests to the accuracy of the substance of the document. However, I accept Mr Cowan's assurances that it was the head of Treasury who made the telephone contact referred to. Mr Speaker, I ask you to take no further action on the matter and support your finding.

Mr HATTON (Primary Production)(by leave): Mr Speaker, I appreciate the Leader of the Opposition's statement in respect of not seeking any further action to be taken. However, he indicated that there may have been some information that I failed to disclose. Mr Speaker, I give you my personal assurance that what I tabled in this Assembly yesterday after the luncheon adjournment was exactly the documentation that I personally received. You will note, Mr Speaker, that it had a 'with compliments' slip pinned to it. I can only presume that the other documentation is still with Westpac. I would not like honourable members to assume that there was any information that I received and did not disclose.

Mr TUXWORTH (Chief Minister)(by leave): Mr Speaker, for the benefit of the honourable member, my understanding is that every transmission has 2 cover pages. I think that is worth investigating before we make a big fuss about it in here.

CENSURE MOTION
Chief Minister's Travelling Allowance

Mr B. COLLINS (Opposition Leader)(by leave): Mr Speaker, I move that this Assembly censure the Chief Minister and Treasurer because: (1) the Chief Minister did knowingly receive amounts of public money by way of tax free travelling allowances to which he was not entitled; (2) the Chief Minister's action in so doing was tantamount to fraudulent behaviour and would have resulted in dismissal and the institution of criminal proceedings had he been a public servant; and this Assembly calls upon the Chief Minister to resign forthwith.

It an interesting question time this morning. The Chief Minister knew perfectly well what I was getting at from the first question; that was obvious. He tried as best he could to obfuscate and cloud the waters with absurd answers, and I will come to them in a minute. Finally, after realising that further obfuscation would result in a more ingnominius departure from the Legislative Assembly than he deserves at this moment, he came clean about what has been an extremely sorry episode indeed.

I intend to refer in a minute to some of the high-minded sentiments that the Chief Minister and Treasurer of the Northern Territory relayed recently to some senior Northern Territory public servants. They are certainly interesting in respect of his own behaviour because the Chief Minister of the Northern Territory has been guilty, on his own admission here this morning, of conducting a well-known scam for which a number of politicians have been caught out previously. They do not get caught out too often, but they do get caught out. It does the Chief Minister no credit as someone who heads a very large number of public servants in the Northern Territory. The facts of the matter are that the Chief Minister of the Northern Territory, who was then a minister, was caught out by the then Chief Minister in what is a well-known scam. He was caught well and truly with his pants down and his hands in the till. He was instructed - as has been admitted by the Chief Minister and Treasurer himself - by the then Chief Minister to pay that money back.

The reason I moved a censure motion is that I have been trying for over 9 months to get this information. I received 3 inaccurate replies in the process. I knew what was going on because it is a process with which I am familiar. This is my tenth year in this Assembly. I knew that the information that I had been given a year ago by a person connected with the media in Darwin - just a whisper - was true. A number of politicians have been caught out at this little game in Australia and they have all had to endure some fairly nasty consequences, which they deserved.

I spent 5 years in the Northern Territory Public Service and I used to see it going on around me in the public service. Being an old-fashioned Irish-Catholic, I have always resisted it myself. I have seen fraudulent statutory declarations signed in respect of accommodation. I have seen false travelling allowance claims submitted for travel that never took place. I have seen travel allowance claims submitted for annual leave when the people concerned were out at Wild Boar in the Northern Territory. That was back in the good old days when we had to drive in and out. Of course, these people received their full mileage entitlement even though they did not undertake the travel.

The Chief Minister and Treasurer of the Northern Territory knows that, if one of those public servants had been caught out, he would not have had the

option of quietly paying the money back. He would have been dismissed from the public service with the support of every single member of this Assembly, and there is no doubt about that. After the procedures had been gone through, he would have been sacked and criminal procedures for fraud would have been instituted. He would not have had the option - as the Chief Minister admitted this morning to his eternal disgrace - of quietly putting the money back in the till and having no more said about it because he was caught out by a Chief Minister who, I have not the slightest doubt - and I say that without reservation - would never have committed such an act himself. I flatter myself that, certainly in terms of personality, I know Paul Everingham fairly well after having worked with him for 10 years. He would never have done it. Honourable members will remember the debates in which he demonstrated those personal traits in this Assembly in relation to the behaviour of people in the Northern Territory, particularly in public office.

Mr Speaker, we had a resignation speech the other day from the Special Minister for Constitutional Development. In that speech, he said something that I completely agree with: that people demand and should receive a very high standard of service indeed from ministers of the Crown. When that service is in respect of the head of the government and the head of the Treasury, the onus of responsibility in relation to the use of public money, particularly when that public money is tax free, is very heavy indeed.

Mr Speaker, as a former Northern Territory public servant of 5 years' standing, I know that travelling allowance was the cream on the cake, and I am sure it still is. When one went bush, the one thing that compensated for the very lousy wages in those days was the T/A. The reason why it was so good - even though it was only \$7.50 a day at the time - was because no tax was taken out of it. The tax-free nature of travelling allowance imposes a particular responsibility. The receipt of tax-free travelling allowance when you are not entitled to receive it is a very serious fraud indeed. It not only involves defrauding the public purse but the Commissioner for Taxation as well.

A number of criminal charges can proceed from these matters. The Chief Minister, had he been an ordinary public servant, and despite any reparation that was made at a later stage, would have been subject to those criminal proceedings and he certainly would have been sacked from the public service. I hope that I do not have to point out to any honourable member that the Chief Minister, on the basis of his own statements to this Assembly this morning, deserves to go. I say that with some degree of personal sadness because I admire Ian Tuxworth as a politician. I had no idea that the questions that I would ask in relation to the statement he issued last year on economising on overseas travel would lead to the sorry point that they have led to. But I knew something was being hidden after about the sixth month of failing to obtain this information. I started nosing around. I can tell the Chief Minister that the information was not volunteered to me. I nosed it out because I knew there was something going on. I am not a mug and I did not like being treated as one.

The Chief Minister has an obligation in this Assembly this morning, and that is why I moved this censure motion. I hope he has sent for the information right now. I am quite happy to stand here and speak, and I dare say the Deputy Leader of the Opposition will join me shortly, in order to give him plenty of opportunity to produce it. I have waited 9 months for this information. I have received only half of it. I sent a question to the Chief Minister. I hope I do not need to remind honourable members of this Assembly

of the protocol attached to questions to ministers. The questions are sent to ministers and the ministers are responsible for the answers. The answers have to be checked and approved by the minister. He stamps his responsibility on the answers before I receive them.

I asked 2 questions, and a reply was deliberately withheld to 1 of them. I knew it was on. I asked how much tax free travelling allowance had been paid to the Chief Minister. I asked very specifically in the second part of the question - and it is here for anyone who wants to look at it - if any reimbursements had been made by any officer holder in respect of travelling allowance received. There was no response to that question at all; it was simply not dealt with.

The reimbursement of money is not an unusual thing. I have done it myself in respect of being prepaid T/A because normally I do not use my American Express card for things other than entertainment. If you do not go on the trip, you pay the money back. I did that just a few weeks ago. I was supposed to go to Tennant Creek and was paid about \$100 in T/A. I did not go and the money was sent back to the Chan Building immediately. That has happened a dozen times. It was not an unusual question, yet it was not answered.

Mr Speaker, is any member of this Assembly, especially any minister, prepared to make a fool of himself in his electorate? That is what might happen. A minister of the government was instructed - those are his words - by the Chief Minister to pay back an amount that, on his own admission, appears to be somewhere between \$10 000 and \$15 000 in respect of travelling allowance for which he was not entitled. Can we believe that that would have slipped his mind? Can we believe that, when the answer was approved by him - and it was - he would not see part 2 of the question in front of him? After having had to sign a cheque for at least \$7000 to \$9000 - although I suspect it would have been closer to \$15 000 to \$16 000 - would it have just slipped his mind?

The Chief Minister had a remarkable loss of memory this morning, as honourable members would have noted. I point out, particularly to the good Christian men of principle on the other side - the member for Victoria River and the member for the Uniting Church opposite, a Protestant and a Catholic - that the Chief Minister's answer to the first question, that he could not remember whether any part of it related to accommodation in Darwin, was absurd. It was equally absurd to answer the second question by saying: 'How can you expect me to have that detail because I do not know how much money was spent in respect of accommodation in Darwin'.

The facts are that the Chief Minister left Tennant Creek in a blaze of publicity in December 1981. From that point on, and certainly from the beginning of 1982, the Chief Minister was not entitled to receive 1¢ in travelling allowance for any night spent in Darwin. If the Chief Minister were an honest man, which he is not - and that has been demonstrated in a very dramatic fashion this morning - without straining his memory at all, he could have said: 'Of course, the answer to the Leader of the Opposition's question is that I have been resident in Fannie Bay since December 1981 and I could not have received any money at all in respect of accommodation in Darwin since that time'. Instead of that, he offered the disgraceful answer that he could not remember whether he had received \$22 300 tax free for living with his wife and family. Like all politicians, I spend a lot of time away from my wife and family. I am always glad to get back. I unpack my suitcase, have a meal and

chat with my wife and kids. I do not expect the taxpayers to pay me for that privilege just because I have a mortgage on a \$160 000 house - I think that was the figure the press gave.

I do not need any further information from the Chan Building to move the censure motion. The Chief Minister stands condemned by his own answers here this morning. We have a very large public service in the Northern Territory, one in which high standards are required. The Chief Minister himself has a preoccupation with some of those high standards. He delivered a speech on that recently to senior public servants and I was defending him for it yesterday because it did not constitute a restructuring of the public service. This is what he said to senior public servants in the Northern Territory Public Service: 'The public service manager must strive to ensure' - and he will stand condemned for this - 'that information given and received is not edited selectively or refined so that a wrong result is inevitable'. That is a high-tone, new-age-thinking direction from the Northern Territory's head of government to our public service. You do not selectively edit information. This is the reason why, and I quote the Chief Minister again:

'To achieve this, there must be trust. Trust will never be the forte of the manager who manipulates people by manipulating information. I would have to say that is one of my pet dislikes. Another of my pet dislikes is the manager who, given delegation for expenditure, exceeds his budget, especially those who exceed their budget without prior approval'.

Mr Speaker, what kind of fool did the Northern Territory's Chief Minister think I was when he sent me an answer to a question which has him receiving 5 times the amount of almost every other minister and myself in respect of tax-free travelling allowance? A perfectly clear and reasonable explanation was provided for the Special Minister for Constitutional Development and his colleague, the Minister for Health. Their amounts of money are high but unexceptional. They are ministers resident in Alice Springs who require constant travel to Darwin and they are entitled to receive those amounts of money. When you then see a figure which is \$7000 higher than that, alarm bells go off.

The Chief Minister of the Northern Territory set very high standards for his public servants only just a few days ago. I will say this very carefully - and I use my words advisedly - to every single colleague of the Northern Territory's Chief Minister who must vote on this matter this morning. I cannot say this strongly enough. If you condone this action, which you would condemn out of hand if it was practised by any one of the Northern Territory's public servants, you then become accessories to this fraud that has been committed by the Chief Minister and was quietly fixed up. It is a pretty onerous responsibility on the Chief Minister's colleagues, particularly his ministerial colleagues, because, if they approve this action of the Chief Minister to register his place of living at a place where he knew he was not entitled to do it, and thus receive amounts of tax-free allowances 5 times that of any other minister in the government, then they are then saying it is open slather for every public servant in the Northern Territory to do exactly the same. How many of them are there? There were 15 000 at the last count. The Assembly would be saying: 'Righto fellows, righto ladies, get into it. Trundle around a bundle of T/A forms to every public servant and the devil take the hindmost'. The principle would be set. They would be told: 'No problems. You stick them in, you get the money, you cheat the Commissioner for Taxation the way the Northern Territory's Chief Minister did, and the

Northern Territory's Treasury, and you will have to worry only if you get caught, as he was. Then fellows, do not worry about it. We will just make a quiet private arrangement with you to pay the money back, and no more will be said about it'.

Is any minister in this government prepared to stand up and say seriously that that is the standard that he wants to set for the Northern Territory Public Service? Would anyone seriously question the fact that the minister's responsibility is an even higher one than that, particularly the minister who is in charge of the public service, the head of government and the head of the Treasury?

It is with some sadness that I have to move this motion. I was hoping - and my staff can attest to this - that the explanation provided in this Assembly this morning would be a reasonable one and that there would have been no need to proceed with this motion. But the information I was provided with as a result of my nosing around from the original stupid answers I got to the questions I asked was quite straightforward. I have the Hansard here in front of me. It has been confirmed this morning in the Assembly by the man himself that, when he shifted to Darwin, he continued to lodge travelling allowance claims for his home in Tennant Creek. There may be some people out there who will not understand the implications of this, but 41% of the work force in Darwin, the public servants, will understand absolutely. He continued to lodge those travelling allowance claims when in fact he was living in Darwin. I think the NT News said it at the time. I have the newspaper extracts here. I am not going to bother dishing them out. 'Slim leaves town quietly' was the headline in the Centralian Advocate. He had sold his house in Tennant Creek. He did that knowingly and fraudulently. There is no other explanation for it. On his own admission, he claimed T/A of around \$10 000.

Mr Speaker, I have moved the censure motion for a number of reasons. After 9 months, I failed to get answers to these questions. I think that all honourable members, and certainly his colleagues, will agree that the exact amount of the cheque that was placed back in the till after he was caught with his fingers in it needs to be revealed during this debate. The Chief Minister knows full well that that information is readily available. It can be brought over here and he can respond to it when he has an opportunity to speak shortly. I do not know what the exact amount is so I am not going to speculate on it any further. The Chief Minister says \$9000. My information is that it is closer to \$15 000.

There is a problem and I want to reiterate it. It is in respect of the Chief Minister's colleagues. If they oppose this censure motion and if they indicate that they are perfectly happy with this arrangement, then they will have set a new low standard of behaviour for ministers of the Crown that is certainly not shared by the Leader of Government Business, as indicated in the speech he delivered here the other day. They will have indicated that not one of them is fit to run a public service in the Northern Territory. I hope every one of them speaks in this debate. In my view, it is the most serious censure motion that has been moved in this Assembly in the 10 years that I have been here. That is without doubt. It is petty graft.

Mr Perron: ...forged documents.

Mr B. COLLINS: I look forward to hearing the comments of the honourable member for Fannie Bay in this debate. I know this is his last term in parliament. I know he will be saying...

Mr Perron: Is that so? You have you been reading my mail, have you?

Mr B. COLLINS: I know he will be saying farewell. I am glad that they are treating this with such levity because I am sure that the public servants in their control will not be laughing quite so hard.

Mr Dale: This is your last term. You're off to the Senate aren't you?

Mr B. COLLINS: Mr Speaker, I am very glad that the government has responded in this happy fashion to the information that has been placed before the Legislative Assembly in question time this morning. For the benefit of the member for Wanguri, the honourable Chief Minister and Treasurer - the head of the Northern Territory Public Service - has admitted in this Assembly this morning that he received around \$10 000 from fraudulent travelling allowance claims because he listed as a place of living a place where he was not living. In fact, he announced that to the world with great fanfare. He was caught out by the former Chief Minister of the Northern Territory. Some degree of criticism obviously needs to be levelled at the former Chief Minister of the Northern Territory for keeping this under wraps and covering it up. But we are all aware, and we do not want to get too sanctimonious about this, that the CLP would have had a pretty hard time handling that information if it had come out.

I suppose that the former Chief Minister of the Northern Territory, Mr Paul Everingham, deserves to be given a little pat on the back and a kick in the backside at the same time. Obviously, he should not have kept this information secret. Obviously, he should have advised that the money had been paid back by the minister as he then was. But he must be given credit for at least catching him out at it. He must be given credit for - in the Chief Minister and Treasurer's own words - instructing him to pay the money back. We will find or we had better find, I would suggest, before the end of this debate, the exact amount of money that was paid back.

There is another interesting aspect to this matter. Another part of the question that was not answered concerned the amount of money received by the Chief Minister in tax-free travelling allowances in the financial year 1982-83. That was a blank page. The response I received was: 'It is too hard. We have to go back into the archives to dig that information out'. The original question was asked 9 months ago! I would suggest to the ministerial staff who are listening over there on the speakers in the Chan Building that, before the end of the debate, they had better start digging out the total amount of tax-free travelling allowance paid to the Chief Minister in the financial year 1982-83.

I want to point out a few other things that should be obvious to members opposite. We know that most ministers in the government received about \$5000 a year. I received about \$3700 in that year. Of course the amounts have gone up since. In that same year, the Chief Minister collected 5 times as much! We know that the Minister for Health and the Special Minister for Constitutional Development received excessively high amounts because they live in Alice Springs and have to commute to Darwin. Alice Springs is their real place of living. That is a perfectly reasonable explanation for their receiving those amounts of money. But the implication is clear. The answers and explanations indicate that the reason for the inordinately high amount is because of expenses paid for living in Darwin.

Last night, on behalf of the Chief Minister, I tried every permutation and combination that could allow him to receive \$22 300 tax free, straight in the pocket. It would be very nice, I admit, for anyone. I tried to work out how many days of travelling allowance would have been needed to make up that amount. It works out to 280 days in 365 of non-stop travel! I had a look at his answers concerning his overseas trips that year. He has agreed with it this morning. In fact, the Chief Minister routinely uses Amex cards.

That is the last point I want to make in this debate because it nails his behaviour down to the contemptible and fraudulent behaviour it truly is. The fact is, and I have no doubt they will be revealed when this matter is thoroughly investigated, that the majority of the travelling allowance received by the Chief Minister and Treasurer, received in the same way as the Leader of Government Business and the Minister for Health received their totally justifiable amounts, was for residence in Darwin. It cannot be otherwise. It did not take me long to work it out because I have the details of his overseas and interstate travel.

We know that, when he was interstate and when he was overseas, he used Amex cards. It is very simple and convenient. You check into the hotel and get your food and drink on the tab. The corporate card takes care of it; you do not have to worry about signing cheques or paying bills later. But it has one major disadvantage for a grafter. The major disadvantage is that you do not end up with the cash in your pocket. That is the problem.

Mr ROBERTSON: A point of order, Mr Speaker! I waited until the second sentence after the word 'grafter'. Clearly, that is unparliamentary.

Mr B. COLLINS: Mr Speaker, the standing orders are quite specific.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! Will the Leader of the Opposition resume his seat. The Leader of the Opposition is in order.

Mr B. COLLINS: I do not think there is a more substantive motion than this one. But I commend once again the attempts of the Leader of Government Business to defend the indefensible. He is going out with a bang, I must admit.

However, the public service will recognise that there is a distinct difference between when the Chief Minister was staying in Darwin and when he was staying anywhere else. This is for one good reason. When he was interstate and overseas - on his own admission - he used and still uses his Amex card. No cash changes hands. No cash ends up anywhere near our Treasurer, thank God. It is all taken care of by the Chan Building, and it never ends up in his pocket or his bank account. I am afraid that the public record, including this morning's answers, is there to show that, when he is overseas and interstate, he uses plastic money but, when he is staying in Darwin, for some strange reason, he uses real money - travelling allowance. The reason for that is quite simple. It is because he was living in his own home. He was being paid for the privilege of living with his own wife and family. The current rate is \$120 a night of taxpayers' money.

He just cannot escape that. He can put whatever permutations and combinations on it he likes, but the record stands clear for very obvious reasons. The Chief Minister did not use an Amex card in Darwin, as he did everywhere else, because he wanted the cash. It is as simple as that. He banked that cash. He collected it knowing perfectly well that he had left

Tennant Creek in December 1981. He should have immediately ceased claiming Tennant Creek as his place of living, because he is not a mug. He knows the implications of all this. But he did not do that.

The former Chief Minister was very good at checking these things out, and I dare say he came across what was an extraordinarily high amount of T/A for a minister. This minister, of course, once ran up a charter bill of \$100 000 in one year. No doubt that is the reason why the former Chief Minister took a look at this amount of T/A, when every other minister was receiving about \$9000 or \$10 000. The then Chief Minister himself only spent \$60 000 in that year - and an explanatory note was provided for that. It actually involved travel for all of his staff, as it does in my office. But the former Minister for Mines and Energy spent \$100 000 in the same year that the former Chief Minister spent \$60 000. There were no staff involved in that \$100 000, or very few. Maybe that was the trigger. Maybe that was what made the then Chief Minister have a closer look at the current Chief Minister and Treasurer's private affairs. The facts are that he used an Amex card interstate and overseas because the Chan Building paid for it and he used a travelling allowance claim in Darwin because the Treasury paid him to pay off the mortgage of a house in Fannie Bay. I do not care whether it is \$10 000, \$15 000, \$1000 or \$10, although in this case it happens to be a substantial amount.

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

Mr SMITH (Millner): Mr Speaker, I move that the Leader of the Opposition be granted an extension of time to finish his speech.

Motion agreed to.

Mr B. COLLINS: I thank the Assembly and I will not delay it long.

It does not matter what kind of an explanation the Chief Minister and Treasurer and head of the public service gives this Assembly this morning. It does not matter because the fact is that he must give a clear explanation as to why, as a matter of practice, he did not simply claim travelling allowance wherever he went. My questions were very deliberate indeed. Members can look at them afterwards. I saw it referred to as 'bricking in' in yesterday's NT News. I have never heard that expression before. The Chief Minister was walled up.

I normally use my American Express card for entertainment, paying for meals and so on for the many people who visit Darwin and need to be entertained. I will be entertaining more of them tonight and on Monday night. Normally, perhaps because I have been doing it for years as a public servant, I simply submit T/A claims. My secretary brings them in and I sign them. That takes care of the tickets and the warrants, and the T/A arrives later. Frankly, I do not even worry whether the amount of money I am spending on my own Bankcard equals the amount I get back. I have never worried about it. In fact, before I was the Leader of the Opposition, I think I was entitled to 12 days in my electorate every year. I do not think I claimed for that once during the whole time I was member for Arnhem. I do not bother about those things very much. Let me point this out to the Chief Minister's own colleagues: you tend, as a matter of common sense, to use either one procedure or the other; you do not use both. If you are used to simply putting in travelling allowance - which I do because it takes care of the ticketing and T/A etc at once - then that is the way you practise. Obviously, if you use

T/A claims, you cannot use your own American Express card for the same purpose. Alternatively, you use your American Express card. The Chief Minister used both selectively. I refer members to Hansard. When he was overseas or interstate, his practice was to use his American Express card but, when he was living in his own home in Darwin, he submitted T/A claims because he wanted cash and American Express does not provide the holders of those corporate cards with cash.

I hope that the former Chief Minister's house cleaning exercise was a thorough one. However, on the basis of the evidence that has been presented here this morning, I do not know that we can accept that. The Treasurer was caught out with his fingers in the Treasury, not on behalf of Henry and Walker or anyone else but for himself. I would like \$22 000 a year tax free to help pay off my mortgage and I am sure everyone else would also. When he did that and was caught out - I am only assuming and I hope the evidence will be given this morning - I hope that the house cleaning exercise was a thorough one and he was forced to pay back every dollar that he received fraudently. But this Assembly cannot accept that as being true.

There has to be further action taken on this matter; there is no doubt about that. If his parliamentary colleagues do not call him to heel over this, particularly his colleagues on the frontbench who have to deal with public servants in their departments every day of the week, there will be some questions asked next week, I can assure you. How can any frontbench member sit down with public servants from this point on knowing that the head of his government, the Treasurer and the head of the public service, has admitted in the Assembly this morning that he filled out, and obviously for a considerable period of time, fraudulent travel allowance claims, and, when he was caught out, he had to pay the money back on the instructions of the Chief Minister and shut up about it. It will be a real giggle for ministers to sit down with their public servants, departmental heads and people they have to deal with on a daily basis knowing that that is what is happening at the head of the government. They will not be able to hold their heads up, particularly if they vote against this motion. If they vote against it and if they take no action in this matter, they will be accomplices in the fraud that has already been perpetrated. I dare say that the federal Commissioner for Taxation will probably be interested in this transaction this morning because he too will have some questions to ask as to whether the money was paid back or not. You cannot receive tax-free allowances to which you are not entitled. That is called tax fraud and that is a serious matter.

I would like one minister in the Assembly this morning to tell me whether he would be satisfied with the explanations given in the Assembly this morning if those explanations were provided to him as minister by his departmental head in respect of any member of the public service. If they as ministers were told that Bill Bloggs had been paid \$10 000 in tax-free T/A to which he was not entitled - and you do not accrue that in one day; you have to fill out quite a lot of travel allowance claims - and he had been caught out but he had indicated that he would pay the money back to the Treasury if nothing more would be said about it, would they as ministers of this government believe that to be appropriate behaviour? Of course, it would not be. It would be a fact that, if any public servant in the Northern Territory, no matter how lowly, performed that act and was subsequently dismissed, that dismissal would be supported by every member of this Assembly. There is also no doubt that, after he had been ignominiously kicked out of the public service, criminal charges would then be laid against him. I dare say that they would probably succeed in the case of the Chief Minister, certainly given the admissions he made this morning.

Mr Speaker, the fact is that the Northern Territory's honourable Chief Minister has a number of perceivable strengths in my view. I give him credit for being responsible for the construction of the Alice Springs to Darwin pipeline. I give him credit for a number of other notable and positive achievements for the Northern Territory during his time in this Assembly. Having said all that, the fact is - and every member in this Assembly knows it - that, on the basis of what has been heard this morning, he cannot remain as Chief Minister. There is no question of that. The member for Barkly simply cannot remain as head of the Northern Territory's public service. He certainly cannot remain as the Northern Territory's Treasurer for one minute longer.

Unless every government member in this Assembly wants to commit mass political suicide, they should think very hard before they decide on good old party lines that they will simply dispose of this matter this morning in the usual manner and walk out. If they do so, they will all be tarred with the same brush. Let me tell you this, Mr Speaker, and I say it very firmly indeed: were any member of the opposition in a similar position, if indeed the former Leader of the Opposition had been in a similar position, and if it were proved that he had consistently over a period of time received tax-free allowances for which he was not entitled, he would stand alone as far as I am concerned. If a censure motion were moved against him for such behaviour, and if it were demonstrated - as it will be one way or the other here today - that an amount of \$10 000 at least, and I say it is more, had in fact been received and politely paid back, he would deserve to steal quietly and ignominiously away. Other people could decide whether breaches of the criminal law had been committed and take whatever action they felt appropriate.

Criminal law charges are not the issue this morning at all. It is a question of proper behaviour, integrity, ministerial responsibility and standards which the Chief Minister is happy to lay down for other people in terms of trust and selective editing of information. From this day forward, given the answers he has made today, if the honourable minister stands up in front of a group of Northern Territory public servants and dares talk about integrity, standards or proper behaviour, they will fall about laughing, and they would be entitled to do so.

I say this to the honourable members on the benches opposite: we have had the Chief Minister's own admissions this morning, which were categorical enough, that the money had been received and, on instructions from the Chief Minister, had been paid back and covered up. If that is established, they have to replace him as head of government; there is no question about that.

Mr Speaker, I am very happy to offer what facility I can in terms of upholding the oath that we all take in here for the good government of the Northern Territory to facilitate the government's actions in this regard because I do not want to see this turned into a shambles or a slanging match or any sort of brouhaha. I happen to feel very strongly about this. The Chief Minister's own answers condemn him. However, further information has to be provided in the course of this debate. There will be a luncheon adjournment shortly which will give an opportunity for a 2-hour meeting of the government party in order to discuss this. The member for Fannie Bay can grin and snigger all he likes but, if the Chief Minister's ministerial colleagues do not take some action in respect of this matter, I point out again that they will stand condemned along with him. I can assure them that they will be condemned along with him if they allow him to get away with this. He has gotten away with it now for quite some time. He was caught out and it was

quietly hushed up. He has now been caught out publicly. It cannot be hushed up a second time because it is out here. They must replace him today as the head of the government.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The Leader of the Opposition's time has expired.

Mr B. COLLINS: Mr Speaker, I would point out to you, Sir, that the motion was that I be allowed to complete my speech, with the agreement I might add of the Leader of Government Business.

Mr SPEAKER: The honourable Leader of the Opposition, the Speaker is bound by standing orders. Are there any further speakers in this debate or will I put the motion?

Mr TUXWORTH (Chief Minister): Mr Speaker, other members on this side of the Assembly will speak in this debate, including the Attorney-General who was the Acting Chief Minister at the time and who dealt with the matter at the time that it arose.

The Leader of the Opposition said it was not 4 years ago but that it was in February 1982. That is 4 years ago. I would like to respond to the motion because the Leader of the Opposition said that I knowingly received an amount of money to which I was not entitled. Let us just dispose of that and get it out of the way quickly. I would like to read to you from the Remuneration Tribunal's determinations on members' travel payment entitlements: 'For the purpose of payment of travel allowance, the home base of a member shall be the home of the member unless he nominates otherwise to the Speaker'. Therefore, everyone of us has the option of nominating with the Speaker where our home base is for the purpose of our travel. You and I did that, Mr Deputy Speaker in 1974. We nominated Alice Springs or Tennant Creek or wherever it was. From 1974 until this matter came up, my home base for the purpose of travel was designated as Tennant Creek.

I will read further from the tribunal's determinations: 'An office holder shall be provided at government expense for reasonable costs of meals, travel, accommodation'. The travel allowance specified is \$105 for each overnight stay within the Territory in a place other than his home base when his stay is occasioned by a sittings of the Assembly, a meeting of an Assembly committee or his official business as an office holder.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Speakers, Leaders of the Opposition and ministers spend most of their time away from their home base by virtue of their office. That was my predicament for the period 1974 until 1981 when my family moved to Darwin. I came up on the Fokker Friendship every Monday and I went back on the Fokker Friendship every Friday. That was just about week in and week out, apart from the times when I was outside the Territory. I lived away from home for all of those years and I received travel allowances for that period of time according to the entitlement. If I were to go to Mr Speaker this afternoon and again designate my home base as Tennant Creek, according to the way it is written, I would be entitled...

Mr Ede: Oh, what a rort!

Mr TUXWORTH: The honourable members are highlighting the very point that was raised. I received travelling allowance when my wife and family were in Darwin. That was in accordance with the terms. It was put to me that that was outside the bounds of reality and that, if I wanted to take the wife and

family back to Tennant Creek, then I could say that Tennant Creek was my residence but, while they were in Darwin, I should list Darwin as my home base. I said: 'Right, done'.

The matter of repayment was not one that was forced on me or milked out of me. I was quite happy to say that, since my wife came back to Darwin - the Leader of the Opposition said it was in December 1981, and that is fine - the payments made after that date would be repaid. It was worked out and the amount was repaid.

The Leader of the Opposition asked me this morning what the amount was. I said that I thought it was \$7000 to \$9000. He maintains it was \$15 000...

Mr B. Collins: I don't know.

Mr TUXWORTH: I am having that clarified.

Mr B. Collins: I am asking you to tell me.

Mr TUXWORTH: He did not ask me to tell him.

Mr B. Collins: In a question on notice, I did - 9 months ago.

Mr TUXWORTH: He made the accusation that it was \$15 000 and I said I thought it was \$9000. I will have that verified this afternoon.

Mr B. Collins: Just have a look at the questions on notice.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order, order! The honourable Leader of the Opposition was heard in almost total silence. I would ask that he extend the same courtesy to the Chief Minister.

Mr B. Collins: Yes, Mr Deputy Speaker.

Mr TUXWORTH: Mr Deputy Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition says that I was caught out. I would say to the Leader of the Opposition and everybody else that, when this matter was raised, I put myself in the hands of my colleagues. I did it openly and said...

Mr Bell: Who raised it?

Mr TUXWORTH: It was raised by my colleagues, and I said to them: 'If you think I have been improper, you have a way of dealing with me'. At that stage, there was nothing improper. In terms of the determinations written in that book, I would be entitled to do it. They said: 'It is out of bounds. Fix it'. As I said, it has been fixed.

The Leader of the Opposition went on to say that I have committed offences that could result in criminal charges. That is absolute nonsense. Do you believe for one minute, Mr Deputy Speaker, knowing the former Chief Minister and knowing the Attorney-General that, if any one of us had committed an offence that could have resulted in a criminal charge, the matter would have been just put aside and left alone?

Mr B. Collins: Yes.

Mr TUXWORTH: You are joking. It would not and it could not. It is just outrageous to suggest that it would. The reason that it could not is because of the way the determination is written.

The Leader of the Opposition said that I was not entitled to 1¢ after December 1981. I accept that, morally, I should not have received any money for that period, and I have not. I do not have any argument with that, and that is why it was fixed in 1982.

I would also like to say that my family and I did leave Tennant Creek. To operate better as a minister, I came to Darwin with my family for personal reasons. There is no need to go into those reasons. Regrettably, I sold my house in Tennant Creek. It was one of the best houses that I have ever had. I bought a home unit, and I still have a presence in Tennant Creek.

The Leader of the Opposition said that this is one of the most serious censure motions ever to come before the Assembly. I say that this censure motion has no basis in terms of the way he has written it. It is simply a scurrilous, muck-raking performance. The most serious censure motion ever moved in this Assembly was when the Leader of the Opposition conspired with one of his colleagues, who had to leave the place for tabling in this Assembly forged documents to try to embarrass the government of the day. So let us just do away with the nonsense.

The Leader of the Opposition stood up this morning and asked me what allowances were paid for the year 1982-83. If that question had been asked yesterday afternoon, at 9 o'clock this morning or 2 days ago, or if notice had been given a month ago, it would have been perfectly reasonable and I would have been able to read out the information. But to stand up in question time and ask a question like that was just foreshadowing that he did not want an answer, he did not expect me to have an answer and, because of that, he was going to give me a bit of Australia. I am supposed to have it at my fingertips. What nonsense! I could ask any one of those opposite what his travelling allowance was in 1982-83. Stand up and tell us to the dollar. If no one can tell me, I would understand because how could someone remember a thing like that?

The Leader of the Opposition then went on to say that, when I stay in Darwin, I get cash from the government. That is absolute nonsense. When I stay in Darwin, I do not get anything from anybody. When I travel outside of Darwin, whether it is to Tennant Creek, Timbuktu, Katherine, Docker River or wherever, I am entitled to travel allowance - and I do not claim it all the time. I might add that I do not always take cash when I go to places like Alice Springs and Tennant Creek. Sometimes I put it on American Express and sometimes I have cash. As a rule, when I am in the Northern Territory, I claim T/A. Sometimes, I put it on American Express.

The Leader of the Opposition asked why I do not get travelling allowance wherever I go - do the same thing in the Northern Territory as I do interstate, or vice versa. It is just not practical to have a firm rule on organising travel payments, whether you are within the Territory or out of it. You cannot even be sure that the places you stay at will take the credit cards that you have.

I would like to say for the benefit of the members opposite and all others who are interested that I have been in the Assembly for 10 or 12 years now, a little bit longer than the Leader of the Opposition. I have received a lot of

money as T/A over those 12 years, as is my entitlement in the book. For very obvious reasons, I have never gone outside the letter of the law on that. You cannot go through the Northern Territory fiddling travel. There are a whole range of ways that people do it: getting discounts at motels etc. I do not do any of that. I just pay my travel straight up and down. It is organised by my staff. It is organised through the Chief Minister's Department and I play it according to Hoyle.

The censure motion that has been put forward by the Leader of the Opposition is scurrilous and muck-raking. He said that I did knowingly receive amounts of money to which I was not entitled. While I accept that, morally, I was not entitled - and I rectified the situation - according to the Assembly papers that I have put on the table, I was entitled.

I do not intend to leave this matter half-resolved with all the innuendo and suggestion that has been put forward by the Leader of the Opposition. I am going to have a comprehensive statement made up of all my travel since I have been in the Assembly because I have nothing to hide. I do not care what goes on the table. People can have a look at it.

The Attorney-General, who was the Acting Chief Minister at the time, was the person whom I dealt with. He too will be giving the true version of what happened. I do not stand condemned for anything. I am not guilty of anything. I have not done anything illegal. If the Leader of the Opposition thinks I have done anything illegal and he believes I can be criminally charged, why does he not set the wheels in motion?

Mr B. Collins: I do not want to do that.

Mr TUXWORTH: Well do it!

Mr SMITH (Millner): Mr Speaker, the Chief Minister may well be a convert to new-age thinking but he certainly has been involved in an old age scam in this particular issue. In the deplorable attempt that he made to defend himself, his basic and only defence was to quote from the Remuneration Tribunal provisions which say, in terms of travel allowance: 'The home base of a member shall be the home of the member unless he nominates otherwise to the Speaker'. Of course, that needs to be read in conjunction with other clauses that stipulate you are not eligible for travel allowance when you are at your home base.

The Chief Minister attempted to turn that clause to his defence. He attempted to defend his actions by saying that, because he did not think it was necessary when he shifted his home base in 1981 to notify the Speaker, that was a justification for his actions. That is just complete nonsense. I think it is relevant to refer to that old legal concept of 'the man on the Clapham omnibus'. What would the average man in the street say if you said to him that a senior minister in this government changed his place of residence from Tennant Creek to Darwin and then used a Remuneration Tribunal provision to defend that? What would be the response of the average man in the street? There is no doubt whatsoever. He would say that the senior minister had been involved in a major scam at the taxpayers' expense.

The Chief Minister this morning condemned himself with his own words. We have already heard that he continued to submit claims and only stopped when he was instructed to by the Chief Minister. His precise words this morning were: 'It was the Chief Minister's view that Darwin should be my home base'. It was

not his view; it was the Chief Minister's view. The obvious question that begs to be asked is: 'If the then Chief Minister had not stopped him at that stage, would the now Chief Minister still be claiming Darwin as his home base?' If you read very carefully what the Chief Minister said this morning, there is only one answer: if he had not been picked up, he would still be claiming Tennant Creek as his home base and collecting moneys for nights stayed in Darwin.

Stemming from the statements this morning, there are a couple of other matters that the Chief Minister needs to address himself to. He claims to have moved to Darwin in 1981. I would like to quote from an article in the Centralian Advocate dated 19 December 1981: 'The Territory minister, Ian "Slim" Tuxworth, voted into power by the Barkly electorate recently, sold his house in Tennant Creek and has moved to Darwin permanently. Mr Tuxworth had lived in the town for 30 years but 12 months ago moved to Darwin - for good, it now seems - after the sale'. So there is the prospect that this scam started not in 1981, but in 1980. A check of the records in the Registrar General's Office reveals in fact that the Chief Minister bought his house in Darwin in November 1980.

Again this morning the Chief Minister said that he paid back the money in 1982. We do not even have the information available on how much money he was paid in 1982 in travel allowance because we were told it was not available. If he had paid back the money in 1982 for overpaid allowance during that period of time, how can he possibly justify the \$22 000 he received in the financial year 1983-84. That is 280 nights away from home. The Chief Minister has to answer that question as well.

Let us get to a more general point. The Chief Minister, in his speech to the public servants this week, insisted that they had to be of the highest probity and had to be efficient and had to be extremely careful with public money. The point that was picked out by the press from his speech was that the thing that angered the Chief Minister the most was public servants who came to him with requests for more money. I do not object to that. Any decent Treasurer and any decent Chief Minister would express that point of view. But it is pretty difficult to give it moral weight when the Chief Minister himself has been so clearly demonstrated to have had his hand in the till. It is pretty difficult to talk to your public servants and demand a higher standard of behaviour from them when you cannot demonstrate that you are doing it yourself.

We can also look at the penalties for officials who abuse the trust placed in them by the public. Section 81 of the Criminal Code has a very specific clause headed, 'False claims by officials', and I will quote it in full:

'Any person who, being employed in the public service in such a capacity as to require him or to enable him to furnish returns or statements touching any remuneration, payable or claimed to be payable to himself or to any other person, or touching any other matter required by law to be certified for the purpose of any payment of money or delivery of goods to be made to any person, makes a return or statement touching any such matter that is to his knowledge false in any material particular, is guilty of a crime, and is liable to imprisonment for 3 years'.

The Leader of the Opposition asked what would happen to a public servant who was caught with his finger in the till, like the Chief Minister. The

answer is there: up to 3 years jail. Unfortunately, the section does not apply to politicians; it is restricted to members of the public service. But the principle remains that, if a public servant was caught in this situation, he would be charged, would lose his job, and could quite possibly find himself a guest of Her Majesty. However, if it is a senior minister in the government who is at fault, it is hidden under the carpet. Nobody is told about it. It is just regarded as a basic error of judgment. The minister did not realise what the average man in the street would realise - that what he was doing was wrong. When it was pointed out to him by someone senior to him, and he was told to stop, the matter was slid under the carpet. Not only that, the crime was compounded by attempting to hide its results from this opposition which has been pursuing this matter for at least 12 months and has been fobbed off every time.

As the Leader of the Opposition said, public servants in this town will find it very difficult to respect a Chief Minister who has behaved in this way, particularly when the Criminal Code spells out so clearly what would happen to a public servant who engaged in a similar practice. It is not a matter of simple omission. For a period of time - and we do not know how long it was - he consciously applied for reimbursement of his travel expenses, each time on a separate form. He has no excuse if he is trying to say that it was something that slipped by him.

It is not only public servants who will be affected by this. People in the private sector will take notice too, as will all Territorians. We all know that many people in the private sector are having to pull in their belts at present because things are not going all that well, particularly in Darwin, for Territory-based industries. What will they think when they find out, as they will today, that the Chief Minister has had his hand in the till?

Furthermore, this is a continuation of the attitude that the Chief Minister has had to government money. A good way of demonstrating that attitude is to refer back to the case of the Minister for Education and his overseas trip. We heard that the Minister for Education paid the government \$1867, 4 days after the Acting Chief Minister told the public that the government had been reimbursed. Again, the opposition had to dig the information out. The only saving grace for the Minister for Education is that he says he is a man of principle and he paid it back because of his conscience.

If one considers what the Minister for Education said on Tuesday and then applies it to the events of today, we have a very interesting proposition indeed. The minister has told us that he was not obliged to pay the money back because the Chief Minister approved his travel. Indeed, the Chief Minister told the Assembly yesterday that he approved the cost of the travel for the minister, his wife and family, knowing that part of the trip would be used as a holiday. The Chief Minister did not stop there. If anyone was ever in any doubt about his cavalier attitude to the use of taxpayers' money, it came right at the end of his answer to a question in this Assembly on Tuesday. Having admitted that he approved the travel knowing that part of the trip was to be a holiday, he then went on to state: 'I just wish I could do it myself from time to time'. The Minister for Education has told this Assembly, in simple terms, that he was not obliged to pay the money back, but he did so because of his conscience. In other words, he could not live with his conscience if he took his wife and child on a free ride. However, implicit in that response is the suggestion that the Chief Minister is not a man of conscience. Quite clearly, the Chief Minister is a man who believes in free

rides at the taxpayers' expense, not only for himself but for others on his side of the Assembly.

We have a situation where the opposition, despite its prodding for 9 to 12 months, still does not have the full information that it asked for. We do not have, despite our request, the information on this matter for the 1982-83 financial year. We do not have the detailed breakdown of the information requested by the Leader of the Opposition for the 1983-84 and 1984-85 financial years. It is imperative in the course of this debate that that information be supplied to this Assembly. This cannot be allowed to go on anymore. We must get to the bottom of it to see the full extent of the damage that has been caused by the actions of the Chief Minister.

As the Leader of the Opposition pointed out, the members opposite have no choice but to support this motion, as difficult as it may be for them. But I can assure them that what really upsets members of the public are politicians taking advantage of the system for their own personal gain. They will cop much more out there if they do not support this motion than they will cop in here from a discredited Chief Minister.

Mr PERRON (Attorney-General): Mr Speaker, I trust that members opposite will not whinge about not having enough time during this sittings for their debates, having wasted everybody's time with this motion here today. Of course we should be used to the Leader of the Opposition's overacting. He has been doing it in here for years and this is just one more example.

It was not the former Chief Minister who raised the matter of T/A payments with the member for Barkly back in 1981; it was me. From recollection, the Chief Minister at the time was overseas and, being his deputy, I was naturally acting. As Acting Chief Minister, it was brought to my attention by a departmental officer that T/A payments were being paid to the member for Barkly whilst he was in Darwin and that this could be seen as improper as apparently his family was also living with him in Darwin. There was no question at the time of such payments being illegal. If there had been, no doubt the claims would not have been processed. There are, of course, verification procedures used when processing government payments, which are designed to avoid the payment of cheques where that would be illegal.

This matter was discussed with my colleagues, and it was agreed that, as the member had moved his family to Darwin, he should regard that as his home base and only claim T/A for nights he spent outside of Darwin. It was further decided that this should apply from a previous date, which I do not particularly recall, and payments that he had received since that date should be repaid. I personally put this view to the member and he agreed to comply. The money was refunded without fuss.

Mr Speaker, there is no dishonesty involved whatsoever. Indeed, the honourable member for Barkly could well have taken the view at the time that it was wrong to move to a position whereby he was entitled to payments for T/A to visit his own electorate and sleep in Tennant Creek, a place where he would obviously be spending quite a lot of time in the future, despite having moved his family to Darwin, and a place where he owns accommodation. By nominating Darwin as his home base, he would have been entitled to payments to visit his own electorate. That was the effect of the decision: that Darwin would become his home base.

But let us look at this home base question. We know that the Remuneration Tribunal provides that members alone elect where their home base will be. The Minister for Health, the honourable member for Flynn, if he wants to remain a minister in this Assembly, must spend some 60% of his time in Darwin. Therefore, rather than stay in a hotel or flat, and living out of a suitcase, he has decided to buy an accommodation unit here. Alice Springs is still his home base and his family is still living there. He is paid T/A whilst he is in Darwin. The difference between his situation and that of the Chief Minister seems to be that he does not have his family with him. It seems to be the difference. This indicates that home base is where you sleep with your wife; that is, for those who have managed to maintain a relationship where that still takes place.

What would be the situation of a minister who was single or separated from his family? Would such a person be expected to nominate home base as the place where he spends most of his time? Perhaps. The Special Minister for Constitutional Development, I understand, also owns accommodation in Darwin, and sensibly so. He also spends 50% or 60% of his time here. He also claims T/A whilst in Darwin as is his absolute entitlement under the Remuneration Tribunal determination. The difference between the Special Minister for Constitutional Development and the Chief Minister is that he does not happen to have his family with him in Darwin. It seems that is the criterion.

The honourable member for Arnhem, I am told, rents a Housing Commission house in Darwin. He must therefore spend considerable time here. If he does not, his house has been obtained under false pretences. He claims T/A, I am told, whilst he is in Darwin. If the member for Arnhem has his family living in the Housing Commission house, then it appears he is in the same position as the member for Barkly was in 1981 and, therefore, should morally pay back all the T/A he has received whilst he is in Darwin because he has received it by fraud if we are to believe the Leader of the Opposition. He is the one who is stating there is fraud involved in this situation. If the honourable member for Arnhem does not have his family living with him in Darwin in the Housing Commission house that he is renting, then he really does have the house under false pretences. Perhaps we can have some answers about that here today. I look forward to the honourable member's contribution.

Mr Speaker, this issue is about the determination of home base. There are no rules or guidelines as to what home base is. Is it where a member spends most of his time? Apparently not. It would be difficult for some members to decide in advance exactly where they will spend most of their time in a 12-month period. I am referring particularly to ministers from Alice Springs or from other centres outside Darwin. It appears that where you spend most of your time is not an adequate basis to determine the matter once and for all. Is it where one's spouse lives and, if so, what if one's spouse moves or leaves? Does one's home base become where one's spouse is residing? Clearly, there is no one answer to this question. Maybe there should be. The Leader of the Opposition, in his typical, self-centred style, stated his view and demanded that anyone who disagrees be branded a cheat and a thief. He overlooked, however, members of the opposition who might be breaking some of his own rules.

Many times over the years, I have listened to the type of nonsense he has paraded here today. It merely reinforces the absolute contempt that I have for him. Let us look at a few of the facts. The Remuneration Tribunal, and it alone, provides for members to nominate their home base. The Chief Minister owns accommodation in both Darwin and Tennant Creek, his electorate.

When told that his colleagues believed he should regard Darwin as his home base, he agreed and refunded moneys paid to him. The moneys repaid were received by him under his entitlements as a member of this Assembly. He was in fact entitled to retain those funds if he so wished, completely legally. There remains considerable disparity in the method of operation in regard to family affairs, accommodation and claiming T/A among members of this Assembly even today. If there is some fault, it perhaps lies in not having a clearer definition of 'home base' in the Remuneration Tribunal determination. I would agree with that conclusion. The last fact is that the Leader of the Opposition is wasting the time of the Assembly in moving this motion as it is without substance, and he knows that the sum that was repaid by the honourable member for Barkly was \$9443.

The whole affair is a charade so that the Leader of the Opposition was able to throw in the heart-wrenching information about how he did not claim 12 days T/A he was entitled to some years ago. What a martyr this man is! What a champion protector of the taxpayer! This man has stood by and watched while Territorians have lost tens of millions of dollars that they were entitled to in the past 3 years. What has he done about that? Absolutely nothing. Instead, he wastes the time of this Assembly with frivolous, nonsensical and unsupported motions like the one we have before us at the moment.

Mr DONDAS (Deputy Chief Minister): Mr Speaker, in rising to speak against the censure motion, I feel that the Leader of the Opposition is really grasping at straws. Yesterday, we witnessed an attempt to discredit the Minister for Primary Production by raising a matter of privilege. That failed. Therefore, he asked a series of questions which he could have raised in this Assembly before. Let us examine the reasons behind this cowardly attack on the Chief Minister today. We all know that the honourable member for Araluen intends to resign next week and there will be a by-election. The Leader of the Opposition is trying to muddy the waters so he can...

Mr B. Collins: Are you accusing me of treating Jim's resignation politically? I can give it to you if you want it that way. I have done absolutely the bloody opposite.

Mr SPEAKER: Order!

Mr DONDAS: Mr Speaker, many words have been spoken in this Assembly in the last 24 hours; many of them will probably be regretted later. I am aware that the Leader of the Opposition has been overheard saying to somebody, and I will not mention the name, that he was out to crucify Tuxworth. And I would like him to say that that is not true.

Mr B. Collins: It isn't true.

Mr DONDAS: He is using this forum today for a cowardly attack on the Chief Minister. He hopes that a little mud will stick. Because his attack on the Minister for Primary Production yesterday failed, he is really grasping at straws.

Mr Speaker, we all have different methods of keeping track of our expenditure as we move around. It is taxpayers' money. Some members prefer to pay with the Amex card. Some members prefer to take the travelling allowance, pay for their accommodation in cash and, at the same time, pick up any entertainment expenses by means of Amex. The method I use is much the

same. I take T/A. I pay cash for my hotel accommodation and other incidentals. All I put on my Amex card are telephone calls which sometimes reach \$40 or \$50 in a couple of days. We all have different ways of keeping our accounts. Maybe, for the benefit of the public because it is taxpayers' money, we should standardise how it is done and not give members of parliament the ability to vary the way they take their T/A. There are so many different ways of doing it.

The Chief Minister moved from Tennant Creek and was placed in a position where he still had to service his electorate. I understand that, when he went back to Tennant Creek, where he spent quite some time, he did not ask for T/A again, which is contrary to the Leader of the Opposition's inference this morning that he was double-dipping. I do not think that is correct.

Mr B. Collins: I did not say he was.

Mr DONDAS: This censure motion is an ulterior motive of the Leader of the Opposition. He has had this bee in his bonnet for some 7 or 8 months and he has had plenty of opportunities to raise it. Why has he raised it just before a by-election?

Mr ROBERTSON (Constitutional Development): Mr Speaker, I shall be brief. As a minister who was involved at the time, it is important that I contribute to this debate. I think that, in order to assess the merits or demerits of any debate of this type, it is important that we look at the actual wording of the motion. What it does, of course, is use the word 'knowingly', and couples the word 'knowingly' with the word 'fraud' and words to that effect.

Mr Speaker, this is my last sittings in this Assembly, so I have no personal reason to say anything other than what is exactly the position as I see it. Indeed, my respect for this place would prevent me from doing otherwise even if I was going to be here for the next 20 years. The Leader of the Opposition equated the position in which the Chief Minister has found himself as a result of this motion with the position in which the Leader of the Opposition hypothetically puts an officer of the public service. I think I am well-known in this place for my dealings with officers of the public service. I recall that, in my years here, the only occasion upon which I was subject to a censure motion was as a result of activities within the public service which were improper. The people involved were known as the famous 5 in Mines and Energy. Quite frankly, in hindsight, and after a few editorials, a lack of diligence on my part led to that. While it was not a substantiated motion, nonetheless it was a valid criticism.

I have always tried to assess the intentions of people whom I have had to deal with. In all natural justice, I think that is what we all do. If there was an intention on a person's part to misuse the system for personal gain, then I would be the first to dissociate myself from it. As a minister of this government at the time, the matter was raised by the then Deputy Chief Minister, the Hon Marshall Perron. Had I thought at the time that there was anything improper in what had happened, one of the 2 of us at that time would have had to have gone; that is, the honourable member for Barkly or myself. The reality is that, at the time, it was a view honestly held by the member for Barkly, now Chief Minister, that it was an entitlement. According to the written statute and the determinations pursuant to statute, which have been clearly illustrated by the Chief Minister and the Attorney-General, that is the position at law.

In order to allege fraud, there must be the usual elements of fraud. The Leader of the Opposition is well aware of that. In Latin, they are: mens rea and actus reum. In other words, one must intend it. There is a difference between an interpretation of a statutory entitlement by one person and the interpretation of that same entitlement by others. Of course, we have debated many times a range of legal opinions which have been made available to this legislature, and I dare say, over our business years, to ourselves independently. It is a truism that, in terms of legal opinion, there are as many opinions as there are people who are willing to offer them.

In this case, it was my assessment, and still is my honest assessment, that my colleague, the Chief Minister, believed that he was rightfully entitled to those payments which were made. There was absolutely no hint whatsoever in his mind - and we discussed this at length - of any improper doings.

Over the years I have been here, many things have come into my possession which would indicate improper conduct by members of this legislature. I have examined them with care. A number were pointed out just a while ago by my colleague, the Attorney-General. I have been aware of those things which one may question for some time, but I have never raised them because I formed the view that, on balance, there was a reasonable, honest approach by the person involved. In other words, it was his reasonable interpretation of his entitlement.

Mr Speaker, I have a photocopy which has been in my possession since about 12 December last year. It is a damning document. It is a photocopy of an invoice sent by a hotel in the name of a member of this legislature. I investigated it. Again it is a very damaging document. But on assessment of that document, I believed that it was an honest mistake. If I wanted to score political points, I would have wheeled that out months ago. The reality is that, on investigation, it would be wrong for me to score political points on the basis of that invoice because I think there was a genuine error made. In other words, it was not a conscious exercise.

Mr B. COLLINS: A point of order, Mr Speaker! The Leader of Government Business says, and I respect this, that he has no intention of naming a member. In respect of the standing order which says that personal imputations and reflections cannot be made on members, could I point out to the Leader of Government Business that we now have a serious problem. This is because, under that standing order, if the member is not named and if this matter is not dealt with very soon by way of a substantive motion in the Assembly, this charge or reflection of improper conduct, by absolute implication, rests equally upon every member of this Assembly. With respect, Mr Speaker, that is a personal position in which I do not wish to be placed. I have brought this matter before the Assembly by way of a substantive motion naming the member concerned. Could I point out the danger of the course that the Leader of Government Business is engaged in by not naming the member, which he can do only by way of a substantive motion. We are all implicated equally, and I demand that the member be named.

Mr ROBERTSON: Mr Speaker, I take the Leader of the Opposition's point. The member is the member for Arnhem, Mr Lanhupuy. As I have said, in relation to that investigation, I am of the firm opinion that there was absolutely no impropriety whatsoever. My point is that, had I merely wanted to shoot from the hip and use it for political point-scoring without investigating the propriety of his actions, a great deal of damage could have been done.

The point I am making is that, in respect of the current motion, and having regard to its wording, it is my submission to this Assembly that no impropriety whatsoever occurred. You can read motives into anyone's judgment. In the years I have been here, I have probably made a mistake a day. All of us do that, and the Leader of the Opposition would be the first to accept that it has happened to him in the past. But the motion does not talk about that. What it talks about is improper conduct and conduct which, in other circumstances, would lead to criminal prosecution. The fact is that that motion and that allegation do not stand up. The reality is that each and every payment made was made pursuant to an act of parliament and to a determination subsequent to that act of parliament. There is an enormous jump between that sort of allegation and the type of thing I have been talking about. The reality is that this motion does not stand up. There is no case to answer on the strength of the allegation.

I believe firmly that the Chief Minister has acted properly at all times. I also believe that the then Chief Minister, at the time this matter came to our collective attention, acted properly. I was party to that discussion and I freely admit it, as I should because it is the truth. We discussed the matter and came to the conclusion that, as a result of our interpretation of that entitlement, it would be reasonable for that member to declare retrospectively that his place of residence was Darwin. That member is now the Chief Minister. He has honoured that interpretation by his colleagues ever since.

Mr B. COLLINS (Opposition Leader): Mr Speaker, once again - not surprisingly - the last speaker, the defender of the indefensible, has put forward the best defence in what has been a dispirited debate. I am very pleased to hear from him that the government intends to dispose of this motion on technical grounds, in terms of an interpretation of the relevant section of the Remuneration Tribunal's determination. I am pleased because it just will not wash in the electorate. All I say to members opposite is that their intention is now clear. They have done it and they can all wear it. They will wear it.

Unfortunately, there are some huge holes in the logic of the government's case. I will point them out now. Coincidentally, yesterday Mr Justice McClelland made some comments which members of the Labor Party, his party, would have found most disagreeable. They concerned corruption in government in New South Wales. Mr Justice McClelland said that, although they could not be proved, he knew certain facts. By absolutely irrefutable inference, only one conclusion could be drawn from those facts: that corruption existed.

I do not resile from the terms of this motion even though I understand the point that was put by the Leader of Government Business. I have one very simple reason: if you look at the facts before us, if you look at the Chief Minister's own admissions in this Assembly this morning, it is clear that they stretch credulity beyond any reasonable point. We are supposed to believe that a member of this Assembly, in fact the Treasurer, Chief Minister and minister responsible for the public service, accepted into his bank account an amount of money which is the equivalent of \$15 000 in 1986 dollar terms, and that it escaped his notice. There were a couple of huge problems with the government's argument this morning. Can I say quite clearly that I accuse the Northern Territory's Chief Minister of doing this knowingly and deliberately for the simple reason that it strains credulity too far to believe, on the facts before us, that anything else could have happened.

Unfortunately for the government, it has not attacked the obvious holes in its arguments. One does not obtain travelling allowance automatically. If one did, I would be prepared to accept some of the nonsense that has been put forward this morning from the opposite side of the Assembly. In order to get travelling allowance, one has to submit a claim form. All the public servants out there know that. One signs a form on each occasion that a T/A claim goes in. It is not a question of nominating a home base and having the exchequer routinely providing a cheque every time it thinks you might be in Darwin.

On the Chief Minister's own admission this morning, we have the information that he sat down and signed any number of those forms while he was living with his wife and family in an extremely substantial house in Fannie Bay, having sold his house in Tennant Creek. He then collected the money. Indeed, thanks to this debate, we now have the information that it was a departmental officer who picked up this little scam. A departmental officer drew it to the attention of the then Chief Minister.

In relation to the confusion about who handled the matter - whether it was the member for Fannie Bay or the former Chief Minister - the Chief Minister admitted in answer to a question without notice this morning that the former Chief Minister, to quote the honourable member's own words, 'directed him to repay the money'. I will run through some quotes from the Chief Minister. He said that the former Chief Minister pointed out to him that it stretched reality to claim that he was still living in Tennant Creek because he had sold his house in Tennant Creek and had paid \$160 000 for a house in Fannie Bay. There were photographs in Northern Territory newspapers.

He also said that his colleagues thought that it could be improper for him to make these claims after a departmental officer had pointed it out. That is the kind of story that gains politicians a very bad reputation among the poor old public servants who have to process those claims. That seems to have escaped the Chief Minister himself. I commend the officer concerned. If he was doing his job for the political health of the government and the minister, he did the right thing in drawing to the attention of the then Chief Minister that those claims should stop.

Let us nail this nonsense right down. I refer again to the Chief Minister's answers this morning. The honourable minister said that he had designated Tennant Creek as his home base and basically forgot to change it. That just will not wash. He might get away with it in here because it is 19:6. He will not get away with it out there; he must think he is talking to a bunch of mugs. There are many public servants in the Northern Territory who deal with travelling allowance and they will not wear it. A travelling allowance form must be filled in and signed on every occasion that a claim is lodged. It stretches credulity beyond reason that a member of this Assembly can sit in his house in Fannie Bay, with his wife and children, having sold his house in Tennant Creek - whether or not he buys a unit down there later - and happily sign T/A claim forms and pay himself a total of \$15 000 in today's dollars for the privilege of living with his own wife and family in his home in Fannie Bay.

If the Chief Minister has been good enough, and he clearly has, to con all of his colleagues that that is reasonable, it simply indicates the collective level of intelligence of the Northern Territory government. I do not believe they are doing anything other than trying to put the right face on it, but it will not fool anyone else. They all intend to vote against this motion absolutely. Let them go out to their electorates and defend that; the

electors will not cop it. They will say to their electors: 'We believed the Chief Minister when he told us what he did. He sat down in his house in Fannie Bay and signed a series of T/A forms. We do not know the number but they would have been considerable'. It takes a lot of T/A claims to pick up \$15 000 in 1986 dollars, tax free. Are they willing to tell their good electors that they were prepared to stand by and watch the minister responsible for the Northern Territory Public Service collect \$10 000 in 1982 dollars by filling out a series of travelling allowance claims, one after the other, so that the taxpayers of the Northern Territory could pay him \$120 a day for living with his own wife and family in Fannie Bay. If they think that people will wear that, they are sadly misguided.

It may have occurred to some of the brighter sparks in the government opposite that there is a real problem in respect of the honourable member who has done this. It would be bad enough if it were the member for Wanguri or the minister for whatever. This was done by the Northern Territory's head of government, by its Treasurer and by its minister responsible for the public service. If any of his colleagues say that that does not require from him a degree of scrupulousness above and beyond any other member of this Assembly, I will walk to Bourke. The Treasurer of the Northern Territory happens to be the head of government and deals with the public service as its minister. He is bound to exercise a high degree of scrupulousness, common sense and good judgment. At the very least, he has failed dismally on those last 2 counts, if not the first.

He had the hide to stand up in front of his senior public servants as their minister - the speech makes interesting reading now - and talk to them about one of his pet hates which is misleading people by deliberate misuse of information. They might be able to keep a straight face out of courtesy from this day forward but they will roll about laughing the minute he leaves the room, and he knows it. He has become a permanently flawed Chief Minister from this day forth. He knows it and his colleagues know it. He has become a permanent cripple in the government. There is no question that this matter will come up again and again - I can promise that - in future debates. I do not know what those debates will be at the moment but they are bound to involve public servants at some stage.

In relation to criminal charges, I point out what I said before. If the Chief Minister had been a Northern Territory public servant, would he have had the option of paying back \$10 000 that he should not have received? It is an indictable offence. The members of this Assembly treated this matter very seriously when we debated the Criminal Code through its 7 or 8 drafts. Section 81 provides a maximum penalty of 3 years in prison. That is what the public servant would have copped. Unfortunately, section 81 is restricted to Northern Territory public servants and does not extend to ministers or, in this case, their own minister.

Mr Speaker, not only has the Chief Minister done himself no credit today but, unfortunately, a number of his colleagues have done themselves no credit. I except from that the careful and proper defence that was put last. It was not a technical defence talking about the Remuneration Tribunal but that the Chief Minister believed that he was doing the right thing. I do not suppose that there is much else one could say.

As a member who is starting his tenth year in this Assembly, I can only say that no member could believe that the minister could unknowingly fill out a whole series of T/A forms which put \$10 000 in his pocket for a house that

he knows he is not living in. If members opposite reckon that will wash with the electorate, they can go for their lives. It will not wash with the Northern Territory Public Service. If they reckon that will not continue to be a running sore with the honourable member for Barkly as its minister, they really are wrong. What will be the reaction the next time the Northern Territory government talks about what public servants can or cannot do or what they are or are not entitled to?

Mr Speaker, the Remuneration Tribunal determination provides a degree of flexibility for members that I want retained. I will oppose any attempt, as indicated by the member for Fannie Bay and the Deputy Chief Minister, to try to implement stringent conditions that will exacerbate the problems that politicians face from day to day. There is 1 basic thing that the tribunal works on: that members of parliament, the leaders of a community, are honourable men. We use the term in here constantly; it is supposed to be true. Those flexibilities are allowed to us because, if we are to run the Territory - I put it to you in common sense - a degree of honesty and integrity is expected of us that perhaps is not expected of everyone else. That is why we have criminal laws prohibiting such behaviour for them and not for us. That is deliberate. When you are a minister of the Crown, you are expected to be given this kind of flexibility and not to misuse it as it has been misused by the person who holds the highest position in this Assembly. He is leader of the government, Treasurer and minister responsible for the public service. If the Deputy Chief Minister and the member for Fannie Bay think, as they have seriously proposed this afternoon, that the only thing this debate has accomplished is to point out the need to draft new regulations for the Remuneration Tribunal, to treat all of the members of this Assembly as a bunch of recalcitrant schoolboys who cannot be trusted with the tea money, then I will resent that and I will oppose it.

What the members opposite have failed to point out this morning is that we are supposed to be running the Northern Territory. We are at the top and the government is right at the top. It is supposed to indicate a degree of honesty and integrity that is above and beyond others. To employ a much-used quote, and it is true, 'Much is expected of those to whom much is given'. That includes every member of the Assembly and, in particular, the most senior minister in this Assembly, the Northern Territory's Chief Minister.

The fact is that I do not believe the explanations that have been given this morning. I fear that no one else will either because they really are stretching credulity. I am prepared to believe that, having sold a house in Tennant Creek and bought a \$160 000 two-storey house and having moved in your wife and children, you could probably be forgiven for overlooking your altered situation the first time you wrote out a T/A claim or even the second time and maybe the third time. The third time would be stretching it a bit as would the fourth. It would be looking pretty sick by the fifth time. But maybe you could go that far, involving perhaps \$1000, although \$2000 would be looking very hairy. However, I would be prepared, as a very forgiving person who likes to believe the best of people, to cop it right up to \$2000. But if the members opposite are seriously going to try to con us into believing that the Chief Minister put \$10 000 of tax free allowance in his bank account, and signed form after form to claim it, without realising what he was doing, then I simply will not cop it. And neither will any member of the Northern Territory Public Service which the Chief Minister heads. Frankly, I know that none of you believes it either. The ministers of this Assembly have not exactly been overwhelming in their support of the Chief Minister this morning, and I am not surprised.

I do not want to see any ridiculous provisions or restrictions placed on the necessary flexibility that is given to members. If you are going to chain the legislature and the government with those restrictions, they will simply not be able to govern. In exchange for that trust, we are supposed to be honest. The Chief Minister has absolutely failed in that area. I warn all members opposite of a fact which they know is staring them in the face. When these facts become known and are discussed at length, and when the replies given in the Assembly this morning are read, some of them will do a lot of damage, particularly the reply from the member for Fannie Bay.

The current Chief Minister of the Northern Territory will become a political cripple. In fact, he has been one since question time this morning. The explanation simply will not wash. In order to give the government one last chance to reconsider this matter this afternoon, because they do need to replace this Chief Minister right now, I seek the leave of the Assembly to continue my remarks at a later hour.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Is leave granted? Leave is not granted.

Mr B. COLLINS: Very well, Mr Deputy Speaker. I thought I would just throw that last lifesaver to members opposite. They stand condemned for not accepting it. The Chief Minister stands completely condemned.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! The Leader of the Opposition's time has expired.

Mr LEO (Nhulunbuy): I move that an extension of time be granted to the Leader of the Opposition so that he may conclude his speech.

Motion agreed to.

Mr B. COLLINS: I referred a few minutes ago to some of the extremely damaging statements that have been made in the Assembly this afternoon in defence of the Chief Minister. One of them, which came from the honourable member for Fannie Bay, was that home base obviously is where you sleep with your wife. That might be thought to be terribly amusing in here and a good defence of the Chief Minister but, unfortunately, it will not be received with that kind of frivolity and jollity by members of the Northern Territory Public Service.

We all know the calibre of the member for Fannie Bay. The member for Fannie Bay has established an extraordinary reputation in this Assembly for being the most consistent knocker. I remember the member for Fannie Bay rubbishing the concept of the gas pipeline from Alice Springs to Darwin when the former Leader of the Opposition proposed it in here in 1981. I remember the member when he was Treasurer telling us we could not have a Territory Insurance Office because it would not work. The same member attacked the establishment of the TAB when he was the responsible minister, and said that that could not work. He attacked the concept of a university college when I proposed it, and said that that could not work. I am pleased to say that, despite the opposition of the member for Fannie Bay, all of those things are now in place in the Northern Territory.

We all know of one other occasion when I upset the honourable member for Fannie Bay. Despite all those failings, we all know the member for Fannie Bay is an enthusiastic public supporter of rezoning Darwin's foreshores. I remember a previous debate where I canvassed that issue. I think the debate

was entitled: 'How to rezone your own foreshore'. I think I called it: 'How to doctor your own gully'. So we all know the standards set by the member for Fannie Bay. I remember him actually storming out of the Assembly on that occasion, screaming and yelling. Therefore, I did not expect anything better from him.

However, the statements that he made in here today will not help the government's case with the public service because every one of us has to interpret where we can nominate our home base. Mention was made of the member for Arnhem. Mention can be made of other members here. I am well aware of the domestic arrangements in respect of the member for Arnhem. I am perfectly happy to discuss them with anyone who wants to talk about them. Let us do it next week. Mr Deputy Speaker, the person we are talking about here this morning is not a shadow minister in the opposition, not that that makes any difference. It is the head of government, its Treasurer and the minister in charge of the Northern Territory Public Service.

The fact is that the home base is not necessarily where your wife sleeps, although presumably it would be if you are in the fortunate position of being married. It is where you consider your home to be. It is as simple as that. What you are expected to do is not to work that out on an electronic calculator in terms of what provides you with the maximum benefit. The facts in that case speak for themselves. It is where your home genuinely is.

We still do not have the information for 1982-83. The amount provided in 1983-84 was nearly \$22 500 - 5 times the amount of most of the other ministers and \$7000 more than the next best, the honourable Leader of Government Business. As I said this morning, a perfectly proper explanation was provided in that his home base is in Alice Springs where, presumably, he sleeps with his wife and does all the other things that the government uses as its criteria for determining home bases. All we are expected to do when we are electing to determine our home base is to be honest about it. The Chief Minister has not done that. It is as simple as that. He has been dishonest about it. The best interpretation you can place on it, if he is not guilty of fraud because mens rea or actus reum was not there - the actus reum was there even if the mens rea was not there - is that it was such a profound lack of judgment that the person who committed that lack of judgment is not fit to be a minister in a government. He is certainly not fit to be the Chief Minister. He is most certainly not fit to hold the keys to the Treasury. He is certainly not fit to be the minister in charge of the public service. Of course, the member for Barkly is all 3.

As I say, I put the best interpretation on it in response to the Leader of Government Business' points. I put the best interpretation on it but I still say to the members opposite that, if he was not guilty of active knowledge that he was doing the wrong thing for financial gain - and I do not believe that that can be believed - then the error of judgment involved was so profound that he is not fit to lead the government. If that is not obvious to everyone opposite, it should be.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I would ask all members to read section 31 of the Northern Territory's Criminal Code, which is deliberately restricted to public servants and not their political masters because we are supposed to be a cut above. We are in fact those to whom so much is given and of whom so much is expected. Read section 81. Ask yourselves whether, if you translated 'the minister' from 'the minister of the public service' to 'a member of the public service', those charges under section 81 would stick. It is my view that they would stick.

I am not suggesting for 1 minute that the member would necessarily get 3 years in prison because that would be at the discretion of the judge. But it is my view that he would be dealt with in the same way that numerous others have been in defrauding unemployment benefits, supporting mothers' allowances and all of the other benefits that are provided by the public purse. He would certainly be committed for trial. He would certainly be convicted of the offence on the evidence that I have in front of me. I suppose he would be lucky if he got off with a fine. Perhaps the judge would say that, if he were prepared to pay the money back, he would shut up about it. But I doubt it.

The last point I want to cover is that there is still much to be provided to this Assembly. The Chief Minister gave a commitment to this Assembly today, and I will remind him of it, that he will provide a complete explanation by way of a major statement. I am not asking him to say it in the Assembly necessarily; a written statement will suffice. In fact, if it is in the form of an answer to questions on notice, that will suffice because I wish to address myself to the ridiculous points made by the Deputy Chief Minister.

This was not a witch-hunting exercise this morning, as should have been obvious to the member in question time. We have been pursuing these matters by way of questions on notice for 9 months. We knew what we were after and so did the Chief Minister, and he actively tried to prevent us from getting it for 9 months. It has been 4 months since we last had a sittings. There was a most acrimonious exchange between my office and the Chief Minister's office over this. It resulted in correspondence because, after we failed to get answers, a member of my staff was instructed by me to ring the Chief Minister's Office on a daily basis, seeking this information. Eventually, that resulted in a very nasty letter from a senior member of the Chief Minister's staff to my office saying: 'Stop doing this. Do it by way of the normal procedure for questions on notice and stop ringing people up'. I instructed my officer to reply in a draft which he showed me. I approved it and it was sent back.

Mr Deputy Speaker, let me tell you, in the years that I have been here, that is the only time that that has ever occurred in respect of any question that I have placed on notice or asked without notice. It is an indication of how seriously the government and the Chief Minister treated it: an exchange of very nasty letters saying, 'Do it the right way. Do not talk to us by telephone. You can wait for your answer'.

In response to the Deputy Chief Minister's criticism, we raised the motion this morning and we asked questions this morning because we were still unable - and we still do not have them - after 9 months to obtain the answers to which we were entitled. We now know why it has taken us so long.

I conclude by saying that the Chief Minister and his government both stand condemned. The explanations they have given in here this morning simply will not stand up in the public arena. If this is defeated by 19 to 6 in here, so be it. But I still want a complete answer to all of the unanswered questions that have been asked. I would like to see this in the form the Chief Minister himself suggested: in terms of a major statement detailing all the missing information we have so far failed to obtain.

The Assembly divided:

Ayes 6

Mr Bell
Mr B. Collins
Mr Ede
Mr Lanhupuy
Mr Leo
Mr Smith

Noes 15

Mr D.W. Collins
Mr Coulter
Mr Dale
Mr Dondas
Mr Finch
Mr Firmin
Mr Hanrahan
Mr Harris
Mr Hatton
Mr McCarthy
Mr Manzie
Mrs Padgham-Purich
Mr Robertson
Mr Setter
Mr Tuxworth

Motion negatived.

TABLED PAPER

Second Report of the Standing Orders Committee

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Honourable members, I lay on the table at the request and on behalf of the honourable the Speaker the Second Report of the Standing Orders Committee.

Mr ROBERTSON (Leader of Government Business): Mr Deputy Speaker, I move that the report be printed.

Motion agreed to.

Mr ROBERTSON (Leader of Government Business): Mr Deputy Speaker, I move that the Assembly adopt the report.

Motion agreed to.

DISCUSSION OF MATTER OF PUBLIC IMPORTANCE Government's Failure in Economic Development Policy

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: The Speaker has received the following letter from the Deputy Leader of the Opposition:

'Dear Mr Speaker,

I wish to propose, under standing order 94, that the Assembly discuss this afternoon as a definite matter of public importance the following: the very serious problems faced by the Northern Territory due to the government's failure to achieve and maintain a rational and ongoing economic development policy.

Yours sincerely,
Terry Smith (Member for Millner)'.
'

Is the proposed discussion supported? The member is supported.

Mr SMITH (Millner): Mr Deputy Speaker, this matter is raised because the opposition is concerned at some specific matters which have come to our attention in the past few months concerning the failure of the government to achieve and maintain a rational and ongoing policy for the economic development of the Northern Territory. It is unfortunate that, in assessing what we were going to put in and leave out of this debate, because of the flood of material available to us, we had to leave out a considerable amount of material.

What I will attempt to do in this first speech of the debate is to concentrate on the actions and performance of the Northern Territory Development Corporation. In general terms, we believe the Northern Territory Development Corporation has been hampered by continuing political interference, bad lending policy and a poor set of goals. In other words, NTDC has lacked the essential features which we believe are required to ensure an efficient and effective organisation. These essential features are: an orientation towards profit; a board of directors who are free, and seen to be free, of political interference; and a commitment to the development of the Northern Territory.

Let us review some recent decisions of NTDC which reflect these problems. The first one involves a name new to this Assembly: Cine Motion. In 1984-85, we find that the development corporation approved an initial expenditure of \$2.1m to a company called Cine Motion. It would seem today that a little over a \$1m has been expended on the Cine Motion project and that the Territory government is under a strict obligation to continue to pay up to the \$2.1m.

Mr Dondas: You are wrong about that.

Mr SMITH: That is despite the fact that a decision has been made not to have a Territory display at Expo 88, and despite the fact that Mr Phillip Adams is on record as describing the space theatre as 'a wretched thing'. The only hope we have stems from comments by the minister responsible for NTDC, who is busy interjecting, that the project 'hopefully will make a profit'. All this depends on finding some third party or parties to buy us out. Of course, this farce was even too much for the Tuxworth government. It found it necessary to replace the bumbling incompetence of the NTDC and its minister with the Department of the Chief Minister and its own particular incompetence. We have a situation now where Cine Motion has 2 directors, 1 a public servant from the Chief Minister's department and the other a Treasury official.

Of course, it took more than a little prodding to extract this information from the government, and that is interesting when you consider some of the purple prose which a press secretary used in describing this concept when it was first announced. It was to be 'a unique and a spectacular theatre'. The theatre was described as being very exciting in concept, although it seems to be less exciting in reality. But the project obviously excited the government. We were told that there would be tilting seats and rotating floors, that a viewer would be given a perfect sense and actuality of motion. What I think they mean is that, by moving you, they will make you think you are moving.

Obviously, with the prospect of guaranteeing, albeit with mechanical aids that the earth would always move for them, the Northern Territory government agreed to pour \$2.51m into this project. It had no clear plan or commitment as to how it would use the space theatre. There was a vague plan to use it at

Expo 88, without any knowledge or certainty that the NT would actually participate. Let us not forget that there was to be at least \$2m spent in Victoria. I am sure the Victorian Treasurer, Mr Rob Jolly, would welcome such foreign investment. But the Territory, as we all know, can ill-afford to allow this sort of money to flow out to places like Victoria. Of course, the whole harebrained scheme fell apart.

I would now like to turn to the question of Annaburroo Station. This Tuxworth government intervention in the free marketplace can only be described as reverse privatisation. The Tuxworth economic goals appear to be privatisation of public utilities such as ports, railways and universities, with a tandem policy of government-owned casinos, hotels and tourist resorts. One of the classic examples of this economic policy at work is Annaburroo. The station was about to go up for auction last year, but the government stepped in and bought it from under the auctioneer's hammer, and without any public explanation. The question still remains today: why did the government cut private enterprise out of this deal? Why was the taxpayers' money used to launch the NT government into the real estate business? The rumours still abound that it was a deal to get a CLP mate off the hook. It is hard to scotch those rumours on the facts given by the Minister for Industry and Small Business. He alluded to the fact that the Northern Territory government paid \$2.5m for the 400 km² property in December to freeze Aboriginal interests out of a possible sale.

Mr Dondas: I did not say that.

Mr SMITH: In a press release issued on 11 December, the minister said:

'With more than half of the Northern Territory land now virtually out of effective control, it is vitally important that Annaburroo Station is purchased for proper assessment'.

Mr Dondas: I was just stating a fact of life.

Mr SMITH: However, the minister well knows that the former owners, the Baldwin family, were making overtures to the Gagagju Association to buy the property. We all know - although I doubt that the minister knows, because he would not have taken the action he did - that the Gagagju Association had no interest at all in buying the property because, in its view, it was never an economic proposition. But that did not stop the government. It was prepared to leap in on some spurious ground. It spent the taxpayers' money; it got caught with the property. That does not worry the government at all.

Let us examine the minister's proposition that the government had to buy the property because it was vitally important for the purposes of proper assessment. Logically, one would have expected the government to sit back, as any proud owner would do, to survey and start planning the development of this grand new property. However, we all know the government did not do that. Within 3 weeks of snapping up this bargain before it could go to auction, the minister announced that the Bark Hut Inn and the billabong were for sale. Ironically, the sale was to be by auction, the method proposed by the previous owner, Mr Baldwin. We all know that the Bark Hut Inn and the billabong were passed in at auction. The only bid came from a Darwin businessman who was at least \$150 000 below the reserve price. It is obvious to most people that the Northern Territory government, in its purchase of Annaburroo, has bought itself another white elephant. I do not know what you call a collection of white elephants; it is probably a herd. We certainly have a rampaging herd of

white elephants galloping around this Territory at present, doing great harm to the long-term ability of this government, and future governments, to manage successfully the affairs of the Territory.

On this side of the Assembly, we have a philosophical dispute with the concept of a development corporation such as NTDC acting as a sponsor of high-risk projects in the Territory and as a catalyst for economic development. However, we believe NTDC has been set up in a way that is inherently opposed to rational economic development and that its everyday operation has been so corrupted by political interference that its credibility is destroyed.

Let me illustrate this argument with a number of examples. Firstly, while we have no objections to the development corporation seeking to provide comfort to development projects in the Territory by way of guarantees and no objections to the corporation providing seed money for development projects which are assessed in their initial stages to be of high risk, we believe that NTDC has incorrectly approached this task. The member for Sadadeen provides us with a prime example of the inherent mistake in NTDC's operations. With a group of other investors in Alice Springs, he sought to construct a set of holiday units. We have been told by the member that he was forced to seek assistance from NTDC because other normal lending institutions assessed the project as too high a risk. NTDC loaned this group sufficient money to build its project and, after some time of operation, it was able to sell this project as a viable concern at a considerable profit.

There are 2 matters that are of interest here. One is whether NTDC ought to be lending money to a member of the government. I do not want to address that particular issue here. It has been addressed before. Secondly, in a situation where NTDC is lending money on high-risk opportunities at concessional interest rates, there surely is an obligation on NTDC to get some of the profit action if and when it becomes available.

The failure of NTDC in this project and in many others is that it was unable to say to the developers that it wanted its share of the profits. That is an essential difference in the approach of this government which too often has thrown good money after bad and has not determined adequately that the funds are flowing to appropriate projects and has not made its judgments on good commercial principles. In other words, will the investment turn a profit? Obviously, there is good economic sense in making that the prime management objective of NTDC. It would allow a continuing flow of money to NTDC so that it could lend more to companies which require funds to realise sound projects. We all know that the Territory is a highly entrepreneurial society. There are many people who, if assessed properly by NTDC, could put up good cases for assistance in the short term. In the long term, their businesses would become established and the NTDC would get a share of the action and be able to help other organisations. Instead of that, the corporation has been consistently hamstrung by political decisions that ignore rational economic and commercial analysis.

Mr Dondas: Give us some examples.

Mr SMITH: The best example is the casino, and we all know the casino story. The only worthwhile contribution from the corporation that came out of this whole fiasco was the suggestion of Mr Tim Moore that they burn the Myilly Point development model. Perhaps Mr Moore's comment reflects the terrible burden that was placed on NTDC by the Everingham government, many of whose

members sit here today. There can be no doubt that the casino deal was put together by politicians in bars and clubs all around the world, with promises and guarantees written on the back of beer coasters and serviettes, and then the whole unwieldy mess was dumped in the lap of NTDC to be fixed up. The corporation seemed to have no negotiating position when the new operators were able to quote promises and guarantees given by the corporation's political masters. Those promises and guarantees were given in many different places throughout the world. As a group of professions, the officers of the corporation were hamstrung before they began the important process of negotiation.

The result of that situation is still with us today and is likely to remain with us for a very long time indeed. We are still being plagued with reports of reshuffles in the casino ownership, of foreignisation of Territory companies, of no tax payments, of tax refunds and heaven knows what else that we have not caught up with yet - and, with no prospect of a return for taxpayers in sight.

Mr Deputy Speaker, it is our contention that the process under which NTDC was established and is operated has made it an inoperative organisation. It would seem that our opinion is confirmed by the actions of the Territory government. The corporation has been stripped of the responsibility for rescuing the Yulara project and the 2 Sheratons and the casino and this has been handed onto the shadowy Abington. It also seems that the corporation has been emasculated in terms of its senior management, either by its own choice or by deliberate actions of the government. Through continuing political interference, the corporation has become a discredited organisation. In fact, we now have a situation where a combination of political ineptness and the already poor situation of NTDC has created potential for great disaster.

This government does not often match its ministers very well with their portfolios. Currently, we have a Treasurer who cannot count, a tired Minister for Mines and Energy, a Minister for Lands who thinks he is running a real estate agency, an Minister for Education who cannot read an overseas travel form and a Minister for Health who cannot find a nurse. But, in respect of the honourable member for Casuarina, the portfolio is just right. I am not sure who deserves whom but the minister is a proper match with NTDC because the record of both is extremely abysmal.

Mr Deputy Speaker, we on this side of the Assembly have major philosophical problems with the Northern Territory Development Corporation as it is presently structured and run and, more importantly, because of the political interference in its operations at present. But we do think that a body like this has a role to play in the development of the Northern Territory economy - a very important role indeed. However, we believe that the performance of the Northern Territory Development Corporation and its minister, over a long period, has played a very integral role in the failure of this government to achieve and maintain a rational and ongoing policy for economic development in the Northern Territory.

Mr DONDAS (Industry and Small Business): Mr Deputy Speaker, the Deputy Leader of the Opposition's contribution to this discussion was a waste of the Assembly's time. He simply regurgitated the old stuff about the casino. Let us talk about the Northern Territory Development Corporation because I have only 20 minutes and I have a great deal of ground to cover.

The Northern Territory Development Corporation is certainly a very important body as far as the Northern Territory government is concerned. It has responsibilities for B-TEC, the rural adjustment scheme, the bull-purchasing incentive scheme, the crop contract scheme, the development of Kings Canyon and Stapleton or Litchfield Park, the second board sharemarket - all new and exciting initiatives providing incentives for industrial development - the Desert Springs Golf Course development in Alice Springs, Annaburroo Station, overseas investment programs, including the business migration program, export market attraction, the local preference scheme and the government extension scheme. As well, it is a last resort lender to industry.

Mr Deputy Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition also spoke about Cine Motion. I am on the public record as saying that we intended to enter into a joint venture with Phillip Adams to develop an unusual and exciting cinerama to be shown at Expo. Unfortunately, because of some of the cuts by Senator Walsh, we have had to rethink our development and promotional programs and Cine Motion was one of them. I will not say any more about it today because there are certain actions in train that will result in the NT regaining the money it has spent so far, and perhaps with some interest. When it happens, it will be a funny surprise to those guys sitting opposite. But we will surprise them then.

We purchased Annaburroo because it was in a strategic location between Darwin and Kakadu. We needed to make sure that that particular area could be developed for tourism. It is true that it was passed in at auction. The Valuer-General put a reserve price of \$800 000 on it. I am happy to say that negotiations are almost successful at a sale price of \$700 000 with a proviso that the purchaser spends over \$300 000 to upgrade the facility. We will say a little more about that once the particular settlement has taken place.

The Deputy Leader of the Opposition talked about casinos. Casinos are old hat, Mr Deputy Speaker. Over the last 12 months, the operators have been trying to make them places of which we can all be proud. However, the slow refurbishing and upgrading program has made it very difficult for the operators to maintain a very high level of service. We understand that that refurbishing program will be completed within the next couple of months and I am quite sure that we can expect to see a great improvement there. What the honourable Deputy Leader of the Opposition did not say was that the operators themselves are thinking of taking a greater equity position in the Darwin casino. More will be said about that at some future time.

Let us speak about this particular matter of public importance. I would like to talk about the federal government's policy of discrimination against the Northern Territory which affects our development. Let us talk about the abandoning of the Memorandum of Understanding. Let us talk about the reduction of funds. Let us talk about the railway. Let us talk about the airport. Let us talk about the handover of national parks. Let us talk about the false promise of \$75m being spent on Kakadu. Let us talk about the recent veto on the mining industry. Let us talk about the threatened gold tax. Let us talk about the mining of uranium. Uranium mining in the Northern Territory is out but the new mine at Roxby Downs is okay. We have said it before. Let us talk about Minister Morris who has let a road construction program in the Northern Territory to a constituent company. Let us talk about Minister West who has let a contract for roofing material at Tindal to a constituent in his own electorate. The tender is a little bit cheaper than Monier's, but Monier has invested an awful lot of time and money in trying to develop the Northern

Territory. I am talking about discrimination, not only by the government but by ministers.

Let us talk about all the good things that are happening. The Deputy Leader of the Opposition is worried about the economy and investor confidence. Let me show him 2 proposals that, over the next 12 to 18 months, will involve \$25m in Alice Springs and Darwin. Not one penny of Northern Territory government money will be involved.

Mr Smith: About time too.

Mr DONDAS: Mr Deputy Speaker, those guys over there do not know what they are talking about when they raise a discussion of this kind. The Chief Minister has rightly said that it should read: 'various serious problems faced by the Northern Territory due to the federal government's failure to achieve and maintain a rational and ongoing economic development policy'. We know that each Australian's share of the national debt is \$4500.

Let us talk about our trade zone. We moved into the trade zone development last year. We introduced legislation. We have established the zone. We have established the authority and, hopefully, before the end of this financial year, we will see people operating within the zone. Let us hope that it all works out.

Let us talk about the Bonaparte Gulf gas project that the honourable Minister for Mines and Energy has been working on. He has been working on trying to encourage some overseas interest in that. We are taking leaps and bounds in horticultural development. Let us talk about prawn aquaculture and where that is going.

What about tourism? In the 1984-85 financial year, tourism was worth \$280m to the Northern Territory. There were 594 000 visitors in that period. This year the Northern Territory Tourist Commission is marketing the Territory aggressively and looking for about 650 000 visitors. The indicators are that more than 700 000 visitors will come to the Northern Territory. The member is leaving the Assembly. I wonder why? It is too much for him.

Let us talk about the review into the pastoral industry to see if we can get that out of the doldrums. Let us talk about the positive steps that have been taken as far as the fishing industry is concerned and the recent announcement of the development of Frances Bay to help the fishing industry. That is all in conjunction with the Norgaard Report. The Deputy Leader of the Opposition seems to think that one can wave a wand and it all happens overnight. All these things take planning; they do not just happen overnight. It is much the same with the Kings Canyon development. After 16 months, that development is finally coming to fruition. Hopefully, we will be in a position to see a commencement on that project in the next 3 to 4 months.

What about the Jabiru development? We have been waiting for the federal government to give permission for the Gagagju Association to build a 4 to 5-star hotel in that region to help develop tourism. Apart from those 2 developments, there are others in the pipeline. There is a company from Perth which wants to put up a 3-star hotel development on the Esplanade. We have plenty of 4-star and 5-star hotels. The Deputy Leader of the Opposition said about 3 months ago that we had to start getting some 3-star hotels into the place because everybody does not want to stay in 5-star hotels. I completely agreed with him at the time. We have been working on it. An announcement will be made about that 3-star hotel on the Esplanade.

Let us talk about business migration and what NTDC has done over the last few years in trying to attract Asian and overseas money into this region. Sure, we all laughed about Burgundy Royale. We all laughed about the Darwin Beaufort centre. But what the Deputy Leader of the Opposition has not said is that it has put nearly \$60m of its own money into the project.

We have other projects on line with funds committed by overseas investors. NTDC, through the Trade Development Zone Authority, is talking to people now, not only about investing in the trade zone but also about investing in other parts of Darwin and the Northern Territory.

What about our friend in Hong Kong who wants to invest several million dollars in putting in place a facility on Elsey Station? All that is part of the business migration. All that has been because of the work of the Northern Territory Development Corporation which the Deputy Leader of the Opposition pooh-poohs at every opportunity he gets. But he is wrong because NTDC is doing a tremendous job.

Let us talk about the airlines development. He threw in a catchcry: 'Why doesn't the Northern Territory get that Perth expert to encourage international airlines?' Why don't we? We do not have to because we have the resources within the Northern Territory government.

Mr Smith: How many new airlines have you got calling in here?

Mr DONDAS: I beg your pardon?

Mr Smith: They have 15 new international flights a week in Perth.

Mr Finch: Give us a new airport.

Mr DONDAS: Eventually, we will get our new terminal, but that airline development is taking place. Certainly, I am watching all the time, trying to cover as much as I can. The important thing is that we are talking to international airline carriers who are saying that they are interested in coming to this place. In fact, a person told me last night that, if Korean Airlines could fly into Australia and fly into Darwin, it would come next week, but the federal government and Qantas will not let it. We are asked why we do not have 14 international carriers coming into this place. The point will be proven when we put in that joint application for Thai Airlines to fly in March 1987 from Bangkok to Darwin to Cairns to Darwin to Bangkok to connect with 11 direct flights into Europe. The crunch will come then. We will see whether their federal colleagues, whether Morris, will insist that Qantas allow them to fly in. They already have landing rights. All we have to do is get them traffic rights at the same time so that they do not lose any capacity out of Melbourne or Sydney. But that is going to be the crunch.

The other crunch will come when Singapore Airlines puts in its application to fly Singapore-Darwin as a terminator. That might be in August of this year. That is how far the negotiations have proceeded. We will find out then how the opposition's federal colleagues will help us and help it. So don't talk about international airline development. Do not talk about us trying to get people at a cost of \$150 000 a year to service an airport that is already international.

Let us talk about our overseas trade. The Deputy Leader of the Opposition did not pick up 1 point about overseas trade in this matter of public

importance. Let us read it out again: 'the very serious problems faced by the Northern Territory due to the federal government's failure to achieve and maintain a rational and ongoing economic development policy'. I have mentioned about 12 points and I have more points. But in his debate today, all he could talk about was Cine Motion which, as far as we are concerned, is a dead issue. He spoke about the casino and the old one about NTDC wasting time.

Let us talk about what is happening in Brunei and our exports to Brunei and Singapore. There is a lot happening in that area. It is only because officers and ministers of the government and business people are able to move into that area to promote their wares. We have one young fellow who comes right to mind, Bob Neate. He designed this beautiful French window and won an Australian award. He is now not only selling his product in Singapore but he is also starting to get orders from the United States. That particular initiative was supported by the Northern Territory Development Corporation.

Let us talk about our recent initiative - the second board stock exchange. That is on line. We have a seminar next week. We do not know whether it will work. We do not know whether mobs of companies will be interested. But at least we are trying. We are trying something new, like the free trade zone. There is no other free trade zone in Australia. Burke has picked up the idea and is including it in his Bunbury 2000 proposal. Other countries introduced trade zones when their economy sagged. We are trying to stimulate our economy. That is why we are trying this free trade zone. Hopefully, it will work, much the same now as the second board stock exchange. I have no guarantee that it will work. Nobody has. But at least we are trying. We are taking the initiative, and that is more than the Deputy Leader of the Opposition is doing.

We spoke about bankruptcies during the course of the week. Senator Ted Robertson made a statement during the course of the week that all these businesses are going broke in the Northern Territory. From June to December, there were: bankruptcies-14; sequestration orders and wind-ups-4; companies winding up-11; petitions-18; and voluntary-13. The important thing is that many new businesses have been registered in the Northern Territory over the last 12 months.

There are other indicators. Let us talk about the growth of jobs. In January 1985, there were 55 000 jobs in the Northern Territory; in January 1986, there were 64 000 jobs in the Northern Territory. That is a 16% increase. I think the Chief Minister may have mentioned that figure this morning. Sure, the unemployment figures for February this year were a little bit up, maybe because of the influx of school leavers onto the job market. Let us look further into the record. There were 4600 unemployed in 1985 and 4900 unemployed in 1986, but our unemployment rate remained lower than the national average because our job growth is much better than national figures for the same period. The rise in the Darwin consumer price index for the December 1985 quarter was 1.1%. The national average was 2%. For the year to December 1985, the rise in Darwin was 8.1% while the national average was 8.2%. Where is all the doom and gloom?

The Deputy Leader of the Opposition spoke about my ministerial interference in the Northern Territory Development Corporation. What he fails to understand is what he himself has said on many occasions in this Assembly: the buck stops here. If the buck stops at ministerial level, there has to be some direction from that level to statutory authorities and departments. It

is a fact of life. However, the Northern Territory Development Corporation has a board. Through the Chairman, it makes its recommendations on the day-to-day operations of NTDC. It is actually running the corporation. In most cases, I am simply asked to note the differences in direction and, if there is a particular problem that I want to address, I can take it up with the chairman. He will then relay the government's concerns back to the board for its consideration. I do not approve the B-TEC program or the other lending programs. The board advises me of the decisions it has taken. I may agree with it or I may disagree with it. As the minister, I have the right to question it, to ensure...

Mr Tuxworth: Responsibility.

Mr DONDAS: As the Chief Minister says, responsibility.

The Deputy Leader of the Opposition says that NTDC has stuffed up the casinos. The casinos would have been in liquidation today if the Northern Territory government had not stepped in and acquired them. We are going over old ground. However, NTDC's role, as far as the casinos are concerned, has been very slight of late, because, as the Chief Minister said in this Assembly, he intends to set up a special organisation within his own department to oversee all Northern Territory government projects which have a government commitment by way of a liability. That is the role of Abington. The Northern Territory Development Corporation's role is to maintain the thrust of development and it is doing this on many fronts. It is doing it with exports, stock exchanges and with incentives, and it is still providing financial assistance. Every couple of days, there are people coming through the door with different ideas. Some of the ideas will not work, but they take time to investigate. Once they are evaluated, they go to the board which, in its wisdom, decides whether particular projects will proceed or not.

How can the Deputy Leader of the Opposition say that the Northern Territory Development Corporation is pretty slack? He ought to be ashamed of himself for saying it because those officers are working very hard.

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

Mr EDE (Stuart): Mr Deputy Speaker, we have just had an excellent example of how to substitute noise for substance.

Mr Dondas: You read it tomorrow. There is plenty of substance.

Mr EDE: Let me talk first about Cine Motion. What we have is a project of no relevance to the Northern Territory involving an untried product with enormous practical difficulties. This government decided that it would jump in, but now all the responsible minister can offer is some vague maybes. Maybe we will be surprised; maybe he will get his money back.

Mr Dondas: You will be surprised.

Mr EDE: Hasn't he got a real belief in his own abilities?

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! The member for Stuart will be heard in total silence.

Mr EDE: Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker. He may also have something for us with the Bark Hut Inn. He tells us 'maybe'. The government's whole

philosophy is to pass the buck to the federal government. It has shown itself incompetent in negotiating with this federal government. That has been the situation for the last 3 years and it is becoming more and more obvious every day. It is so busy blaming the federal government for everything that it can do nothing itself.

Mr Dondas: Where is our railway?

Mr EDE: Where is this? Where is that? Where is the positive thinking we keep hearing about from his mates next to him? All the minister says is: 'What about this, what about that?' How about a little bit of getting on with it? But it cannot because it is a tired government with tired ideas. It is going round and round in circles, getting itself deeper and deeper into trouble. Whenever it does move, it is with the scatter-gun approach - ad hoc development. The results are generally of very little benefit to Territorians, except possibly in terms of the cowboy image that government members have been able to build up for themselves overseas.

The Labor Party rejects the current operation of NTDC. As the Deputy Leader of the Opposition has indicated, the corporation, by its own mismanagement and by the poor decisions forced on it by the Country Liberal Party, has placed itself in a hopeless position. The situation has been confirmed by the government's own treatment of NTDC. We have seen senior staff decimated and we have seen a procedure introduced whereby both NTDC and Treasury now have their decisions checked by a special advisory committee. We also see that all NTDC's disasters are being handed over to Abington.

What a sad statement we had on Tuesday when the Treasurer was forced to admit that the cost of the Alice Springs Sheraton had risen from \$35m to \$37m, and that the reason for this increase was simply the interest charge that applied during the first 6 months of operation. What householder could continue to operate in a situation where his loan increased every year? We have heard all sorts of plaintive pleadings from the government about high interest rates, but the point to remember is that the original deal for the Alice Springs Sheraton was so poorly thought out and so poorly researched that, in September last year, we faced the obligation not only of guaranteeing the profits to the proposed owners but also of actually paying company tax for these people. Just think about that special little deal.

Not only are we concerned by the failures of NTDC but we are also gravely concerned that this government has no plan and no idea of what it intends to do. We have heard some vague comments from the Chief Minister and Treasurer.

Mr Coulter: Do you want to stop us creating jobs?

Mr EDE: If the honourable frontbench would like to listen for a moment...

Mr Coulter: Well, say something.

Mr EDE: Right.

What are the results of the vague comments that the Chief Minister has been making about his financial supermarket involving NTDC and TIO? The only feature of this proposal has been the use of TIO as a means of shoring up both the casinos and the Alice Springs Sheraton. I am sure that policy holders in TIO will be pleased to know how well their money is invested. Like so many of the Treasurer's statements on economic issues, this financial supermarket has died.

Mr Deputy Speaker, you remember the proposal for a tax summit. What happened to that? You remember the people who were lined up to come into the Alice Springs Sheraton. What happened to that? You remember the proposal to review the tender and contract system. What happened to that? You remember the proposal to float the casino trust. What happened to that? You remember the statements that the Alice Springs Sheraton was full. This government is bereft of sound economic policies and now resorts to grandiose policies to lead us further and further into a mire of debt and unpaid interest.

There is a solution to this problem, this quagmire of revolving debt and constant use of \$2 shell companies. The shadow treasurer and a member of our staff have developed a model for a vehicle for the economic development of the Territory. We have named this model Territoricorp. It is based on the rather simple concept of a government-owned corporation where the board is drawn from business and its primary goal and guiding philosophy is to make a profit by participating in and encouraging the economic development of the Territory. We believe that these 2 principles would ensure that a great number of errors in the past would be avoided. The philosophy of Territoricorp would be such that it would not compete with existing private enterprise. It would facilitate the development of major projects in the Territory. It would open up greater financing opportunities to Territory firms and projects, and would develop joint ventures with Territory companies. It would advise and encourage Territory firms in the expansion of their businesses. As we propose it, Territoricorp would avoid the current situation where Territory government assistance simply provides one operator, often from outside the Territory, with an unfair economic and commercial advantage over existing Territory firms. We are talking about the expansion of business opportunities, not the present effort of constantly reshuffling the debt.

To achieve these goals, Territoricorp would need to be established by an act of this Assembly as a public company with a board drawn largely from outside the government and therefore independent of the government. This feature is essential because of the history of NTDC and the constant political interference in its operation. What we are proposing is an organisation with the structure and the staff to get on with the job. It is our view that this organisation should have a number of major divisions or responsibilities.

Firstly, we propose a project development division whose task would be to participate in the planning and investigation of major development projects and the encouragement of those projects. This division would also be involved financially in development projects. But that involvement would be on strictly commercial terms with the aim of making a profit, and would not be simply for financial handouts. This project development division, where appropriate, would be prepared to be an initial holder of equity in projects, not at the exclusion of interested private investors but simply to encourage and facilitate project development. I would expect that such equity participation would be strictly limited, in the charter of the company, to specific short periods of time.

Secondly, we believe that Territoricorp could have a very real and profitable role in handling the Territory government's cash balances and its investments in the short-term money market. This role is currently fulfilled in Western Australia by the highly successful Western Australian Development Corporation which is not only gaining an additional interest margin for the Treasury, but is returning a profit to the Western Australian Development Corporation. We also believe that the Treasury and a government assets division could have a sensible role in rationalising the land holdings and

physical assets of the Territory government to ensure that maximum use is made available of available funds in the immediate future rather than having them tied up over long periods.

Thirdly, we believe Territoricorp would have a very prominent role to play in the development of export markets for the Territory. We envisage the division, possibly called something like 'Excorp', would be a semi-autonomous profit centre within Territoricorp which would have the expertise to secure investment export opportunities for Territory firms and for other firms wishing to base themselves in the Territory. The key to the success of this division, and indeed the whole of the organisation, would depend on recruitment of highly-professional, experienced staff. Once again, Excorp would have the capacity to enter joint venture agreements in relation to potential projects.

We believe a fourth part of this important organisation should be devoted to small business and to the encouragement of that business to explore potential for further development. Often, the development of efficient Territory firms with significant innovations is hampered by lack of funds. The enterprise division would be responsible for seeking out such firms and encouraging or assisting them in steps towards public listing. The service of this enterprise division would not be free and it would expect to make a profit from its involvement with local firms in their expansion. But this division would offer Territory firms the confidence that they are dealing with a sympathetic adviser who is aware of the needs of small business in the Territory. In many cases, clients of the enterprise division would be redirected to existing sources of advice on finance in the private sector. Normal advice to small business would continue through a government department concerned with industry and small business. The enterprise division would be an important aid to the development of a secondary stock exchange in Darwin.

The next area I wish to speak of is something we have called the institutions division which would be responsible for the investigation and development of financial markets in the Territory for the benefit of Territorians. One project will be the possibility of a joint venture in forming a Territory bank which would allow the participation of Territorians in banking in the Territory. Very real opportunities exist for such a joint venture.

As the various divisions of Territoricorp took up equity in projects, albeit for short periods and covered by sunset clauses, there would be increasing demand on the available capital of Territoricorp which would put us in a position where we would need to consider placing these accumulated involvements in the form of a trust or trusts, which we have nominally described as Territory development trusts. Units of these trusts would be available to Territorians to allow them to share and participate in the exciting development of the Territory. Of course, such a move would provide Territoricorp with a suitable injection of cash which would allow it to get on with its long-term goal as a facilitator of economic development.

That is a brief outline of the sort of organisation that the Territory needs. It reflects the sort of planning and thought that this government should be putting into the future of the Territory. As I said earlier, we see none of these plans coming out of the Tuxworth government because it is a government in crisis which is unable to plan for the future.

Let me turn to the annual report of NTDC for 1984-85 in which is discussed the activities of the Corporate Affairs Division. This division has 8 major projects on its books: the Alice Springs Sheraton, the Darwin Sheraton, the Territory Property Trust, Diamond Leisure, Desert Springs Golf Course Estate, Myilly Point Hotel Casino Development, Yulara Guarantees and the Darwin Centre. Six of these are in a state of crisis.

The government has had to capitalise \$2m worth of interest on the Alice Springs Sheraton and is still fumbling around trying to secure any real investment in the project, and the whole deal is costing us \$6m a year. The Darwin Sheraton will join that sorry tale very soon. The Territory Property Trust is surrounded by speculation. Have Kumagai Gumi taken over Henry and Walker? Is Henry and Walker a foreign company? Is the property trust a foreign company? Look at Diamond Leisure. Pratts are supposed to be leaving, allegedly because Aspinalls want to do their own thing, or is it because Pratts are dissatisfied? We will have to wait and see. There is the proposed Myilly Point Hotel Casino which even the Chief Minister had to pour a bucket on to cool it down. Finally, there is the Yulara project which will cost \$34m this year and next year with a prospect of over \$50m in the next 5 years.

Those projects are the sad legacy of NTDC and they would have nothing to do with our proposed Territorcorp because we could take them out of the hands of the shadowy Abington. We would reveal the facts on these crises and get on with the job of fixing them up.

The argument is clear. The examples we have given here today show this CLP government is tied to tired and failed concepts for the development of the Territory which have tied numerous millstones around its neck. Unless they can provide us with a clear outline of the plan of development for the future, then they are open to the serious criticism that they have lost control of the economy and, as such, they do not deserve to govern.

Mr TUXWORTH (Chief Minister): Mr Deputy Speaker, what snivelling bile and drivel we have had to put up with this afternoon. We have a new name for policy: 'a matter of public importance'. Tip a couple of buckets on a few innocent bystanders as you go. What claptrap! I would have thought that honourable members opposite would at least have the capacity to understand what is going on around them even if they do not want to admit it.

The whole thrust of today's matter of public importance discussion was to talk a little bit about what is going wrong in the Northern Territory and then to talk about how the new policy launch of Territorians, or whatever they want to call it, will save the people of the Northern Territory from ruin and take them forward into the 21st century. Those people would be flat out taking themselves home, let alone worrying about the 21st century.

Let me paint it for the honourable member for Stuart because he has the foggiest imagination of them all. He does not know what is going on around him. He sees it, touches it, smells it and sometimes he tastes it, but he does not understand.

Let us deal with tourism. Several years ago, we decided that we needed to try to attract about 1 million tourists a year to the Northern Territory to give our tourist industry and infrastructure viability. If you work with less than a million tourists a year, it is very hard to sustain the viability of the infrastructure. We said: 'If that is the objective for the Northern Territory by 1994-95, how do we do it?' We do it by building Yularas,

Sheratons, airports, roads and all the infrastructure that you need to attract paying customers. We have done that. We went out and bit the bullet; we did it at a time when those people poured cold water on us, and told us the earth was flat: 'You cannot do it. It has never been done before. We will all go broke. The people will leave and the government will fall'. Fortunately for the people of the Northern Territory, the government is still here and they will not be subject to the whims of the people opposite.

We do have a design for the tourist industry of the Northern Territory. We are well on the way to putting all that infrastructure in place and giving the industry the capacity to place bodies in beds, which it would not have had without the infrastructure. We have only one problem: the attitude of the Commonwealth government towards the development of our airport. It knows that, if it does not build an airport, it will prevent the creation of jobs, it will force a lot of people to go broke, it will create financial difficulties for the investors in the Northern Territory who have put big money into projects, like Burgandy Royale, and it will make life pretty uncomfortable. It will get away with it for a year or 2 but one thing about the Northern Territory is that it is not the first time we have had to deal with it. We have been dealing with it for 80 years and we have survived. We will continue to survive this mob in Canberra and get on and do the job. If the people opposite had one skerrick of integrity, they would not be bellowing and moaning about what is wrong in the Northern Territory; they would be doing something about their own people to change the ways of the Labor Party which is determined to cripple us financially.

Mr Bell: Well, you are not doing a bad job by yourselves.

Mr TUXWORTH: We are doing a fantastic job - creating employment, creating opportunities and attracting investment. I gave some indicators in the Assembly this morning of the increased production in the Northern Territory in the last couple of years. They did not listen to it because they are normally asleep and it is hard to understand things when you are asleep. But I will get them a copy and send it to them so they can read it for themselves in a quiet moment. The facts are that we have done well with our growth and production.

Let me just pick up another area of development: fishing. The prawn fishery is pretty limited in what it can do. It is producing 3000 t to 4000 t a year. There are no growth prospects there. We can just sustain it. But we have gone out and tried to arrange joint venture and bilateral agreements with countries. The biggest criticism came from the Labor Party in the Northern Territory. The biggest stumbling block was the federal Labor Minister for Primary Industry. But we are committed to getting about 400 boats in the Northern Territory fishery by the mid-1990s because, from experience overseas, we believe that that sort of activity will bring about 9000 jobs to the Territory community. The Minister for Ports and Fisheries has already started work. Studies are being prepared. Work is taking place on the waterfront to support the fishing industry and the boats will come.

Let us talk about mining. The Labor Party does not like to talk about mining because most of it takes place on Aboriginal land. It is generally a very traumatic exercise and a painful price to pay to get a mine out of the starting blocks on Aboriginal land, and the Labor Party encourages that. More to the point, uranium mining, which has a great potential for us, is not allowed to take place in the Northern Territory. It can only be mined in South Australia because the South Australian project will probably never fly.

But the mining operators here are not even allowed to enter the market because everybody knows they could sign and seal their contracts in about 4 months.

The potential for the Territory with Jabiluka and Koongarra is still there. The only group preventing that is the federal Labor Party which is determined that we are not going to mine any more uranium so that it can look after its mates in South Australia. If the member for Stuart had a skerrick of integrity, he would be saying to the federal government: 'Look, get out of the way and let us get on with it'. But he does not. He likes to try to pick holes in things that are going on at home to try to give people the impression that the federal government does not have anything to answer for - but, by gee, it does.

We have the Enterprise goldmine, the Granites goldmine, the Argo goldmine and the Tennant Greek goldmine. They are all small mines and are in the production phase now. Work on them did not start last year or the year before. Those projects have been developing now for some 7 years. From the day you walk onto an exploration site to look for a mine, it takes 20 years to find the mine and get it up, and it costs an average of \$20m per mine in the Northern Territory to find one. What do we get from the federal government and the people opposite? We get nothing but obstruction.

The Minister for Industry and Small Business mentioned the offshore gas development. That offshore gas development will take 10 years for us to bring into production. It does not matter whether we start now or in 1990; it is a 10-year project. What help are we getting from the members opposite or from the federal government? We are getting very little. We are doing it all ourselves. We are not complaining. We will make a few mistakes along the way. We are not shy about that either. But we are committed to the growth and expansion of that potential.

We have also spoken 100 times in this Assembly about the development of our indigenous supplies onshore for our own use. Again, those things did not just drop out of the sky. Lots of people in government departments, in mining companies and in organisations went out and made it happen. The pipeline that will finish this year was conceived 2½ years ago. It is one of the fastest track projects ever built in Australia and that had to happen because of our absolute need for it. Normally, a project of that nature would take 5 to 7 years. We are prepared to look ahead 5, 7 and 10 years on projects because we believe in them.

We also believe in feeding ourselves. There is no future for the Territory as long as we spend all the profits of our work buying food. We have to start to feed ourselves. We embarked on a project some years ago with the ADMA development farms. When I was Minister for Primary Production, those people over there gave me heaps because the farmers did not turn in a good crop the first year, obtain the best prices in the second year nor obtain 100% sales in the third year. We are in our fifth and sixth years and the ADMA farms are looking really good. We have a base now to expand that development, create more cropping and do a lot more good for ourselves.

On the horticultural front, we are doing very well. I mentioned this morning that we have had something like a 160% increase in horticultural production in the Northern Territory. Again, most of that produce is exported but we are using a lot of it ourselves. It is absolutely essential that we do that.

Another area of development is the nursery area. Who would believe that people in the Middle East would want to spend \$1m in the Northern Territory every year to buy pot plants, palms and shrubs? It is a fact. We have people in there selling and they are doing a great job.

We also believe in developing training facilities for Territorians. We cannot stabilise our community while most of our young people have to go away to further their education. We are trying to do something about it. We have been given the royal order of the prawn, the rough end of the pineapple, or whatever you want to call it, by the Labor Party that there will be no tertiary education for people in the Northern Territory until 1991. That is another 6 years away. We face another 6 years of losing young Territorians before we hope to get a university. Then it is still a hope which we have to build on. We have bitten the bullet and we intend to establish our university. We are going to succeed at it. I know there will be many people who will denigrate it, but we will make a fair shake of it.

In the cattle industry, we would dearly like to see more processing in the Northern Territory, such as canning. But one of the things crucial to further processing in the cattle industry is the resolution of matters such as the Mudginberri dispute. We need to have a set of industrial rules and settlements in the Northern Territory that cover us and that are not forced on us by people from outside because it suits big unions or big business down south. We can do a lot more for ourselves but we have to do it differently from other people. Jay Pendarvis set out to do that. He negotiated an agreement with his employees and they were both happy with it. They were told that it would not work. The unions down south would not accept it but they had to back out and stay out.

We are committed to the ultimate expansion of the cattle industry - better productivity, pasture improvement on properties etc. All these things are part of a process that will take time.

The member for Stuart asked me a moment ago about the tax summit and why we have not had it. I am very keen to have the tax summit. The great difficulty is that the federal Treasurer announced last August or September that he would put these new tax provisions into place and they would have a serious impact on us by virtue of our isolation because it is dealing with air fares and all sorts of things. We are still waiting for the details of the taxation proposals.

Mr Ede: Until he does his thing, you're not going to have your summit.

Mr TUXWORTH: Let me explain for the benefit of the member. We are coming together as Territorians - business, government, local government and even unions on some points - to examine the impact on the Northern Territory of all of these taxation arrangements. What does it mean to us collectively to have air fares taxed or housing taxed or whatever? We still do not know the details of what the federal Treasurer is proposing. As soon as we have them on paper, I will be happy to have the summit. We will be paying pretty dearly; that is my guess.

All I can say is that we are used to people knocking, carping, criticising, kicking, biting and scratching but, despite all of that, we are making progress. This morning, I gave some indication of the progress with the economic indicators. It is continuing. We are doing our very best to ensure that it continues at a higher level. Every minister in the government

is working continuously to find new opportunities to create development, to create growth, to create wealth and to create jobs for the whole Territory community, and we will never retreat from that position.

MATTER OF PRIVILEGE

Mr B. COLLINS (Opposition Leader): Mr Speaker, I rise under standing order 83 on a matter of privilege. Mr Speaker, I have just received a letter from Mildren, Silvester and Partners which, in my view, constitutes a clear breach of the privileges of this Assembly. Under standing order 87 of the Assembly, I provide you, Sir, with a copy of it. It is dated 20 March 1986, 2.45 pm (EST). I will read it in full:

'Mr Bob Collins MLA,
Leader of the Opposition,
Legislative Assembly,
DARWIN NT 5790.

Dear Sir,

Re: Mudginberri Debate in Legislative Assembly 19.3.86

As you are aware, this firm is instructed by Mudginberri Station Pty Ltd. We have now been provided with a photocopy of material tabled by you in the Legislative Assembly on 19.3.86. The material consists of a four page memorandum from Mr A.D. Moore of Westpac which includes statements in respect of funding arrangements, and lists Assets and Liabilities of Mudginberri Station Pty Ltd and J.D. & J. Pendarvis. These documents have been marked with the notations "Westpac 1" and "W2".

We are advised by officers of Westpac that the photocopies which you tabled are in fact copies of actual Westpac documents and the tabled photocopies were not provided to you by Westpac or any bank officer employed by Westpac.

Westpac 1 and W2 form part of the total documentation produced to the Federal Court in response to a Subpoena issued by the AMIEU and duly answered by Westpac on 11th December 1985 (See transcript page 1633) in respect of the Federal Court matter titled Mudginberri Station Pty Ltd v AMIEU. On 19th December 1985 at page 1874 and subsequent, the transcript of the above matter records arrangements whereby the solicitors for the parties could obtain photocopies of the Westpac documents with the consent of the court. Such photocopied documents were to be utilised in the court proceedings and not otherwise. This firm has not requested any photocopying of the bank's records nor has it made any original or duplicate bank documentation available to any person.

We, of course, do not question the Legislative Assembly's right to examine materials properly placed before it. Upon the facts stated, however, it would appear to us that materials subpoenaed under Order 27 of the Federal Court Rules for the purposes, and the purposes only, of litigation (being confidential documents as between a bank and its client) have wrongfully come into your possession and the acts necessary to place such documents in your possession may constitute contempt of court.

In view of this, we would appreciate your advising that the materials (being Westpac 1 and W2) will be withdrawn immediately and that you advise us of the manner in which you acquired possession of these documents. Unless we have received your written response agreeing to comply with the requests contained herein by 4.15 pm EST today, we will place these facts before His Hon Mr Justice Morling forthwith.

We can be contacted by either Telexing Sydney AA24106 or by Facsimile Transmission 02-2214960.

Yours faithfully,
P.J. TEITZEL'

Mr Speaker, I have received legal advice, and indeed it is my own view, that the last paragraph of this letter, in particular the last sentence of this letter, constitutes a clear breach of sections 57 and 58 of the Northern Territory Criminal Code. I will read those out:

'Section 57: Interference with the Legislative Assembly.

Any person who, by force or deception or by threat or intimidation of any kind, interferes with the free exercise by the Legislative Assembly of its authority is guilty of a crime and is liable to imprisonment for 7 years.

Section 58: Influencing a Legislative Assembly Member.

Any person who, directly or indirectly, by force, deception, threat, or intimidation of any kind, influences a member of the Legislative Assembly in the exercise of his duty or authority as a member of the Legislative Assembly, or induces him to absent himself from the Legislative Assembly or a committee of the Legislative Assembly, is guilty of a crime and is liable to imprisonment for 7 years'.

I wish to state briefly that I have no intention of ever disclosing to Mr Teitzel or anybody else how or where I came by these documents. That is definite. The question of contempt of court, any court, has nothing to do with me; I am not even interested in it. My view is that the threats contained in the last paragraph of this letter, and particularly in the last sentence of this letter, constitute a clear breach of those 2 sections of the Criminal Code.

Mr Speaker, I believe they establish a prima facie case for the referral of this matter to the Privileges Committee of this Assembly.

Mr SPEAKER: Members, I have listened to the Leader of the Opposition and I will advise the Assembly, pursuant to standing order 84, as to my intentions in this matter.

LAW OFFICERS AMENDMENT BILL
(Serial 165)

Continued from 21 November 1985.

Mr EDE (Stuart): Mr Speaker, the amendments are aimed at separating the positions of Solicitor General and Secretary of the Department of Law. Both positions are currently held by Mr Brian Martin QC who will continue as

Solicitor General. In the states, the positions are separate. While the current Northern Territory legislation does not require the positions of Crown Solicitor and Solicitor General to be held by the same person, it contains very little provision for the latter position. The amending bill will rectify this situation in respect of the Crown Solicitor. It provides for appointment to be made by the Administrator on such terms and conditions as he determines. The Solicitor General cannot hold ministerial office; he must be a legal practitioner of at least 5 years standing; he is not a public servant; he is entitled to the pension rights of a Supreme Court judge and retirement at 65 years; and he can be removed by the Administrator on grounds of incapacity, misbehaviour, bankruptcy or insolvency. The Solicitor General acts as counsel to the Territory and performs such other duties as the Attorney-General directs.

Most of these provisions are in line with those in the Australian states. The transitional clause provides that the occupant of the position of Solicitor General shall continue in that office while ceasing to be a public servant. However, his pension rights under this amending bill will not apply to his period of service before the commencement of these provisions. It should be noted that the government announced on 10 January last that it was seeking someone to fill the position of Secretary of the Department of Law.

As the Attorney-General stated, splitting of the responsibilities is further recognition of the constitutional development of the Territory. The relationship between the Northern Territory and the Commonwealth creates a special need for high-level advice on constitutional matters. Certainly, the position of Solicitor General is onerous, particularly with a government like this one which is constantly in strife. It is appropriate to separate it from the policy and administrative functions of the head of the Department of Law.

The opposition will give general support to this bill. However, we have some major problems with it and we have circulated some amendments which we hope that the government will take on board so that we can give this very important piece of legislation the overwhelming support of this Assembly. I will draw the Assembly's attention to those aspects which we are concerned about.

In both Victoria and New South Wales, there is a prohibition on the Solicitor General engaging in the legal profession or other paid employment outside the duties or functions of his position. While some states permit such activities with the consent of the Attorney-General, we believe that this is inappropriate. This bill, however, proposes to permit it with the consent of the Attorney-General. In introducing the bill, the Attorney-General stated:

'I will draw members' attention to subparagraph (e) which might allow the Solicitor General to retain the role of private practice with the Attorney-General's consent. While the provision is not unique to the Territory, I believe it gives a further degree of flexibility which might be required some day to attract the right candidate'.

We believe that it is inappropriate for a Solicitor General to be permitted any other employment. We would certainly question whether other employment would be necessary and we believe that it could possibly be quite inappropriate. We believe also, as the Attorney-General stated, that the position itself is onerous enough to command the full attention and efforts of the occupant. Even though it would require the consent of the

Attorney-General, we believe that such provisions for outside employment are inappropriate.

One of the provisions of the bill which is not similar to those in the states is the grounds for removal of the Solicitor General. I would like to go through some of the actual provisions in other legislation of this type around Australia. In Victoria, there is a general provision that the Governor may appoint and remove the Solicitor General. In New South Wales, the Solicitor General is deemed to have vacated his office if: the Governor removes him from office for any cause which appears sufficient to the Governor; he becomes bankrupt or mentally ill; he resigns, or attains 70 years of age; he engages in any paid employment or practises law outside the duties of his office. In South Australia, the Governor may remove the Solicitor General on the grounds that he is incapable of performing his duties or that he has been guilty of misconduct. In Tasmania, the government may suspend the Solicitor General if: it is satisfied that he is incapable of performing the functions of his office; he becomes bankrupt or insolvent; he has been convicted of an offence punishable by 12 months or more imprisonment; or has been guilty of misconduct in the performance of his functions. He is removed by the Governor if both houses of parliament so resolve and a statement of the grounds of suspension is tabled first. In Western Australia, the Governor may remove the Solicitor General if he is incapable of performing his duties, is guilty of misbehaviour or becomes bankrupt or insolvent.

As you can see, Mr Speaker, Tasmania and South Australia have removal on grounds of misconduct; Western Australia has misbehaviour; Victoria has a general provision for removal; and New South Wales allows for removal for a cause which appears sufficient to the Governor. On this side of the Assembly, we prefer the New South Wales provision. It is wider and thus offers greater flexibility than the more specific misconduct and misbehaviour clauses. The cause would have to appear sufficient to the Governor. Although this would be a political decision, it should have a basis of some substance. Obviously, it would become a matter for discussion in this Assembly if it were abused. We intend to move amendments to that effect during the committee stage of this bill. However, one will relate to the ability of the Solicitor General to take outside employment with the consent of the Attorney-General. Our position is that there should be no outside employment. The other will concern the removal of the Solicitor General from office. We believe that causes, which in the opinion of the Administrator are sufficient, should be sufficient grounds to constitute the removal of the Solicitor General.

Debate adjourned.

POLICE ADMINISTRATION AMENDMENT BILL
(Serial 157)

Continued from 19 March 1986.

In committee:

Bill, by leave, taken as a whole.

New clauses 3 and 4:

Mr TUXWORTH: Mr Chairman, I move amendment 65.1.

By way of explanation, this amendment is an additional clause to validate certain actions that have taken place since the bill was introduced into parliament and to ensure that officers are not prejudiced in terms of those actions. I have consulted with the member for Nhulunbuy who has agreed to the proposition.

Mr LEO: Mr Chairman, the Chief Minister has indicated that it is necessary to effect validating legislation. I want to draw the Assembly's attention to the amount of validating legislation passed because events overtake introduced legislation, or perhaps the legislation is not drawn up with certain consequences in mind.

I repeat previous opposition calls to the Executive Council that, when it is drawing up legislation, and indeed when it is amending regulations to acts, it should keep in mind what the laws of the day are at the time it changes certain regulations or procedures within the public service. In that way, we would not have to introduce validating legislation.

New clauses 3 and 4 agreed to.

Bill reported; report adopted.

Bill read a third time.

MOTION

Statement and Report on Juvenile Crime

Mr ROBERTSON (Leader of Government Business)(by leave): Mr Speaker, I move that the noting of the ministerial statement on juvenile crime and the report of the Task Force on Juvenile Crime in Alice Springs be debated together and one motion be put to take note of the statement and the paper.

Motion agreed to.

MOTION

Noting Statement on Juvenile Crime and Report of Task Force on Juvenile Crime in Alice Springs

Continued from 6 June 1985 and 19 November 1985.

Mr VALE (Braitling): Mr Speaker, I wish to speak about the Task Force on Juvenile Crime that conducted its inquiry in central Australia. I will be fairly brief because the report has been tabled for several months and events have since moved on. In fact, a number of initiatives have been introduced by the government.

It would be quite accurate to say that I, along with other members in central Australia, went into the inquiry with the view that parents should be responsible. However, as the inquiry progressed, it was seen that, in many cases, a family unit or family support was non-existent. The other thing that became very apparent as the inquiry progressed was that juveniles who cause trouble in the community are very much in the minority. There is a vast majority of young people who make a more than worthwhile contribution to society but, unfortunately, their good work often goes unrecorded whereas the press tends to highlight the actions and activities of the juvenile offenders in central Australia and in other parts of the country.

Since the report was first presented to the Minister for Community Development, the government has taken a number of steps to implement recommendations contained in our report. From a brief reading of the Darwin report, my understanding is that many of our recommendations are similar to those in the Darwin report.

I wish to highlight 3 steps that the government has implemented in central Australia. The first is the revision of the community services order. That is one of the most excellent schemes operating in relation to juveniles. An organisation of which I am president in central Australia, the Ghan Preservation Society, has had the services of young people who have been under community service orders. Those young fellows have worked for us on a number of occasions. I might point out that this has been through the hottest months in central Australia from 7 o'clock in the morning to late in the afternoon. All of those young fellows have worked particularly hard and have taken an interest in what the society is doing in central Australia. I propose talking about the society next week. It is interesting that 2 of those young fellows have come back under their own steam and in their own time to work for the society. They have brought tools and equipment with them. I think that shows that the community service orders are working well. I compliment the minister and the departmental officials who supervise their operation.

To put kids on cattle stations was another one of our recommendations. In particular, we pointed out that the facilities at Hamilton Downs could be utilised to get young people out of town. In essence, we thought that these kids had low self-esteem and it would be a good idea to get them working on cattle stations in rural surroundings where they might be able to build up a little self-confidence. When I was in Perth last year, I spoke to people involved in a similar scheme with juvenile offenders. I am delighted to know that the minister has had officers of his department talking to the cattle station proprietors in central Australia with whom I put him in touch. I am hopeful that the minister will not be too long in announcing further action in that regard.

The Minister for Youth, Sport and Recreation announced the proposed juvenile drop-in centre in central Australia. That is welcome news because, in all of the schools that we visited in central Australia, particularly the high schools, pupils emphasised the need for such a facility.

However, there is still a high degree of concern in the community as to who pays if hardships result from the activities of juvenile criminals. This question needs to be addressed urgently by the government in its review of the Juvenile Justice Act. Before turning to a number of the recommendations contained in the report, I wish briefly to quote from 3 sections of the report concerning the most common offences, re-offenders and substance abuse.

Under the heading of 'most common offences' in the Alice Springs report, there is a set of figures. As seen by table 1, the most common offences committed by juveniles in Alice Springs are related to stealing, unlawful entry with intent to commit a crime and unlawful use of motor vehicles. In relation to stealing offences, information provided by the police does not allow for the distinction between minor and major offences. That is not a criticism of the police, but the committee believed that the police manpower should be beefed up to enable more accurate and detailed statistics to be kept for future inquiries and other government departments. For instance, the figures do not indicate how many juveniles were apprehended for shoplifting as distinct from being apprehended for stealing sums of money over \$100 or goods

whose value exceeded \$100. In relation to shoplifting, figures do not indicate whether juveniles were apprehended for goods whose value was under \$5 and so on.

According to an Alice Springs police spokesperson, by far the largest number of thefts by juveniles related to push bikes. Some honourable members will remember that, some years ago, the police pulled in excess of 500 push bike frames out of Ilpapa Swamp. As he was coming home one night, a mate of mine saw a kid sanding and painting a bike in the back lane. As he drove into his backyard, he realised it was his daughter's bike. It had been taken about 400 yards and was being repainted. Obviously, a number of young kids who steal push bikes are fairly ingenious at camouflage methods.

Shoplifting offences also account for a large number of stealing offences. According to the police spokesperson, most thefts associated with breaking and entering are for items such as food, confectionery, clothing, cassette radios and cigarettes. There do not appear to be many incidents of major theft.

I turn now to re-offenders. My comments are taken straight from the report. One thing that became quite apparent is that it is nearly impossible to draw up a composite picture of a juvenile offender. Each offender is different and each is influenced by a whole variety of factors which lead the young person to offend. Studies, particularly overseas, have identified some factors which seem to be the dominant influence on the majority of offenders studied. Some of these factors include the individual's level of self-esteem, the ability to achieve at school, the family environment from which the individual comes and the social and socio-economic status of the individual, the environment from which the individual comes, race, ability to obtain a job after leaving school, peer group pressure, the individual's perception of the police and the juvenile justice system and the ability to use leisure time constructively or, conversely, not to be able to use leisure time constructively. For any individual offender, it could be one or a combination of a number of these factors. Studies have shown that approximately three-quarters of first offenders never re-offend. What needs to be determined are the significant factors that influence this group of juveniles compared with the persistent offender.

The last point I wish to discuss is a comment in the report relating to substance abuse. There is a widely-held opinion in the community that many young kids are turning to juvenile crime because of their need to obtain money to purchase drugs. The report reads:

'Substance abuse for the purpose of this task force falls into 3 categories: alcohol abuse, illicit drug abuse and petrol and glue sniffing. To determine any relationship between substance abuse and juvenile crime, it was found that there were virtually no statistics available which might have helped paint a clearer picture. According to the 2 magistrates, senior Alice Springs police and senior staff of the Northern Territory Department of Health, there does not appear to be any significant relationship between illicit drug abuse and juvenile crime. In particular, senior police do not seem to think crime is committed to support illicit drug or alcohol habits. It must be remembered that the terms of the reference confined this inquiry to Alice Springs and not to the more remote communities where petrol sniffing is apparently a major problem.

Alice Springs police stated that they come across quite a number of juveniles who use and or are under the influence of marijuana or alcohol or both. A small number are under the influence of one or the other or both if apprehended for criminal activity. Most of these fit into the 13 to 14 age bracket. That is a sad reflection upon us. Whilst the offender may have been under the influence on apprehension, it does not follow that the alcohol or illicit drug was the major factor leading to the offence being committed. Evidence from research has not been found to prove conclusively that it is'.

Mr Speaker, another matter which should be examined critically by the Northern Territory government, particularly the Department of Community Development and the judicial authorities, is the age at which a child can be charged with a crime. There was concern expressed by the police and other authorities in central Australia that young people of 6 or 7 or even younger were committing crimes in Alice Springs, apparently knowing full well that what they were doing was illegal.

I will give one small example. The Teppa Hill Pre-school was broken into some 2 years ago. The police finally found a group of 6 and 7-year-olds who started by taking the goldfish out of the fishtank, cutting their throats and bleeding them into the toilet bowl. They went back the following night and took the zebra finches out of the aviary and plucked them whilst they were alive, cut their throats and gutted them. A couple of nights later, they went back and did the same thing to all the poultry that the young pre-school kids had out there. These kids were openly bragging around the town area that they were far too young for the police or any other authorities to charge them with any criminal offence. I believe that some type of amending legislation should be contemplated so that the police and court officials can decide whether something can be done with such children.

Mr Speaker, I would now like to turn briefly to a number of the recommendations in the report. I will be fairly brief because the report has been circulated to all honourable members. Recommendation 1 reads:

'We recommend that the Northern Territory government review all laws with a view to increasing the penalties for those who are found guilty of selling or supplying alcohol to juveniles'.

We found with our talks with children in the schools that they openly bragged that they could get liquor at a number of outlets in central Australia.

Recommendation number 4 concerns truant officers. This is one for the Minister for Education's attention. The recommendation is that all police officers be appointed truant officers whose duty would be to apprehend whilst on normal patrol those whom they considered should be at school and take them immediately to the school they are supposed to be attending and that the schools be responsible for all the paperwork, follow-up with parents and prosecutions as was thought necessary. The general thinking behind that was that children had been taught about 'stranger danger'. Having truant officers in civilian clothes could result in potentially dangerous situations. Police in uniform at least had some standing in the eyes of the community. The police were somewhat worried about this proposal because they thought they would bog themselves down in paperwork. Thus, the recommendations are that the police be truant officers and the schools handle the paperwork.

Recommendation 8 relates to police in schools. This came from talking to children both in high schools and primary schools. The recommendation is that a police officer be assigned to the high schools and the primary schools in Alice Springs for a trial period. Evaluation would then occur to determine whether a police officer should be assigned to the other schools or the program be either modified or abandoned.

The feeling of the committee was also that a magistrate should pay frequent visits to schools. I might tell honourable members of an amusing incident at one of the schools. There was a young coloured kid who obviously had been in trouble with the police. When we sat down with him, he started to question us like a Queen's Counsel. He said: 'Mr Vale, this is not me, but someone that I know'. He then started pumping me about what would happen in such and such circumstances. Within half an hour, he had cross-examined all of the members of the juvenile task force. I guess he received a pretty good legal briefing from the other people there. It was obvious that he had been up to some type of high jinx and was checking his legal standing in the community.

Recommendation 13 relates to Aboriginal family counsellors. This resulted from discussions we had with the various members of the Aboriginal community in central Australia. The recommendation is that the Aboriginal people, with the assistance of the Department of Community Development and the Department of Health, establish a network of family counselling and support services staffed by Aboriginal people to assist families in need, particularly those with late primary and secondary schoolchildren.

Recommendation 15 is that all new teachers coming into Alice Springs undergo an in-service course designed to develop their understanding of Aboriginal culture and, in particular, Aboriginal children, that an Aboriginal counsellor be appointed to service one school or a group of schools to whom the Aboriginal children can go when they have a problem or are in need of help and that 4 instead of 2 Aboriginal home liaison officers be appointed to assist Aboriginal families who send their children to local primary and or secondary schools.

I discussed Hamilton Downs very briefly before, and again I urge the minister to look at that in conjunction with the children on the pastoral properties.

Recommendation 18 was that the Northern Territory government increase the number of youth service officers to a total whereby they are able to fulfil their statutory responsibilities and other tasks permitted by law in a manner which allows them to do justice to themselves, their job requirements and the many juvenile offenders that they come into contact with. The general feeling was that it was just a case of these people being so overloaded and so thin on the ground that they just were not able to do the job properly. There were a number of requests for additional staff but we thought this one in particular had a lot of merit.

We noted that the Darwin report had some recommendations pertaining to Giles House. The Darwin report recommended that it be closed down; we recommended that the Giles House facility remain in Alice springs and be maintained and fully resourced to cater for central Australian offenders sentenced to detention. That needs no comment.

I have commented already on the CSO review. Again, I would emphasise my total support for this scheme. I believe it has a great deal of support in the community in central Australia and, I guess, in other parts of the Territory.

Mr Speaker, I said I would be very brief and I think I have been. In conclusion, I would like to thank all those who served on the task force: Mrs Gillian Liddle from the Department of community Development, Pastor Paul Albrecht from the Finke River Mission, Mr Graham Ross from the Department of Education and PEP Program, and Brother Ed Havelock, a former director of the Youth Gap Centre. Unfortunately, Alice Springs has lost Brother Ed; he has returned to NSW. Ed Havelock did a lot of the research for the report and finally wrote it. Last but not least, I would like to thank my secretarial staff in Alice Springs, Mrs Gayl Males and Miss Tusa Satour, for their help in typing the report and with researching, and organising the many appointments relating to the inquiry.

My final comment is that it is a sad reflection on the community that we have any level of juvenile crime in the towns throughout the Northern Territory and that such an inquiry was needed in the first place, but I am pleased to have been asked by the minister to serve on the inquiry. I just hope some goodwill flow from it.

Mr LEO (Nhulunbuy): Mr Speaker, as the member for Braitling said, fortunately events have pretty well overtaken us. There are some matters within those reports which bear examination. The member for Braitling canvassed the views of Centralians. The inquiry was conducted extensively throughout the Northern Territory, including my own community at Nhulunbuy. It never reached the point of being a full community task force but there was some degree of community discussion. Indeed, there were a number of community meetings held on this report on juvenile crime.

Some of the recommendations have very little application for a community such as Nhulunbuy. One is the obvious recommendation that there be coastal or station camps set up for juvenile offenders. That recommendation has real value but has very little application for people in my community. Indeed, they could be introduced into communities such as Tennant Creek and Katherine. But I am not too sure whether or not it would be possible to introduce similar ideas in and around Nhulunbuy. I would certainly be interested to find out. I must go back and find out whether or not similar propositions can be introduced into Nhulunbuy. I imagine there would be certain legal problems. I do not think it would be beyond the capacity of the community to enter into such undertakings. It is a matter of legal requirements.

There is one concern I have about putting juvenile offenders to work on either cattle stations or some coastal stations. Certainly they would learn skills and could develop a sense of purpose. I do feel, however, that the community might lull itself into some false sense of achievement, even if those things were not achieved. Over a period of time, it could become a way of merely hiding out. In fact, if they were put in a coastal work detention place or whatever, the community may well be lulled into a false sense of achievement even though no real achievement had been accomplished. It certainly is a concept which should be attempted or at least experimented with. I would say to the minister that it should be experimented with at one community and gradually developed over a period of years to ascertain the community reaction. It would be terrible if the community developed the idea that it had a prison farm for juvenile offenders but it did not achieve what it was supposed to achieve: a reduction in juvenile crime.

There was support expressed for both Malak House and Giles House. Those facilities are extremely worth while. I must admit that I have had very little to do with them myself. As I understand it, they are both extremely worthwhile facilities. Perhaps the concept should be extended to small communities. I appreciate there are financial constraints upon the minister. Those 2 institutions were both described as being worth while. I certainly think that the development of institutions of that type should be looked at in relation to communities such as Katherine, Tennant Creek and Nhulunbuy. I appreciate that costs do not always allow such developments but they should at least be viewed with a positive attitude by the minister.

Mr Speaker, a very vexed question is the matter of police in schools. I appreciate that it is a widely-held public opinion that police should have more public exposure and that police should be seen in and around schools a lot more than they are. I would agree with that. I think that it is a very sound idea to introduce police in some way into the activities at schools. However, it would not be to the advantage of all students. Certainly, I really do not see that it would be to any real advantage of students generally. Certainly, policemen conducting the odd class at schools is a very worthwhile concept. But, if police become too heavily involved, there will be a drain on their resources. I do not know that it would achieve what most citizens would hope it would achieve.

The concept of police acting as truant officers was raised by the member for Braitling. From my limited experience with juvenile crime, both as a youth and as the member for Nhulunbuy, I know that most juvenile crime does not occur during school hours. In fact, it occurs after school hours, at night or on weekends. I do not know that police acting as truant officers would really do much to alleviate the problems of juvenile crime. I accept what was put to the task force in Alice Springs. Some parents are very concerned that truant officers are dressed like you and I, Mr Speaker. There is a real danger of young people accepting persons as being truant officers when in fact they are not truant officers. Of course, that is a matter of real public concern. Nobody would want that. To suggest that police officers acting as truant officers would reduce the level of juvenile crime is expecting a little too much because, from my limited experience, most juvenile crime does not occur during school hours.

The member for Braitling touched very briefly on one point which is of real concern in Nhulunbuy. I imagine it is a matter of real concern throughout the Northern Territory: the depressingly high number of juvenile Aboriginal offenders. It really wears you down. Every time there is a monthly court conducted in Nhulunbuy, the number of juvenile Aboriginal offenders is very large. You cannot help but feel that those young people are victims of circumstances rather than deliberate offenders. These people are caught in a terrible social dilemma. They are caught between a society that had rules, and ways of policing those rules which everybody knew, but which does not know how to police those rules any more. They are caught with new rules that their parents in many circumstances understand very little about because they are so very new. You have to remember that Europeans within my community have only had any real presence during the last 20 years. I know that the airforce was there during the Second World War for 5 or 10 years while extremely small missions have been there perhaps for 70 or 80 years. But, by and large, the real incursion of a modern European technological society has occurred in Nhulunbuy only over the last 20 years. That creates a very real dilemma, particularly for young Aboriginal people. I cannot help but feel that the answer is not to continue to push them in front of courts

nor to send them away to prison farms. Continuing to inflict fines on them is not the answer because their parents nearly always have to pay the fines even though they are generally in very desperate financial circumstances themselves.

The member for Braitling suggested that there was a real need for Aboriginal community counsellors. I cannot help but believe in that. I think it is one approach that could offer some chance of reducing the horrendous rate of juvenile crime amongst Aboriginal people. Certainly, the process of picking up offenders and putting them in front of the courts and imposing fines or sending them away to some prison farm or, if it is a more serious crime, to jail, simply is not achieving any results. It is not doing anything for those young people and it is doing absolutely nothing for their communities. The important thing to remember about all this is that those juvenile offenders of today are tomorrow's leaders. We are creating a chain of events which is reoccurring again and again, and that chain has to be broken somewhere. We need to look at community-based law enforcement so that young offenders could be put in front of community tribunals, where they could be counselled by community counsellors or family counsellors so that, if there were some penalty, it would be served within their own communities. Nobody could promise miracles, but certainly it would have to be better than what we are doing now.

It is true that events have pretty well overtaken both the statement and the reports which the minister gave at the time. I hope that the major parts of the reports are implemented. I have those few reservations but, like you, Mr Deputy Speaker, I congratulate those people who worked on those task forces.

Mr SETTER (Jingili): Mr Deputy Speaker, in rising to support the minister's statement, I recall that, at an earlier time, I drew attention to the alarming rate of juvenile crime in the Northern Territory, in particular in the northern suburbs of Darwin. I did this because of my personal experience, having lived in that area for many years, and having the misfortune of being a victim of their foul efforts. Many of my constituents have also complained to me over the last 12 or 18 months about their properties being burgled, verbal abuse they have received from young juveniles and vandalism. In fact, when I rose yesterday to speak about the trees that had been damaged in my electorate, I thought that that was a serious matter. However, when I listened to the member for Braitling this afternoon talking about the way birds had been disembowelled and plucked and fish had had their gullets cut, perhaps the community in the Jingili electorate is not so badly off after all.

I pointed out earlier that a number of problems needed to be addressed. These included: the neglect of children by their parents; the children of broken marriages who are allowed to roam the streets at random, sometimes until the wee hours of the morning; and children with excess time on their hands, some of whom form into gangs, get up to mischief and commit crimes and generally make a nuisance of themselves. I have heard dozens of stories of instances of this occurring in the northern suburbs.

I drew attention also to the need for facilities to be developed to provide for the requirements of the young people to whom I have just referred. As part of the package necessary to solve this problem, I included the appointment of social workers to act as counsellors and an expansion of the number of community centres. Fairly recently, I held discussions with some of

my colleagues regarding the possibility of developing a purpose-built centre in the northern suburbs of Darwin. This would be a low-cost building. In other words, it would not be air-conditioned or have any fancy frills, but would be a basic centre, available to a range of groups and organisations, perhaps 1 night a week, on a roster basis, to run their own programs. However, such a facility would need to be equipped with suitable sports equipment. I do not refer to traditional gymnasium equipment which does not interest a great number of people these days; I am talking about the sort of equipment that interests the kids who go to places such as the Fire Escape.

I was interested to note that Alice Springs has been very fortunate. The Minister for Youth, Sport, Recreation and Ethnic Affairs has confirmed that a purpose-built centre is to be constructed in Alice Springs. I understand it will be called the Alice Springs Youth Leisure Centre. That is very good, and it is the sort of facility that we need in the northern suburbs of Darwin. The existing facility at what was known as Casuarina High School is manned by a police officer and is working very successfully. The Blue Light Disco is held once a month and is very popular. However, the police officer recently in charge of the centre reported to the school council that the more traditional types of programs that he has been running over the past 12 months were becoming very poorly attended indeed. On his recommendation, the council decided to make the facility available to various groups, religious or otherwise, within the community, at a low cost, for their own programs. I am pleased that the school council took up that option and I understand that the facility is now used by 3 or 4 different community groups and attendance has increased quite considerably.

I am very pleased to learn that, as a result of the report of the task force, action taken by other government departments has gone a long way to addressing the general need. As the member for Nhulunbuy indicated, this statement and the reports have been available for some time now. Action has been taken in a number of areas. I compliment the Minister for Community Development for being so prompt in getting things moving after the reports were brought down.

The task force confirmed many of my suspicions when it identified the problem areas. I will run through a range of them which I have extracted from the task force report. I will take them in order. Firstly, peer group pressure is a major problem because, unless a child conforms, he is out on his ear and given a hard time by the other kids. That is most regrettable. The lack of positive recreational facilities for juveniles, and the consequent boredom, was cited as a cause. Of course, it is a major cause and that is why we have set up the Casuarina centre, the Fire Escape and similar facilities in the northern suburbs, and others elsewhere in the Northern Territory.

Another cause is youth unemployment and the lack of financial support for juveniles under the age of 16 years. That is a problem because, if parents are unemployed or belong to the lower socio-economic group, then children who love to play the pinball machines or indulge in similar activities are short of money. They may not have the bus fare to ride into town to go to the movie theatre or whatever. Young people need money and it is very important that they receive adequate financial support to enable them to have reasonable recreation opportunities.

The juvenile court was perceived as being too soft on offenders with the consequence that juveniles did not view the court as a place of punishment. I understand that issue is being addressed. The social effects of Darwin having

a relatively new population with a high rate of mobility was another cause given. Drug and alcohol abuse by juveniles and the attitudes and examples set by adults was highlighted as a problem. The member for Nhulunbuy spoke about the number of young people who are getting into trouble, particularly in Aboriginal communities, who will be the adults of tomorrow. Clearly, if they set the example, the younger ones will follow. It is very important that the adults in our community set the example for our adults of tomorrow.

Another issue was that many of the parents of Aboriginal juvenile offenders, in Darwin in particular, were placed in childrens' homes during their own childhood and, consequently, did not have parental models as they were growing up. That confirms what the member for Nhulunbuy said earlier.

It is pleasing to note that the task force made a number of constructive recommendations, some of which have been taken up already by the minister and the government. It recommended that the Northern Territory government fund the employment of 2 full-time family counsellors, attached to an appropriate community organisation, and also the possible extension of the police liaison officer scheme into other schools. It is recognised that the scheme needs to be adapted according to the unique circumstances of each school. I understand that recommendation has been taken up and about 10 police officers are operating in schools in the Northern Territory at the moment.

Also, the task force endorsed the development of the community policing policies adopted by the Commissioner of Police. I am happy to describe to members the way in which the community policing option is working in the northern suburbs, particularly in my electorate. I have had a number of discussions with the inspector in charge of the northern suburbs, Inspector Dave Moore. We have discussed the issues which concern my electorate. I have had his police officers call on me to discuss the issues and I am very pleased to say that the incidence of juvenile crime in the area seems to have decreased.

I am also pleased to note that the Department of Correctional Services has taken over the Beatrice Hill operation which, I understand, previously belonged to the Department of Primary Production. I understand that it is on a fairly temporary basis but the department is upgrading and redeveloping that area. That is the sort of activity in which we must involve these young offenders. In my opinion, there is no point at all in putting them in a retention or a jail-type institution; they should be somewhere where they will be taught skills and decent attitudes.

The task force has put forward numerous other suggestions which are being considered by government, not the least of which is that its members reconvene in mid-1986 to consider and review its recommendations. I hope that the government will take that up. I am confident that the action will be taken to correct and cure this malaise within our community - and I refer there to juvenile crime - and implement the recommendations of the task force.

I feel sure that the investigations will result in the redirection of the lives of many young people so that, in time, they will become decent citizens of the Northern Territory. I support the statement.

Mr DALE (Wanguri): Mr Speaker, the Task Force on Juvenile Crime was established as the result of a perceived high rate of juvenile crime in the Darwin area. I think it is fair to say that this perception was induced by the tremendous media coverage which seems to be given to this type of news in

the Northern Territory, particularly in the Darwin area. To be aware of an issue, a person need only turn on his car radio on his way to work or pick up the newspaper on his way home. It will be covered again in TV news. The media coverage tends to give a person access to a news item maybe 5 times a day. One can very quickly build in one's mind a perception that the actual number of events is far greater than what it really is.

The difference between here and interstate was mentioned. Housebreaking and school vandalism were highlighted. Particular mention was made of an incident involving a very young child in a school in the northern suburbs. Those types of things tend to get a great deal of coverage up here whereas, in a major suburban area interstate, the only people who would know about your problem would be your immediate neighbours.

Mr Speaker, I was fortunate to be a member of the task force which was given the task of inquiring into and reporting on 3 main factors within that area of juvenile crime: first, the incidence of juvenile crime; secondly, the relationship of substance abuse to juvenile crime; and, thirdly, the approaches to reduce the incidence of that juvenile crime.

In relation to the first term of reference, the crime rate and clear-up rate statistics made it difficult to come up with a definitive statement on whether juvenile crime is in fact on the increase or not. As a result of the report, that matter is being addressed by the Northern Territory Police Force. I certainly hope so, anyway. However, I have the impression that the small, hard-core offenders are in fact very active. My feeling is that, overall, juvenile crime is not on the increase.

The clear-up rate by the Northern Territory Police Force is quite outstanding by any standard. Once again, I believe that this is because of the small numbers of juvenile criminal offenders. They seem to be very active and are committing a number of offences. Therefore, when the police pick up 1 or 2 individuals, they clear up a large number of complaints made by aggrieved people.

It was interesting to note the observation that juveniles and young adults tend to commit offences in groups while adults tend to commit offences by themselves. I think that is a significant point to consider when talking about the facilities that we have for young people and how they are properly supervised in group activities. What they are really finding is entertainment around the place.

Input to the task force by a wide cross-section of the community identified perceptions on the causes of juvenile crime. The family had a very high profile. Parental attitudes, lack of parental control, lack of discipline, inappropriate parental models, alcohol abuse by parents, family breakdown, single parent families, working parents, unemployed parents and low household incomes were all cited as contributing factors. Problems with schools also received attention. Truancy, failure to prosecute truants or their parents, the relevance of education for juveniles, the lack of relevance for Aboriginal children, low achievement by juveniles and diminishing opportunities in alternatives to school, such as apprenticeships, were also cited. Other matters mentioned were peer group pressure, lack of recreational facilities for juveniles and their consequent boredom, youth unemployment and the lack of financial support for juveniles under the age of 16 years and a soft attitude by the juvenile court which gave offenders the attitude of not viewing the court as a place of punishment.

Aboriginal people pointed out that many parents of Aboriginal offenders had themselves been placed in childrens' homes and, therefore, did not have parental models as they were growing up. This was a very interesting point. Aboriginal people living in suburbia have no parental models and this leads to problems for their children.

Input from the public was invaluable and very much appreciated by members of the task force. There was a huge number of submissions. I believe that the response by the public was quite remarkable in this matter.

The second term of reference, the relationship of substance abuse to juvenile crime, led us to take account of alcohol abuse, illicit drug abuse and the sniffing of volatile substances. It is interesting to note that researchers have concluded that delinquency leads to drug use rather than the converse. The report notes that the task force was able to obtain some raw figures on the numbers of apprehended juveniles who were under the influence of alcohol or drugs at the time of the offence. In the period July 1984 to March 1985, 15 juveniles who were apprehended were under the influence of alcohol at the time of the offence. No juveniles appeared to be under the influence of an illicit drug. While the task force noted the use of alcohol, drugs and volatile substances by juveniles, and noted there were several government initiatives addressing the problems, and keeping in mind the specific terms of reference, it concluded that substance abuse is not a major factor contributing to juvenile crime in the Northern Territory. I think that is a very pleasing revelation. Consequently, the task force did not make any recommendations beyond supporting those actions now being directed at the public at large.

During its deliberations on the third term of reference - that is, approaches to reduce the incidence of juvenile crime - the task force identified several key problems which I would like to list. Firstly, it mentioned the relatively small group of persistent offenders who account for a substantial proportion of offences committed by juveniles. Secondly, it mentioned the problems in the families of juvenile offenders. This covers a range of issues, including insufficient parental care and supervision, inadequate parental skills and the adequacy of resources available to families of juvenile offenders or potential juvenile offenders. Finally, it mentioned the problems that young people, especially low academic achievers, experience in the education system and later in the transition to the work force. As a consequence of these problems, the following explicit criteria were adopted for addressing the merits of various proposals: the proposals be aimed at reducing the incidence of juvenile crime; the proposals meet society's expectations; whether proposals can be achieved within existing resources and structures; the relative cost effectiveness of the proposals; whether the overall package of proposals achieves a balance between prevention and treatment; and whether the proposals balance the punishment and rehabilitative functions of the juvenile justice system.

The task force addressed a number of matters on what one could call the positive side. By that I mean the facts that are there to be looked at by any committee or any agency which wants to look at them; for example, statistics and submissions from various people who are affected by juvenile crime, including some offenders themselves.

However, there is another side to the problem of juvenile delinquency. I would like to relate a story that unfortunately came to my notice late last year. I believe it illustrates another area where the community at large has

a responsibility not to treat juveniles who happen to find themselves in a sticky situation as juvenile delinquents or juvenile offenders until such time as they are well and truly established to be that.

On 22 November last year, a 13-year-old lass went to the Big W store at Casuarina Square. She went there with her girlfriend after receiving \$5 from her mother to buy some makeup. She was going to a school social or similar function that night. After a day at school, she was wearing an ankle-length skirt. She had no pockets in her dress; it was worn for a play or something of that nature at school that day. Because she had no pockets in her dress, she gave the \$5 to her girlfriend to put in her purse. They both went down to the Big W store at Casuarina, and her girlfriend wandered off in one direction and this young lass stood beside a makeup stand looking at some eyeshadow. She tucked her long dress under her belt to make it a normal knee-length skirt. Whilst she was looking at some eyeshadow, one side of the skirt dropped down from her belt so she lent down and picked it up. While she was tucking it under her belt again, she was apprehended physically by a female in the store. She was taken over to the credit facilities counter where the woman almost put the young girl on display by saying: 'Here we are. We have another one. Call the manager. Here is another one for us to fix up'. With that, the young girl was taken to the manager's office where she was spoken to by 4 adults for 1½ hours.

Under any circumstances, that would have been rather intimidating. However, whilst she was there, the young lady was asked to sign a couple of forms. The first one is form number 9321. On the top right hand corner is written: 'C/O Woolworths Limited' the branch and a phone number. It is already typed and one has only to fill in the squares. It says:

'Dear Father/Mother,

I admit stealing goods from Woolworths Limited at the above branch on the date for which action may be taken against me and ask you to call within 24 hours and interview Mr...who will explain the circumstances to you'.

Under that, there is the signature of the lass, her address, phone number and the date. That form was taken home with the young lady to her parents. By the way, up until that stage, there had been no attempt to call the police and no attempt to call the young person's parents.

There is another form which she was asked to fill in and sign. It is form number 93215, and it is headed 'admission'. It says:

'(Name in full) of (her address) admit and acknowledge having stolen from Woolworths Limited at their Big W store the undermentioned articles: eyeshadow kit.

Question: Have you read this statement?

Answer: Yes.

Question: Have you made this statement of your own free will?

Answer: Yes.

Question: Has any inducement, threat or promise been held out to you to make this statement?

Answer: Yes'.

That 'yes' was crossed out and the word 'no' appeared beside it. It continues:

'Question: Were you cautioned before making this statement that you were not obliged to make this statement unless you so desired as anything you did say would be taken down in writing and may be used in evidence?

Answer: Yes.

Question: Have the meanings of these questions been explained to you?

Answer: Yes.

Question: Do you understand the questions?

Answer: Yes.

(Signature, date and witness)'.

That is one of the most remarkable forms I have ever seen. The young lass told me that, when she was asked the question, 'Has any inducement, threat or promise been held out to you to make this statement?', she wrote 'Yes' because that is exactly what she believed because, during the interview, she was asked to sign the forms and she said that she would not sign the forms. Then one of the 4 adults present pulled the old trick of walking out the door and saying: 'Look, if she is not going to sign that, I will call the police. Will I call the police now? Do we have to go to the police?' She said: 'All right, I will fill it in. I will sign it'. When she answered 'Yes' to that question, they said: 'You cannot do that. You have to put "No" to that question'.

The young lady finally got home to her parents with the message and members can quite imagine that the parents were fairly upset. After first complaining to me on 26 November, the parents wrote a letter to the General Manager, Woolworths Ltd, Casuarina Branch. I will not read all of the letter because it is fairly length. In the penultimate paragraph of the letter, the mother says:

'I am completely aware of the problems management are faced with in the area of shoplifting but I do not accept that this gives you the right to treat every child as a petty criminal or, however suspicious the circumstances, to make unqualified judgments followed by bullying tactics in the absence of any parental representation'.

That was a fairly reasonable letter to forward to the Big W people.

Subsequently, I went to the media on this matter. I put out a press release. I was interviewed by Channel 8. This lady, by the way, is quite a remarkable young citizen. She was very upset by this particular incident but, nonetheless, she saw that she had a responsibility to her peers. She felt she needed to protect their rights in some way so that this sort of thing would

not happen again. She went through what I thought was quite a remarkable television interview. She answered the questions. Anybody who saw the interview would have been impressed with the way that she handled herself.

I made representations to the Attorney-General. I made representations to the management of the Big W store. Without going too far into that, I will say that I was not satisfied with the response from the Big W store. On 30 December 1985, the Big W management sent a letter to the mother of the young girl. It says in part:

'You will appreciate that store security is a prime and increasing problem for our organisation as security staff are under constant pressure, particularly in the busy trading period to Christmas. The original only copy of form 93214 is in your possession and form 93215, signed by your daughter, is enclosed herewith. In doing so, we must record that our staff denies that your daughter was made to sign the forms. Woolworths does sincerely regret any distress and embarrassment suffered by you and your daughter arising from the incident as described in your letters'.

That is the only response that they had from Big W. After legal investigation, the Attorney-General then wrote to the management of Big W, as I did. The Attorney-General offered the management training for its staff by the prosecutions section of the Department of Law. He also asked that the forms be withdrawn from use and that any forms concerning this young lady that were still held be returned to the parents.

Mr Speaker, I am running out of time and I just want to make the point that I have been leading up to. I have another example of where this admission form was used. It involved a young child who, some 2 years ago, was interviewed for a shoplifting offence. She was subsequently cautioned by the police and, undoubtedly, was guilty of the offence. Nonetheless, a form similar to this was filled in and was kept by that store. Subsequently, during a Christmas holiday break some 15 months later, she applied for a part-time job with Big W. She had the job and was working well for 4 weeks. The management then called her to the office and said: 'You cannot work here any longer. You are sacked'. She said: 'Why? I have been working hard'. They said: 'Because you didn't tell the truth on your application form. You have been in trouble before for shoplifting'.

The big stores are keeping records of our kids and I do not like it. As I said before, through this forum, I call upon Big W to give an undertaking that it has in fact withdrawn those forms from use and that it will destroy any records that it has relating to juvenile offenders or juveniles who are non-offenders in the Northern Territory. At the very least, it must conform to the spirit of section 25 of the Juvenile Justices Act that sets out quite clearly the methods, and the only methods, by which juveniles can be interviewed.

Mr EDE (Stuart): Mr Speaker, the member for Jingili reminded us that, hopefully, the task force is to meet again in July 1986 to review its original recommendations and what has taken place since. I had been wondering why we have been waiting so long for this to come on the notice paper. I know why now.

There is always a bit of a problem with delays of this nature because one is never quite sure whether to debate the report within the context of the

time when it was produced or to take account of any movements that have occurred since and to update one's response in light of later happenings. It would be facile to state that the increase in juvenile crime was a concern. Of course, it was a concern. It was a major concern for everybody. We have to look at some of the causes for that: general changes in our society; current very high unemployment rate for young adolescents; single parent families; the availability and the unfortunate growth in drug and substance abuse; the increasing competition in schools resulting in low achievers; difficulties in competing and consequent loss of self-esteem; and factors in the larger society which have made the younger people grow up with less faith in society. In many cases, offences are the result of underlying problems and any move to curb juvenile crime has to be directed at the causes as well as at the actual treatment. We have to work out how we are going to deal with a juvenile once he or she has offended and has been apprehended.

Clearly, from what members have said today, I think that it is generally accepted that jail is not the most appropriate institution in which to place those young people. Such an environment is most inappropriate in the vast majority of cases. In fact, it has been shown that jail terms can feed and nurture crime and lead to the acceptance within a particular peer group of the idea that acceptable behaviour and acceptable life histories have some form of a jail term as part and parcel of their nature. I believe that the recidivist rate supports this.

I have heard that there is an increasing move towards community service orders. Certainly, there is a move toward their use in the Northern Territory. The movements that I have read about in South Australia demonstrate that there are a number of innovative ideas around. I compliment the minister - he does not receive many compliments from me - on the efforts that he has been making to investigate some of the innovative ideas that are utilised in other countries. If he can translate the search into something of substance, obviously I shall commend him further.

The South Australian experience reveals that, a decade or so ago, an average of about 300 young offenders were in institutions in that state. They included youngsters who had failed, or whose parents had failed, to pay fines. Today, after developing several innovative alternatives, South Australia has reached the stage where only 65 young people are actually in lockup institutions. I would like to go through a few of the ways that that state has approached the problem. For example, there is the concept of screening panels which assess all young offenders and decide whether warnings, panel appearances or court hearings are the most appropriate courses to proceed with. These were introduced in 1979. The problem has been a net broadening effect in that 40% of the people between 10 and 18 were directed to appear before the panels. This was taken as an indication of a crime wave amongst young and resulted in a reluctance on the part of the police and screening panels to use warnings. South Australia has moved further down the line now in that screening panelists, welfare officers and police officers are empowered to decide that a minor offence - stealing a chocolate bar or something of that nature - may warrant only a police warning.

I recall that some of the most powerful people in the small towns that I grew up in were the police sergeants. Sometimes it was a good idea to have the police sergeant grab a young offender by the ear, take him to one side and say: 'Now listen here, young fellow, you do that again and you'll have my boot up your tail'. Often such an encounter had a very salutary effect. I am not saying that the actual perpetration of such an assault would be

acceptable - certainly it would not - but a good dressing down by a senior police officer who is involved with youth can produce excellent results. We have a couple of such officers in Alice Springs who have been highly successful. They have maintained community contacts with all groups and they are capable of producing a salutary effect in many cases.

In South Australia, it was found that, of the 5700 offenders who went before the aid panels, 27% had committed offences which involved \$20 or less. It was felt that many of those offenders could be handled by warnings. The next step was admonishment by the panel. It was found that, after admonishment, 75% of the youngsters did not offend again. Offenders guilty of offences of a more serious or repetitive nature go to the children's court and the judges have an armoury of quite interesting weapons at their disposal.

Quite frequently, supervision by a welfare worker is utilised and, in that instance, a bond condition can include community service work which is also often used when there is default in payment of fines. I believe also that it is being used now for a program referred to as 'accelerated release' by which offenders are released earlier for specific projects. A recent project was to clean up the old northern railway town of Kingoonya to enhance its potential as a tourist attraction. The results corroborate some of the statements made by the minister that hard work out in the bush is effective on some kids.

Another approach has been to impose this condition on a 1-day-only basis; others have required longer periods. One of the spin-offs of the day-long programs has been that nocturnal behaviour or jetting around the town at night has dropped off because, after a hard day's work, the kids have been rather more tired than they would have been if they had been hanging around.

However, these programs are short term; they rarely last more than 12 weeks. The South Australian Department of Community Welfare is trying to find ways to persuade the parents of young offenders to encourage the young people to become involved in structured activities of a community-work nature on a voluntary basis after they have completed their period so that they can continue with projects such as the work with the Ghan Preservation Society which the honourable member for Braitling mentioned.

For more serious offenders, particularly those with behavioural problems, South Australia has various group-oriented activities. Originally, these were for boys but recently they have been extended to girls. They take part in day, evening and weekend activities which often include such things as preparing meals and eating together before discussing problems. Through this, people with behavioural problems learn basic things such as cooperation and how to achieve goals that they set for themselves through cooperating and working together within some form of structured system.

Another South Australian initiative, which has won considerable praise overseas apparently, is intensive neighbourhood care which is mostly used during remand periods. Under that system, some 50 or 60 offenders are presently boarded out to screened parents who have proved themselves to be quite successful and are willing to play a parental role with some of the young people who may be 'hard cases'. In many cases that I have heard about and read of in reports, quite often such parental discipline is lacking at home. Of course, there is a financial spin-off there. The INC parents receive \$19.80 per day for looking after those children. In comparison, the cost of keeping the same child in a youth remand and assessment centre is about \$290 a day.

I believe that system covers a number of the points that we need to look at. Obviously, we should not transplant that system directly into the Northern Territory because we must develop something that fits our own society. However, the beauty of it is that it appears to be dealing successfully with juvenile offenders. The senior judge at the children's court in South Australia, Judge Newman, has described the system as being light years ahead of those operating in many other countries. As I said before, this is borne out by the statistics in that 75% of young people who appear before children's aid panels do not offend again. It not only deters juveniles from crime but it keeps as many as possible out of the courts. It addresses the underlying problems and provides for support from within the community. It says to the community: 'These are our children. This is our next generation. We need to be involved in the process of turning them into good citizens. We need to involve them in our society so that they can see that there are real benefits for them through acting as a concerted part of society, moving in the same direction as its other members rather than playing a divergent and destructive role outside of it'. It provides a much better result economically. In South Australia, 2 institutions have reached the stage where they have closed down. I would like to see the day when we can start closing down some of our institutions of this nature. We are not there yet and, with the way the Territory is growing, it may take us some time because we have our particular problems.

As I explained, in South Australia, offenders and their parents face a children's aid panel which can assess the facts. It detects obvious problems which are causing the young offenders' behaviour, provides counselling and seeks undertakings from all members of the family, the parents and the children about how they intend to overcome these problems within the family structures. Another important factor is that the child is not treated in isolation. It is not a matter of telling the child that it is all its fault or telling the parents the fault is wholly theirs; it is a matter of revealing that there is a problem within the family, or with some members of the family, in its relationship with the wider society. There is a need to treat the problem as a whole. That is a better approach than to separate the welfare aspects, the health aspects, the legal aspects and the correctional institution aspects. We cannot divide the problems of young children neatly into those groups; a broad approach is required. In South Australia, for the 30% of reported offenders who go to court, there are bonds, intensive neighbourhood care and community service orders. Jail is used only as a last resort.

Consideration should be given to this report. I hope that its recommendations will be investigated because crime is often the result of underlying problems and some of those problems are dealt with by the report. If the issue is tackled early, the incidence of crime may be reduced. The community care program is recommended and has been covered in the Report to the Advisory Committee on the Uncontrolled Child. It is a process used in South Australia, and I hope to see it utilised here as soon as possible.

My electorate covers a number of rural communities. I am concerned that there does not appear to be as much in these reports which is relevant to their needs as there is to the needs in urban areas. Let me hasten to add that we do not have any petrol sniffing problems at the moment in my electorate and that is one of the things that makes me most proud, but we have associated offences still. We have the problem of alienation from general society because children are unable to see a clearcut role for themselves and, as the honourable member for Nhulunbuy said, are often caught between

2 systems. They do not see models that they can follow easily to go on to a life of full employment. Unfortunately, due to the lack of those models, they can easily be influenced to follow the models which are available to them in the older group who are involved in anti-social behaviour.

I submitted a report to the Task Force on Juvenile Crime and, while many of the issues were not taken up specifically, I was happy to see that some of them were covered. I provided some more information on the particular problems experienced in rural communities and I hope that those will be taken up in greater detail when the review is undertaken in June 1986.

Mr FINCH (Wagaman): Mr Deputy Speaker, I would just like to take 5 minutes of this Assembly's time to speak on a couple of matters relating to the Task Force on Juvenile Crime. Certainly, I found that serving on the committee was a most rewarding experience, as I am sure other members of that committee found. Members represented a broad cross-section of the community: welfare workers, Aboriginal groups, youth groups and various government departments. There were also my parliamentary colleagues, the members for Wanguri and Millner. I am sure they all shared a great experience in putting to rest a great number of myths relating to juvenile crime. More importantly, I am sure that those other members of the task force came away with a far more positive attitude towards our youth. That is the aspect to which I would like to direct my remarks.

Mr Deputy Speaker, some of my parliamentary colleagues have spoken at length this afternoon. With the greatest of respect, I would suggest that it is well and truly time for those members who are displaying either negative attitudes or non-constructive attitudes to put all that behind them. I would also suggest that much of what we have heard was submitted to the juvenile task force committee in the first place. If it was not, I would suggest that those honourable members were negligent in their duty at that time.

In identifying the true extent of juvenile crime within our communities, the report obviously identified significant factors that need to be addressed and methods of addressing them. I am certainly not looking at juvenile crime through rose-coloured glasses. Because I had the opportunity to serve on the committee, and I am involved with various social, sporting and community service youth groups, I have - as many other members have - the greatest confidence in the youth of the Northern Territory.

Many programs have already been established in response to the recommendations in the report. We have truancy officers within schools, and community policing programs have been established. We have a junior police ranger system and school police officers who are involved in various other activities such as youth centres and blue light discos. The Juvenile Justice Review Committee is addressing itself to the judicial matters that were raised. The minister is addressing himself to the probationary, detention and community service aspects that have been discussed ad nauseam this afternoon.

I have the greatest confidence that this government, as it has already illustrated by its positive participation in policies and programs, will continue to address itself in a constructive manner towards improving the lot of our youth and ensuring that they develop into healthy young adults.

Times have changed since we were young people who copped a policeman's boot in the backside. Despite the pressures of society on young people today, they are illustrating great signs of leadership and responsibility. It is

about time that we all put this negative attitude behind us and contributed positively towards the progress and development of our young people.

Mr BELL (MacDonnell): Mr Deputy Speaker, I will make my comments as brief as possible, but I rise to give my support to the statement. I see the motivation for consideration of juvenile crime as a twofold concern: about property and about the welfare of the young people themselves. Those 2 questions are inexplicably intertwined and I do not mention them in any particular order. Both of them are important. You will be aware, Mr Deputy Speaker, of concern about this issue in Alice Springs, and I do not choose to dwell on that this evening.

A point that I wanted to make was adumbrated by my colleague, the member for Stuart: the nexus between juvenile crime and youth unemployment. As all honourable members will be aware, structural unemployment, which has influenced the employment opportunities of young people, has been a phenomenon of the 1970s and 1980s in this country, and it is something that has to be dealt with. You will be aware, Mr Deputy Speaker, of initiatives of the Commonwealth government in this regard.

I mention this because unemployment generally, and youth unemployment in particular, is a problem in my electorate. There are no jobs available for young people. Perhaps the question of juvenile crime under those circumstances takes on a different perspective to what it might in the town centres of the Territory. I wish to place on record my concern in that regard. In an adjournment debate earlier this week, the member for Victoria River referred to exactly this sort of difficulty and suggested that it is one thing to bleat about it and another thing to actually do something about it. Certainly, the solutions are not simple. I have some faith in the community employment projects and a variety of other programs that can be harnessed to find jobs for people, but I do not really think that this debate is the place to consider them. I simply place on record my concern about the connection between juvenile crime and youth unemployment in all parts of the Territory.

The second point I wish to make is to follow up a comment made by the member for Jingili where he referred to one of the positive steps in providing youth facilities. As a board member of the YMCA, that is a matter of some interest to me. The consideration of which programs are working well for which particular groups of people is the other side of the juvenile crime coin and needs to be given due consideration.

A recent initiative was mentioned by the member for Jingili: the Alice Springs Youth Leisure Centre which is a drop-in centre for young people in the 16 to 18 age group. A variety of youth activities are available around the town. I understand that the Alice Springs Youth Leisure Centre will occupy part of the aptly named CLP building. It will be rented by the Department of Youth, Sport, Recreation and Ethnic Affairs for the purpose of running this drop-in centre. This came to my attention in a news report of comments by the Minister for Youth Sport, Recreation and Ethnic Affairs. I am aware that there have been some concerns about the use of this building.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I would like to know how the centre will fit in with the framework of other youth services in central Australia. I would like to know from whom expressions of interest were sought in this regard. I would appreciate being advised of the amount of rent to be paid for this building and whether it reflects the market value. I would also like to know how that rent was determined. I would also be interested to know whether the builders

approached the government or the government approached the builders in relation to renting space in this building. I would be interested to hear from the minister whether the government rental was crucial in determining the viability of the building, how the rental was negotiated between the government and the principals and whether that was before, during or after the construction of the building.

I would like to know why the youth facilities are to be located on the first floor rather than on the second floor of this building given that first floor rents are more expensive and that second floors are harder to let. Whether the youth leisure facility is sited on the first or second floor of such a building is not crucial. Finally, I would be interested to know the details of the government's expenditure in relation to that youth facility. That facility would appear to be part of the government's strategy with respect to youth services which are the other side of the juvenile crime problem. I look forward to hearing some answers to those questions from the Minister for Youth, Sport, Recreation and Ethnic Affairs.

With those few comments, I commend the report and commend the minister for his interest in these problems. I hope that the consideration given by this Assembly will assist in some regard.

Mr SMITH (Millner): Mr Deputy Speaker, I too give a promise at the outset to keep my comments brief and, unlike some, I hope to keep it.

I was a member of the Task Force on Juvenile Crime but, unfortunately, due to other events, I was not on the task force at the time that it made its recommendations. However, I must say that I am very pleased with the balanced and comprehensive nature of the recommendations and, in all modesty, I must say that I do not think they would have been much different if I had been there.

What particularly pleased me was that there was, in my view, a good balance in what I see as one of the basic issues in relation to the provision of services for youth: the balance between physical resources and human resources. Too often in the past, governments everywhere have fallen into the trap of thinking that, if they take over a building and call it a youth centre, the problems will be solved. That has not worked and, in my view, will never work. You must pay equal attention to the provision of human resources; that is, people who are skilled and trained at working with youth and who can, either in those physical buildings or in many cases outside them, work with kids. I am pleased to say that is the general trend that runs through this report, and it is good because of that.

To take a little bit further my reservations about buildings, youth centres and Fire Escapes, or whatever else you might want to call them, I believe their major problem is that, without human resources, they do not attract the kids we want to attract - the kids at risk. Instead, they are intended for the nice middle-class kids who normally have a good home environment. However, for their own reasons, the kids whom we are trying to reach - the ones who are in trouble or likely to be in trouble - do not go to these types of centres. That is why it is particularly important to have human resources, people who are able to plan programs and develop initiatives that will attract those kids, as well as the kids who are attracted by physical resources like youth centres.

I want to pay tribute tonight to one school, which happens to be in my electorate - Millner school. It has developed a very good program for dealing both with kids who are potentially at risk and the parents of those kids. The school has been able to do it because, for the last 4 to 5 years, it has had special assistance from the Schools Commission. It has had assistance in a number of areas. One of the things that it has been able to do is to employ an extra person who fulfills a home liaison role. I think that it is important that I give her some recognition. Her name is Brenda Shields. Brenda is part-Aboriginal. She has developed a very effective program of counselling kids and keeping them as much as possible on the right track. In some ways, it is quite an interventionist policy because, if kids do not turn up to school, Brenda goes around to their homes and finds out why the kid is not at school and encourages the kid to come to school.

Brenda and other members of the staff at Millner school have been able to develop programs for parents. Both programs have resulted in the breaking down of barriers between the parents and the school, and we all know, particularly the ex-teachers of the Assembly, how difficult that is in some cases. Millner school has been very effective in breaking them down. There is now a very wide range of relationships between the school, the community and individual parents. It is always pleasing to see the large number of parents at the school on assembly days. They are not only the parents whom you would expect to be there; a wide-ranging group of parents attend those assemblies. It extends across the wide range of socio-economic groups that live in the Millner area. Millner is a very good example of the point that I am trying to make: human resources, people who work with kids, are just as important as physical resources.

I want to touch briefly on one other concern that I have. The minister may wish to respond to it. I am informed that, at present, there are a number of kids who are awaiting the pleasure of the court and are being held in the remand section at Berrimah. I think that would concern every one of us. It is a most undesirable circumstance for kids to be held in the remand section of a jail with other remandees, many of them adults who have been there 3 or 4 times before. I understand that, particularly over the Christmas period when the remand section was full, it was a fairly unpleasant place in which to be housed.

This reveals a problem which the task force pointed out. There is a need in the Top End for a secure facility for juvenile offenders such as those who have been housed in the remand section at Berrimah for the last few months. As the task force realised, having a secure facility is itself a temptation for authorities to fill that secure facility, which may not be the best thing for people involved. I think the need for a secure facility in the Top End has been demonstrated. One would hope that it would be a small facility which would encourage rehabilitation rather than emphasise punishment.

Firstly, it appears to me that waves of juvenile crime come and go. I would think we would all accept that. They also have a lot to do with the age of the population. It seems to me that the juvenile crime problem in Darwin has crossed Rapid Creek and is now a more important problem in the northern suburbs than it is in the Millner and Nightcliff areas, where it seemed to be concentrated before. They are all going to Tiwi or Jingili. It is also very obvious that, within a few years, the problem will be seen in Palmerston. I think we have a lead time in the Palmerston area to come totally to grips with that problem and I know the minister has a personal interest in making sure that we do come to grips with it. From what I have seen, things are starting

to happen there with the opening of the Y-front last weekend and, equally importantly, the provision of trained social workers and other community development staff to work in that community. I have the pleasure of knowing a couple of those people quite well, and I am sure that, through their efforts, the Palmerston community might avoid some of the problems it would otherwise experience.

Mr COULTER (Correctional Services): Mr Deputy Speaker, I wish to thank members for their comments today on this most serious matter of juvenile crime. I will obtain figures on the numbers of juveniles on remand and supply them to the Deputy Leader of the Opposition. Wherever possible, these juveniles are kept separate from the other remand prisoners but I think that, recently, the number has been around 13. I have said on a number of occasions that crime is a growth industry which the Northern Territory can well do without. Our prison statistics are still very high, as they have been for the 2 years we have been compiling them.

From the range of speakers and the topics which have been addressed, it is evident that the effects of juvenile crime, both direct and indirect, touch upon every member of our community. From the range of submissions received by both the Darwin and Alice Springs task forces, it is evident that the number of suggested solutions and treatment options is almost infinite. There is no quick or simple way to fix the problem. I have noted, however, that the general community perception of juvenile crime in terms of causes and desirable treatment options seems to have a very practical basis and, at risk of being overly simplistic, seems to represent the mid-swing of the pendulum which has previously gone from one extreme to the other. I would like to read a statement:

'Our youth loves luxury. They have bad manners, contempt for authority and disrespect for old people. Children nowadays are tyrants. They no longer rise when their elders enter the room. They contradict their parents, chatter before company, gobble their food and tyrannise their teachers'.

That was written by Socrates in 400 BC.

No responsible person would seek a return to the bad old days of children's workhouses, draconian physical punishments or lengthy and non-rehabilitative prison sentences, such as were imposed by the judiciary on youth and adults alike. More progressive societies rightly came to accept that many young offenders were products of their environment. Much of the blame should be sheeted home to the lack of proper example set either by parents or the general adult community. A small number of juveniles may have become little pains in the proverbial - even in an ideal community environment - but I feel it may be reasonably accepted that any significant juvenile problem in a community is a reflection on the general health of that community.

As a consequence of this enlightened thinking, and in abhorrence of what used to pass for juvenile justice, normal group dynamics played their part in what I believe to have been an extreme swing towards ultra-benevolent treatment of juvenile offenders. This approach satisfied collective consciences for a time, and coincided with a general shift in social attitudes to a wide spectrum of community activities, including such things as new welfare programs and high-profile civil liberty and peace movements. It has been demonstrated that, although altruistic ideals may well be worth striving for, they sometimes give rise to less than ideal practical consequences.

Unlike our federal counterparts, who seem to be forever bowing on social and other issues to vocal but not generally popular minority groups, the Northern Territory government believes that the views of the wider majority should prevail. In that respect, I believe there is a majority opinion in our community that the time has come to reassess our approach to matters concerning our youth, and to strike a practical balance between the extremes I have mentioned. In fact, as can be seen from the task force reports, it is interesting to note that this view was expressed by our adult community and our younger citizens during extensive consultative processes.

Whilst I have the highest regard for our police, the judiciary and our welfare and correctional services staff, there is, unfortunately, a general public perception that we are not effective in our dealings with juvenile offenders. To some extent, that is unavoidable. Due to the nature of our juvenile justice system and the confidentiality provisions which are presently built into it, the media and its audience are not privy to the comprehensive assessment and pre-sentence reports prepared in each case nor to the heartburn experienced by the judiciary in attempting to decide on appropriate penalties where convictions are recorded. Due to privacy requirements, the media is also generally unaware of many success stories. Even so, I suspect a story of young Johnnie or Suzie being turned away from a path of crime after one brush with the law would not be considered newsworthy.

Statistics can be somewhat misleading also if they are not read in their proper context. Whilst it is not possible to be pleased with any crime statistic above zero, figures available to me indicate that the number of juvenile offenders in relation to the number of offences reported is not as great as I had first supposed. The relative merits of 100 kids committing one-off offences as opposed to 5 each committing 20 offences could be debated at length. In fact, at one stage, I think the task force found 135 offences committed by 30 juveniles. Notwithstanding all this, the community concern is valid and needs to be addressed in a positive manner. Justice not only needs to be done and be seen to be done, but there also needs to be evidence of general community benefit. Both preventative and curative approaches must be adopted and, as a result of its inquiries, the Task Force on Juvenile Crime has given due regard to these aspects in its recommendations.

To illustrate this, I would like to provide this Assembly with a resume of those recommendations, and of the actions taken by the Northern Territory government since receipt of the task force reports. It is also interesting to note that speakers on both sides of the Assembly have spoken about how events have overtaken us. When I established the Task Force on Juvenile Crime, I indicated that it was to get on with the job and come up with meaningful recommendations as soon as possible. It is interesting to see that the date of establishment of the task force was May 1985. Some 10 months later, much has been done. I would like to pay particular tribute to the Minister for Education and also the minister responsible for police, the Chief Minister, for the effort and commitment they have made in developing these programs. It has been a joint effort and the results have been magnificent.

One of the recommendations was to develop a network of family counselling support services, including parent training, throughout the NT. Members have spoken about that this afternoon. Mr Deputy Speaker, you would remember full well during the appropriation speech that the Chief Minister announced that \$250 000 would be set aside to establish a Northern Territory counselling service. I can advise members that plans to set up such a counselling service are now well advanced and some announcements will be made in the coming weeks on how it is to operate.

School counsellors in high schools to provide for family counselling was another recommendation from the task force. \$60 000 was set aside to upgrade 12 positions to be included in the 1986-87 budget proposal to ensure that those recommendations be met. Media campaigns were also recommended in the report and, it was interesting to note that, when we did have good media coverage, there was a correlation between that and the decrease in juvenile crime. It was quite extraordinary. When we posed the question to parents, 'Where is your child? It is now 3 o'clock in the morning', they had a look and found the child was not there. We brought those matters of concern to the attention of the community. The juvenile crime rate actually decreased during that period of intense media coverage.

In terms of increasing numbers of Aboriginal home liaison officers, funds were allocated for one extra position to commence in the 1986 school year in Darwin. There is a whole range of these recommendations but time does not permit me to go through them all in detail. However, I can assure members that much has been done and many recommendations have been implemented. In regard to the police liaison officer scheme, funds have been provided for 3 additional officers including 1 at Alice Springs. The problem that the Commissioner of Police has in this regard is simply finding suitable staff to be attracted to those positions, bearing in mind that it takes in excess of 12 months to train people for these positions.

There has been an extension of the NTPS training scheme for school leavers and implementation of job-creation for youth. The Chief Minister is to be commended for his efforts in that regard. It is an excellent scheme which is producing worthwhile employment for our youth. The truancy officer scheme was embarked on last year. Even before the juvenile crime task force report hit the desk, the Minister for Education had that proposal up and running.

Mr Deputy Speaker, in regard to recreational facilities for at risk groups in remote areas, \$400 000 was allocated for Aboriginal sports development and recreational programs. The Department of Youth, Sport, Recreation and Ethnic Affairs was to consider the development and expansion of the availability of outdoor personal development programs. That was being worked on by the Minister for Youth, Sport, Recreation and Ethnic Affairs, whom I overlooked when offering my congratulations earlier.

In an attempt to bring about more meaningful rehabilitation for our juvenile offenders, we embarked on a program on 18 December 1985 as a result of my overseas study tour. I heard the honourable member for Stuart outline what South Australia is doing. Perhaps I should organise a briefing for him as I did for those people in South Australia. I think they have probably stolen most of their policies from me. I accept that you have to move fast if you want to be original these days.

The new programs that we are embarking on include the curfew or home detention orders. Under this program, a juvenile can be ordered to remain at his or her residence during hours when he or she would be particularly at risk, such as after school or after work etc. This will be policed by probation and parole officers.

The wilderness or outward bound camp concept has been spoken about today. I take nothing away from Graham Ross from Alice Springs who has been advocating this particular program to me since 1976. We should be able to make some announcements in the next couple of weeks on the establishment of such an outward bound camp. Under this program, suitable juvenile offenders

are placed in a rural setting with experienced operatives who have the appropriate skills and work experience. The member for Millner spoke about the need to ensure that human services are taken into account. I can assure all members that this is a highlight of the program that we are embarking on. The juveniles are required to be somewhat self-sufficient at these camps and may be required to construct their own dwellings, raise their own poultry and become involved in educational programs. I have had preliminary discussions with the Office of Technical and Further Education for it to become involved in those types of educational programs.

The placement of juveniles on stations has been spoken about by the member for Braitling. I congratulate all the pastoralists whom we visited for their willingness to become involved. I pay full credit to the member for Braitling who provided me with considerable support to ensure that the pastoralists were cooperative in those areas.

Under the pre-release programs for juveniles, offenders resident at Giles House assessed as suitable would be employed in the community and reside in accommodation adjacent to Giles House. I think that is another important adjunct to the facility. The member for Braitling spoke about how well that particular program works.

We are looking at becoming involved in joint ventures with the Conservation Commission. One of the programs is to look at building low profile artificial reef areas in the harbour. We can also become involved with some tourist facilities.

In relation to custodial programs for juvenile offenders, we are looking at the upgrading of Malak House, the reception and assessment centre for juveniles, and converting it into a detention centre. This may take some of the pressure off the remand problem that the Deputy Leader of the Opposition spoke about.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I believe that we have been successful in implementing the findings of the task force. I pay particular credit to the members of the Task Force on Juvenile Crime, both in the Darwin area and also the Alice Springs area. I would like once again to place on record my sincere appreciation and thanks to all those people who participated in the exercise, including the media. As the member for Wanguri said, the response we received from the community was excellent.

I would like to conclude by commenting on the Deputy Leader of the Opposition's comments about the problems at Palmerston. I am due to receive a report on juveniles from the people in Palmerston. Palmerston is not the depository of all of the Northern Territory's social ills. I do not believe that Palmerston has any greater problem than Malak, Karama, Leanyer or Millner. I would like to see some statistical information from the member for Millner which suggests that there is no juvenile crime problem in Millner. Of course, there is an ageing population in the Territory and a shift in emphasis. The Task Force on Juvenile Crime identified the most at-risk age group as 13 to 15 years of age. Indeed, I was talking to the Commissioner of Police about statistics in his annual report. Wherever we have children in the 13 to 15 age group, there is a possibility that some of those children will be at risk. I would like to conclude by paying credit to the youth of the Northern Territory. They are our future. I believe that the Northern Territory government can look with pride at the vast majority of youth in the Northern Territory.

Motion agreed to.

MOTION

Noting Statement on Aboriginal Education in Homeland Centres

Continued from 19 November 1985.

Mr McCARTHY (Victoria River): Mr Deputy Speaker, on 19 November last year, the Minister for Education made a very valid statement in relation to Aboriginal education in homeland centres. Unfortunately, the same thing cannot be said for the response of the member for Stuart who lost his balance when he jumped out of his chair and did not regain it. Homeland centres or outstations, as many people call them, by their very nature are often transient affairs. Certainly, there are those outstations - and there are certainly some in Arnhem Land and in other places - which have maintained fairly constant levels of occupation. However, the great majority of outstations fluctuate quite dramatically in numbers from hundreds of persons down to nobody at times. The latter can occur in the Top End during the wet season. This might not be a problem in the central areas to the same extent but I do understand that there is a fair amount of fluctuation between outstations even there.

No matter what facilities are provided, in the bush they cost large sums of money. Already the education budget in the Territory consumes up to 25% of Territory funding. It is money well spent and the standards of educational facilities and services provided by this government throughout the Territory are good. But there must be a limit to the percentage of the budget which goes to any one area of government service. For instance, we often hear the complaint that this government is assisting the tourist industry in the Territory with loan funds or guarantees while more money is needed for education or some other service. I put this to the members of the opposition: what good is an education without worthwhile employment? Perhaps the largest potential employer of Aborigines will be a sound and well-balanced tourist industry. Many of the frustrations of young Aboriginal people are transferred into vandalism, violence and crime.

Mr Deputy Speaker, during the last few days, I have heard about some of the violence and crime that has taken place against teachers in Aboriginal schools. In one community over the past 2 weeks, a young female teacher of good repute had a knife held at her throat for a long period in her own home, while the keys of her car were demanded by the person with the knife and one other person. In the same community, a young school teacher of good repute and of some years standing in the community had a shotgun held to his stomach for some time in his own home while the keys of his vehicle were demanded. In both cases, the people who carried out the violence - and if that is not violence, I want to know what is - were young men who had recently completed 10 or 12 years of schooling in the local school. They found at the end of their education that there was nothing for them; nothing at all that they could do. They had no employment. There are as many as 400 unemployed in the community. That is a big problem.

I have heard members opposite complaining about the lack of job opportunities for Aborigines in communities as well as in the towns. You cannot have it both ways. Only sound and well-developed industry can ever absorb the numbers. Not even a socialist government, like the one members opposite aspire to, will ever be able to employ the significant numbers of Aborigines who reside in remote corners of the Territory. Even the member

for Stuart might be prepared to take his blinkers off for a moment and concede that the task of providing adequate schooling in outstation areas is very costly and difficult.

The member for Stuart raised a number of questions. One of those concerned the cost of education in various communities and in various types of schools. I would like to quote some of those figures. The cost of educating a child in an urban primary school within Australia is \$2200. It is \$3345 in an urban primary school in the Northern Territory. In non-bilingual Aboriginal schools in the Northern Territory, it is \$5070. In a bilingual school in the Northern Territory, it is \$5463. Education in outstations in the Northern Territory varies from \$4000 to \$6000 per student. Obviously, that depends on the numbers of students in the community, the level of services provided etc. Secondary schools within Australia cost \$3500 per student. Secondary schools in the Northern Territory cost \$5310 per student. Yirara College costs \$17 467 per student. Kormilda College costs \$16 637 per student. They are very significant figures and obviously indicate that there is a special case for education needs in the Territory.

The Territory should be considered unique because the percentage of students attending schools in remote areas is far greater pro rata than in any of the states. The Aboriginal student population in the Northern Territory, when compared with the next biggest state, shows quite a dramatic difference. 31.4% of the Northern Territory's population is Aboriginal. Western Australia has 4%, which is the next biggest. Victoria is the smallest in Australia with 0.3%. There is no doubt that we need support in covering outstation education.

Quite clearly, the outstations are emerging communities. We refer to them as outstations but, in a few years time, many of them will be settled communities. Regardless of the oft-stated desire for limited facilities, they will be bringing pressure to bear on the government for improved facilities to a standard expected in the more settled communities. How many new towns are being formed in other states? Very few. Most are mining towns which are fully paid for by a mining company. Hundreds of outstations are emerging in the Northern Territory. I think the number of outstations now is around 360. Of these, 64 have outstation schools at various levels. Many of the others are very small outstations.

The member for Stuart believes that there should be an assistant teacher in every Aboriginal class. I dispute his claim. Why should an Aboriginal class that has a trained Aboriginal teacher from the same language group also expect to have an Aboriginal assistant? The purpose of Aboriginal assistants is to provide support in language communication between the teacher and the class. Where white teachers have lived in one community for long enough to speak the language and understand the culture, why should that teacher require an Aboriginal assistant?

I am increasingly concerned at the level of separatist activity in all facets of life in Australia as it relates to the Aboriginal and white populations. We have separatist land ownership laws, separatist health services, separatist flags, and many are advocating separatist education. I can see no value at all in having an Aboriginal teacher for every Aboriginal class unless for the purpose of maintaining language communication in the Aboriginal language of the area, and that only in the very early primary classes. This is not the reasoning of the people who advocate one Aboriginal teacher per Aboriginal class. They do not concern themselves at all with the

problem of an Aboriginal teacher from Alice Springs teaching an Aboriginal class at Maningrida or Port Keats. The only connection would be a similar racial background, and that varies. There can be no advantage in such cases over a skilled white teacher. Why not claim that we should have special Chinese teachers for the Chinese, Greek for the Greek and so on? We should be one people in this country. In my view, so called positive discrimination is possibly better named 'separatism'.

There are so many people in influential positions who believe all Aboriginals to be of the same mind. More often than not, Aboriginal groups are as alike as an Irishman and an Arab. For this reason, national policies on Aboriginal education are ludicrous. I was pleased to hear the member for Stuart say he agreed that you could not have a national Aboriginal education policy. Unfortunately, there are many people in Australia who believe there should be one because they believe all Aborigines to be the same. Where possible, Aboriginal education should have the same goals as education for every other Australian. Education for Aborigines has to commence at a different level than does the system for the general Australian community, but it should aim at reaching parity at an early stage. If Aboriginal people are to compete for jobs, if they are to take part in the development of this nation that we share, they must compete in the education system as equals.

A recent paper presented an excellently balanced viewpoint. It was published by Stephen Harris, principal education adviser for the NT Aboriginal bilingual program. Beth Graham, formerly senior educational adviser for the NT Aboriginal bilingual program, and David Odling-Smee of Batchelor College indicated that, according to current projections for one school in Arnhem Land, Ngukurr, all band 1 teaching positions in the school could be filled by Northern Territory Teaching Service Aboriginal teachers at the beginning of 1987. I understand that it has already reached that stage in 1986. This is a feather in the cap of NT education policy and the direction that we are taking. It is certainly a clear indication that Batchelor College is doing an excellent job. However, it should not become the be-all and end-all of education for Aborigines. Surely, it will not be argued by members opposite that these teachers should have an Aboriginal assistant. What justification could there be?

The Minister for Education has made it quite clear that the RATE program will continue and expand. It is working well in my own electorate. The concern of the opposition in this regard is totally unfounded. The RATE program has been extended this year and the lecturers spend time in every community where the RATE program is employed. Each of those lecturers spends one week in every 4 in the communities, and actual teaching in those communities takes up about 50% of their time. They are doing their job and they are doing it well.

The member for Stuart should also get his facts straight on the provision for families at Batchelor College. I was rather surprised that he seemed not to know about this. Teacher trainees at Batchelor College benefit from the provision of housing and support for their spouses and children at the college. Yet the member for Stuart said that it was very difficult for them to find accommodation for their families and children. Very good accommodation is provided, and that goes for the children too. It will be enormously expensive to duplicate the Batchelor College facility in central Australia, and advantages may prove to be only marginal. However, the minister has indicated that moves are afoot to investigate teacher training facilities in central Australia, and the member for Stuart knew that at the

time that he denied it. Of course, the people who live in the bush cannot always expect identical services to those who live in urban areas.

I for one fight for better services in the bush because I live in what some might call the bush, and I certainly travel the bush. I know and most people living in the bush know that they cannot expect identical services to urban areas. But the member for Stuart does. He believes that they should have that. In every state of Australia, people travel from remote areas to their nearest large town or city to obtain education, health and every other service that they require. The member for Stuart would have us provide all of those things on the spot. This government would be irresponsible if it were to spend money without consideration of the value return for that money. This applies to education as well as to every other service. Our friends opposite tend to observe what is actually said and then place their own interpretation on it. Page 7 of the minister's statement says:

'In future, the government intends to adopt a new and more realistic approach of helping those who demonstrate that they are prepared to help themselves. We will meet our obligations to provide education services where they are required but homeland groups will have to ensure regular attendance and be willing to help themselves before the government will commit additional resources. If they fail to keep attendance to reasonable levels or fail to send their children to central schools during extended visits to the central community, the government will then have to review its support'.

I thought that to be totally reasonable, but what does the member for Stuart have to say about that? He said the minister said:

'Instead of talking about a homeland group and outstation, one could imagine the uproar if one were to say to a community - for example, Alice Springs - that, as a community, it did not ensure that its attendances are kept up, and it actually became involved in the construction and maintenance of its schools...'

He did not say anything about the construction and maintenance of schools but the member for Stuart says that that is what he said. If that is not casting a new light on what was said, I do not know what is.

I suppose that he would deny that truancy is a problem in Aboriginal schools; that it is significantly higher in Aboriginal schools than in other schools. We know that it is. The responsibility for this truancy rests with parents, be they Aboriginal or white Australians. A comment was made that it reflects a lack of experience of teachers and a lot of other things, but in my opinion it reflects a lack of interest on the part of parents in communities. In fact, the attendance rate of Aboriginal students in schools is below 70%, and that really is a very bad reflection.

Why should this government not review its support to a school that does not maintain reasonable levels of attendance? Of course, it should, as it does in all schools when numbers do not warrant the level of services. For the benefit of the member for Stuart, the present attendance at Victoria River Downs school is 13. The school's existence was under review following the movement of children to Yarralin, but it has been able to remain open through the transfer of School of the Air children to the school.

There is also a difference between maintaining a school for a period after numbers have decreased in order to ascertain whether it is a short-term phenomenon and initiating a new school with less than the acceptable number of students to warrant the action. The member for Stuart claimed that there were 2000 children in his electorate unable to attend a school. There are only 1100 Aboriginal students throughout the whole Territory who are unable to attend a school. He says 2000 are in his own electorate. Obviously, that is rubbish.

Commitment to Aboriginal education has been a hallmark of this government. The very special treatment accorded to the Aboriginal teacher training facility at Batchelor is just one proof of that commitment. The opposition talks of special treatment for white students compared to Aboriginals. I would draw members' attention to the fact that Batchelor teacher trainees who hold a position in their home school maintain full salary while studying. Very good accommodation for the spouse and children is maintained, all meals are provided, education for the children at Batchelor school is assured, free bussing to Darwin is available weekly for shopping excursions and a creche is provided for pre-school children. Personally, I am delighted that all of that is available for students at the Batchelor College.

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

Mr BELL (MacDonnell): Mr Deputy Speaker, there are several comments I would like to make in relation to this particular statement. Before I offer my own comments, let me pick up a few of the comments made by the member for Victoria River. He made mention rather querulously of my colleague's suggestion that there should be quality services in Aboriginal communities and that the level of services provided in Aboriginal communities should reflect those provided in the towns and urban centres in the Northern Territory. This idea seemed to be pooh-poohed by the member of Victoria River because he said that there were certain economic strictures in this regard and one should be realistic.

I must admit that I find that a fairly odd point of view when, time after time in this Assembly, we have exactly that refusal on the part of Territory government ministers to accept the reality of economic strictures right around the country. I find it particularly odd that we had an example of it this very morning when the Chief Minister loudly proclaimed that Territorians ought to have exactly the same communication services as anybody living anywhere in this country. There was no mention then that problems of economic strictures ought to be taken into consideration. Evidently, when the services are being provided by the Northern Territory government, economic strictures have to be taken into consideration so that Aboriginal communities must accept a lesser level of services than those provided in the towns. I will give an example of that. During the halcyon days since self-government in the Northern Territory, at least one critical service has decreased. I refer particularly to the number of assistant teachers who are employed.

Before I get to the particular comments I had to make about Aboriginal assistant teachers in Aboriginal schools and in homeland centre schools, let me say that I wish to take to task the honourable member for Victoria River in this regard because he failed to take into consideration one of the reasons that such assistant teachers are employed. In addition to the central purpose that such assistant teachers are employed - namely, to enhance the quality of educational services provided - such positions as assistant teachers exist in areas where there is high unemployment, as we have already mentioned in other

contexts and as I believe the member for Victoria River mentioned. I think that, where such employment opportunities exist and people can be gainfully employed as assistant teachers, it is vital that such positions be made available. All these things are interrelated. We talked about youth unemployment before. I can think of dozens of people who have been given an opportunity to work as assistant teachers. Not all of them have necessarily remained in that line of work for years and years but I think that many of the people whom I have seen working in those jobs have been important for the communities within which they are working as well as for the people themselves. So I would urge the member for Victoria River and the Minister for Education to take a slightly wider view in that regard.

I do not have a great deal of time but I really cannot pass without comment the use of the term 'separatist' for the provision of educational services and the independent Aboriginal schools that have been mooted and have been established in some areas. I would like to reply to the general point there. I suppose that we should be somewhat thankful that the member for Victoria River did not deride such proposals as apartheid, but I suspect that he felt that way. Let me just again urge a wider view on the member for Victoria River and his colleagues. The fact of the matter is that many of these independent initiatives in providing educational services and in providing health services - they are the 2 chief examples - are being carried out in order to give people who have been generally deprived of control over their own lives a greater degree of such control. I have no objection to objective analysis of those independent services. Those independent services have to work. Some of them employ non-Aboriginal people who are more interested in furthering some sort of idealistic view of the world or some sort of radical idea rather than providing the services.

With any of those initiatives, the yardstick has to be the quality of the services provided. Having said that, I strongly urge the member and his colleagues to reconsider the merits of such independent services, and not simply deride them as separatist or apartheid as they occasionally do. We are talking about Aboriginal Australians for whom we have a unique historical responsibility and for whom the wider society does not have a very good record of providing. This responsibility should not be couched in the same terms as providing services for particular immigrant groups. The member for Victoria River compared it with providing Greek teachers for Greeks and Chinese teachers for Chinese. I maintain that our responsibility with respect to Aborigines is of a much higher order than with respect to those other groups.

There are several other points raised by the member for Victoria River which I would like to mention, but time prevents me from doing so. I have severe reservations about a number of his other comments, but I particularly want to return to the question of assistant teachers. The Northern Territory government can hardly be proud of the number of assistant teachers attached to bilingual schools, many of which are associated with homeland centres. I have here a table which I believe was prepared within the minister's own department. I am prepared to give him a copy in case he has not seen it. I ask him to note that, in 1980, there were 128 assistant teachers employed in bilingual schools in the Northern Territory. From memory, 1 July 1980 was the day on which the Northern Territory government took responsibility for education. When the Northern Territory government took charge of educational services in the Northern Territory, there were 128 assistant teachers employed in bilingual schools here. What do we find 5 years later? In the second semester of 1985, we find 99 assistant teachers, a decrease of about 20%. I will provide a copy of this to the Minister for Education for his perusal and

his response in whatever forum he cares to choose. I think that he certainly has to give some answers.

I wish to make a few further comments about the ministerial statement on Aboriginal education in homeland centres. I suppose it is a subject dear to my heart, having spent some time as a teacher-linguist in an Aboriginal school. I am concerned that neither the minister nor his colleague, the member for Victoria River, has really come to grips with the position of schools in these circumstances. It bothers me that the yardstick that is always chosen for evaluating education is the education provided in town schools in the Northern Territory. Aboriginal kids are always measured against the yardstick of achievement of children in the town schools in the Northern Territory. I urge both the minister and those of his colleagues who are interested in this question to take a broad view. Quite clearly, we have to be pluralist in this regard. Here we have a government which prides itself on liberalism and diversity of aspiration. I would urge it to provide Aboriginal Territorians and kids in Aboriginal schools with exactly that opportunity for pluralism. On the one hand, it is important to provide Aboriginal kids with quality education so that, should they so desire, they can take part in mainstream Australian life. On the other hand, we have a responsibility to consider what sort of life kids in homeland centres are likely to lead. Given the fact that some 25% or 30% of the Northern Territory population is made up of Aborigines, some consideration ought to be given to saying that perhaps a well-educated Pintubi child will have a different schooling from a well-educated child who lives in Alice Springs.

I am deeply concerned that there is this sort of one-dimensional view of what the good life should be for Aboriginal kids living in homeland centres and, more generally, for Aboriginal people. I would have liked to think that assimilationist views, where we believed that Aboriginal people could aspire only to majority Australian values and lifestyles, were well behind us. But I detect, both in the minister's statements and in his colleague's statements, that that sort of attitude towards Aboriginal Territorians is still alive and well. For example, the minister said in his statement that it is a matter of great concern to the government that there are many children in this situation who are not receiving an adequate education, and there are many others who are not receiving an education at all. I think it is worth pointing out that all Aboriginal kids, even the 1100 referred to by the member for Victoria River, are educated. Traditional Aboriginal society has a formal education curriculum of its own. However uncomfortable that might be and however great the problems which that might create for providing government services, it has to be taken into consideration.

There were some interesting figures tossed around, apart from the economics of education that the member for Victoria River gave. I think that stating those figures so baldly is a little dangerous. Since my time is nearly up, I mention that I would like to see a breakup of the 360 homeland groups that the minister referred to in his statement. With those few comments, I suggest that all is not rosy with the government's performance.

Mr MANZIE (Transport and Works): Mr Speaker, the concerns expressed by the member for MacDonnell are, in general terms, concerns that all Territorians share. I believe nobody would argue with the concept that all children are entitled to quality education, no matter where they live nor what colour their skin is. This government certainly stands by that concept. As has been said by the Minister for Education, there is a general agreement within the government that the concept of homeland centres is desirable for a

number of reasons. Obviously, I have insufficient time to go through the sort of benefits that homeland centres have for the people who desire to move back to them.

It has been said that we are talking about 350 homeland communities, which is a rise from 186 in 1978. We know what the problems are. The member for MacDonnell has certainly spelled out his version of them. He has also spelled out his approach to solving them. Unfortunately, to use some of his own words, he is unable to come to grips with the fact that a financial commitment to carry out all the wishes of the government and the Minister for Education regarding education in homeland centres is impossible without a commitment from the federal government.

I would just like to run through some facts and figures regarding homeland centres and the cost to the Territory of their growth. It has been said in this Assembly many times before, and it obviously will be said again, that, for a normal outstation, we are looking at a rough cost of around \$2m. That is just to supply some electricity, fuel tanks, water supply - including water tank - some reticulated water and a bore, a communal toilet block, some road works, an airstrip or a barge landing and some rubbish-dumping areas. It works out to around \$2m. That does not take into account the cost of providing a school building. The facilities at Kintore, which is in the honourable member for MacDonnell's electorate, were provided at a cost of \$400 000 to the Territory government. We have facilities in about 60 homeland centres, which means that we really need facilities at another 300.

At a cost of \$400 000 per centre, realistically, we are looking at an amount of \$120m just to provide the teaching facilities. As I said earlier, we must be realistic. If we are looking at a cost of \$2m to provide essential services to each of those 300 communities, we are looking at a cost of \$600m. So we are up to about \$720m. The member for Stuart has stated to the House of Representatives Standing Committee which studied homeland centres - and I agree with him totally - that it will cost \$2000m to provide adequate housing for Aboriginals throughout the Territory. This gives a total cost of around \$3000m to provide adequate facilities, housing and education in homeland centres.

Homeland centres are growing. The concept is being actively encouraged by the Commonwealth. Unfortunately, we are forced to try to provide funding for those communities from an ever-decreasing budget. Until there is some realisation by the Commonwealth and by the members opposite - who know the answers and who seem to expect us to walk to a money tree - that the amounts of money involved are well beyond the scope of the Territory, we will not get anywhere. We are talking about nearly 3 times the Territory's budget!

All states and territories have expressed concern that the Commonwealth is not properly meeting its funding responsibilities towards Aboriginal people. At a meeting of education officers from all states and the Territory in Adelaide about a month ago, it was recommended and endorsed by all present that, prior to the next meeting of Ministers for Aboriginal Affairs, concern be expressed that the Commonwealth was seeking to cut back on its obligations even further. Existing financial arrangements between the states and the Commonwealth are currently being reviewed and there are widespread fears that the Commonwealth will use the review to withdraw from some areas of funding and hand over responsibilities to the states without providing any financial assistance. In fact, the New South Wales Premier, Mr Wran, wrote to the Prime Minister on 14 February and actually sent a copy of that letter to the

Northern Territory government. He expressed grave disquiet about the funding review. He said: 'The review would severely delay an important initiative designed to address the needs of Aboriginal people in New South Wales'. We have a problem that needs to be addressed in the Northern Territory to the tune of \$3000m just to provide for the needs of people presently living in those communities.

Obviously, the federal government cannot have it both ways. It cannot claim to be *el supremo* in all matters Aboriginal while, at the same time, reduce the necessary and extremely costly funding for Aboriginal infrastructure and services. The fact is that the Territory cannot possibly afford to do all it would like to do in improving the quality of life for all people. The cost, as I said earlier, would be several times the Territory budget. I certainly hope, and members opposite should hope, that the Commonwealth will come to terms with the inadequate financial response to the Territory's rapidly expanding homelands movement. It has not done so previously.

The Minister for Education pointed out the direction that the government is taking. He has pointed out the problems involved and he has pointed some of the initiatives that the Territory is presently carrying out. Even though funding is being reduced, the Territory is providing a bilingual education service. In fact, we are the only place in Australia that is doing so apart from one centre in one other state. We are running 16 such schools. I find it totally amazing that we seem to be castigated publicly for doing such things. We are castigated because, apparently, we are not expanding that sort of service rapidly enough. Yet nowhere else in the country is it being carried out.

We have Aboriginal teacher education at Batchelor College which is second to none anywhere in Australia. We actually provide accommodation for the families of students to enable them to be qualified to the standard which is required to educate young people. Obviously, there are problems because the retention rate is not as high as it should be. However, it is a scheme that the government is very keen on and will continue to promote because it is vitally important that Aboriginals are trained as teachers and can go back to the areas they came from to help educate their people.

It cannot be done without a commitment, without understanding from the Commonwealth and without understanding from the people of Australia that there is a limit to what the Territory can do. At this stage we are doing more than all other states to educate Aboriginal people. While homeland centres continue to expand, the cost on government as a whole will increase and we will have to change the Commonwealth's attitude. The Commonwealth's attitude has always been simple: it is the Territory's responsibility. Since self-government, the level of federal assistance to meet those responsibilities has been virtually non-existent.

I would just like to say again that we are committed to providing education for all Territorians but, unfortunately, money does not grow on trees.

Mr LANHUPUY (Arnhem): Mr Deputy Speaker, in rising to speak to the statement made by the honourable Minister for Education on Aboriginal education in homeland centres, I would like to address the matters which he raised specifically. I would also like to say a few words in respect of some of the comments made by the member for Victoria River concerning his attitude

about what he calls 'separatist' schools, health programs and things like that. I hope he says the same thing to the people at Peppimenarti and Daly River which has a Catholic school which is responsible for Aboriginal education.

I was very pleased to hear the announcement by the Minister for Education in respect of some of the guidelines on government policies and programs concerning Aboriginal outstations. At the same time, I was very pleased to hear that he wanted to focus attention on the need for much more Commonwealth support. Certainly, I would be very pleased to be able to assist the Minister for Education in applying pressure to seek those funds from the federal government. I am sure that there are a lot of people in these communities who would be willing to assist this government to develop the programs and initiatives that those people want in the outstations.

The Minister for Transport and Works would have us believe that those people in outstations want \$2m programs. Some of those communities barely manage to get any money except from arts and artifacts that they produce themselves or funds for CDP programs which are paid to some people who are already committed to living in outstations. The Minister for Education became aware of this when he made his visit to Galiwinku last time. He said that one outstation he visited was running well.

I would like to advise honourable members that not every one of the 360 or so outstations wants a school. Some of those people go to areas like Lake Evella, Elcho, Milingimbi and Ramangining to get their kids educated. They travel miles and miles to get to schools. It is not as though each and every outstation wants a school. They might be satisfied with the teachers they have, with people who have been through Batchelor College or the courses that are operating in the communities. They know the level of education required at outstations like Darling Wood, which I am very familiar with. There are 2 teachers there who are willing to work on that community without any money whatsoever because it is somewhere they have learned to live and love and will live forever.

The outstation school program has expanded. People are starting to go back. The member for Victoria River was quite correct when he said that the population fluctuates during the Wet and the Dry. It is not as though we are asking for a permanent school facility in the outstations. It is not like that. How about regional educational facilities for those people who are out there? If Dhupuma College had not closed, Aboriginal people would still be attending. In fact, I was pleased to hear from Bakamana Yunupingu the other day that the federal minister - I do not know whether the NT government assisted - funded \$6000 to set up a task force to look at the possibility of setting up a regional area school in the north-east Arnhem area. I would welcome any comments that the Minister for Education makes in respect of that, particularly if he is willing to assist in the funding.

The minister knows that most outstations have radios. It would not be that hard for the Department of Education to have a crystal installed in those radios and operate like the School of the Air instead of having teachers going out there all the time with books, charters and boats. I am sure that, if the Department of Education set up the radio and exchanged views with students on those outstations by radio, that would be welcomed. It would cut a lot of cost. I would welcome any comments the Minister for Education in respect of that.

The main reasons why people go to those outstations are because they want to live there and because they belong there. They do not necessarily want to live in communities like Milingimbi and Elcho. Some of those people have conflicts of interest. Their tribes might not get along with each other. These are some of the aspects that legislators must take into account. We should not necessarily blame them for the enormous costs of living nor the expenditure that this government must make to look after them. Those people are Territorians and this government has an obligation to give them the best it can offer.

We heard the member for Victoria River speaking about the fantastic facilities we have at Batchelor. I do not think those people who are being taught at Batchelor will go back and live on outstations and teach at outstations. Sure, we are training them for a school environment but they end up in a classroom in some of the major communities. Hopefully, some of them will take jobs interstate. Let us look forward to those days. Those students at Batchelor will not end up teaching at outstations. It is wrong to say that this is what we are doing and this is what we are providing. We must look at people in their independent situations. We have to look at their needs and ask for their advice and guidance on these things instead of preaching to them about what the government is doing. I would call on the Minister for Education to ensure that, in relation to matters of interest to outstations, he listens to the people in the outstation resource centres. They are very closely linked with the people living on outstations. I am not saying that the schools do not have a good relationship with the outstations; I am sure they do. Teachers go out on a monthly basis to some of those communities, and they are very committed. I would like the Northern Territory government to be a bit more understanding towards the needs and aspirations of the people on the outstations.

Mr COULTER (Community Development): Mr Deputy Speaker, I rise to participate briefly in this debate because I have a great deal of empathy with the Minister for Education in his endeavour to provide services to homeland centres. In my portfolio of Aboriginal development, I too am faced with this problem. I was interested to hear the member for Arnhem say that they do not want large resources. I look back to probably one of the first outstation movements in central Australia at Kintore, where a group of people left Papunya and went back out to their homeland. We put down a bore for them. The bore had a hand pump on it which was supplied by the appropriate technology people. Then it became a windmill. Next it became a diesel generator. After that, there was an airstrip. We have now spent around \$2.5m at Kintore, on what was an outstation. There are any number of examples of basic outstations which have expanded greatly. The Minister for Education could think back just 18 months to the school that was at Kintore. At the time, it was a bough shed. The point is that the expectations of some homeland centres tend to increase. There tends to be demands on government.

I said to the member for Arnhem last year that not only is there an outstation drift but that there is also an urban drift towards major centres. He reinforced that this evening when he talked about people going to Maningrida and other more populated areas for schooling. I was at Tangentyere 2 weeks ago and the council explained to me that there are now 1200 people living on the outskirts of Alice Springs. So the government has to face this urban drift. These people are transients. They move around quite a lot, as the member for Arnhem said, on a seasonal basis. They may move from an outstation to a community, then into a major urban centre.

We must also consider the pastoral excisions which are occurring. The Minister for Lands has been successful in negotiating a number of these, and the people on the excisions need services. The Minister for Education has to meet these as well. The member for Nhulunbuy has a magnificent outstation resource centre in his electorate. It funds about 20 outstations in that area with a budget of some \$180 000. It is a self-help organisation and I pay tribute to those people. As the member for Arnhem said, some of these Aboriginal resource centres do work well, and have built their own schools and supplied their own facilities. But there are still ever-increasing demands upon government to supply schools, airstrips, generators and water. It is not always easy to do that with limited resources, especially when one considers the transient nature of some of these people. What is an outstation one minute becomes a minor community the next.

To deal with this particular problem, my department has categorised the living areas into major communities, minor communities and outstation communities. These have respective populations of above 100, between 50 and 100, and less than 50. Some of the outstations have less than 4 people living on them. I can advise members that there is one outstation in the member for Victoria River's district which has had some \$180 000 spent on it. I think 4 people live there. There are demands there for schools, electricity and airstrips. In fact, we have already placed an airstrip in that area, and it is used on a seasonal basis. The government purse is not such that it can cater for all these needs.

I agree with the member for Arnhem, and I would go one step further: if we can get solar power up to a stage where it can run television sets, the satellite will provide a wonderful means of communication in these areas. Radio is another issue which is being addressed, and the member Ludmilla has done a considerable amount of work on how we can develop those facilities for the homeland centres.

The Chief Minister talked today about educational prospects for Aboriginal people and I think they are real. In some areas there is a commitment to build the school. Then staffing has to be provided. The types of education and the standards which can be achieved will also vary. In some cases, people may not even wish to go to school. Many outstations have suggested to me that, if they want their children to go to school, they will move back into a major area. As the member for Victoria River mentioned today, it is common for children in rural areas throughout Australia to travel 140-160 km a day to attend schools. Sometimes they move into a provincial town until they have completed their high school education. If they then want a tertiary education, they might move to a city area. If they want university education, they move to a capital city. The same thing applies with health and other services and facilities throughout Australia.

What we need to realise is that we cannot continue to chase after people and supply airstrips, generator sets and schoolrooms wherever they want to set up camp. That is just not feasible. Not only do we now have this outstation drift but we also have an urban drift. I have been questioned on that before in this Assembly. People have tried to tell me that people are going back to the bush, but I can provide the statistics for them. They clearly demonstrate that there is an urban drift, and that we have to provide increased facilities in the towns as well. That is the problem that the honourable Minister for Education has in relation to funding. It is not so much the construction of a building or even supplying a teacher; it is the enrolments and the attendance at those particular schools. We all know of major areas where the attendance

is extremely high and some of the schools are excellent. I pay particular credit to Harry Wilson at Peppimenarti where the attendance rate is incredible. There are outstations there as well and the children come to school from those outstations.

I realise that there are problems with different skin groups and people who cannot get along with each other, but I suggest to the member for Arnhem that problems are generated in places like Kintore as well. It started out as an outstation so the people could get away from some of the problems that existed at Papunya, in particular petrol sniffing and the consumption of alcohol, and the different skin groups that were collected within that area by people like Jeremy Long in 1964. Mr Deputy Speaker, probably you remember the time when those people were brought in from the western desert country to those major centres. However, the fact is that Kintore now has very serious social problems. The task force on petrol sniffing is operating out there. Something like 350 people are living in that particular area which is almost as many as were at Papunya at one time. The social problems do not go away when people move to the outstations, especially if the outstations flourish.

Kintore itself has an outstation. I refer to places like Well 33. These particular homeland movements are not confined within the boundaries of the Northern Territory; they cross state borders, in particular the Western Australian border from places like Docker River, and into the South Australian triangle and across to the Nicholson River area in Queensland. There are outstation movements and homeland centres there as well. All those people have expectations and do not recognise state borders. They recognise their homeland areas.

We need a firm policy to develop schools in the 45 communities that have been designated as major communities and to have them operating at an acceptable standard. I know that the Minister for Education has spent considerable time on the Aboriginal Educational Program, and he is to be congratulated for that. With the vast distances involved, it is not always easy to provide staffing to some of those facilities which are right out in the bush.

As I said, it is not only the homeland movement; excisions will place an increasing demand on limited resources, so let us hope that Mr Blanchard, Mr Hand and Mr Connolly, who are on the Select Committee on Homeland Centres, may be able to come up with some answers for us in terms of federal funding and how the federal government intends to address the problems of providing essential services to these centres. I believe they are still a long way from providing any meaningful solutions. Mr Blanchard, Mr Hand and Mr Connolly have a great deal of hard work ahead of them before solutions to these difficulties can be determined.

In the meantime, I congratulate the Minister for Education on his stand on Aboriginal homeland centres and his intention to tackle the problem of dealing with the ever-increasing difficulty of having only limited resources to provide services to people as their communities settle across the Northern Territory. I believe that we will have to concentrate on major centres and to make certain services and facilities available on a regional basis.

I close by saying that there are some Aboriginal resource centres, in particular the Yirrkala model, which are prepared to develop and build resources for themselves. Other communities simply demand from government that it should provide water, airstrips, generator sets and diesel pumps. The Northern Territory government's coffers are just not that big.

Mr LEO (Nhulunbuy): Mr Deputy Speaker, I have just concluded a trip around the outstation communities within my electorate and, as the honourable Minister for Community Development said, there has been some change in the standard of housing in some of those communities. At Wundhawuy community, down towards Blue Mud Bay, there are building materials for a new school. At least that one community has improved greatly since the last time I spoke on this matter in this Assembly. I think I said at that time that ramshackle buildings served as schools in all the communities, and that those buildings inevitably disappeared during the wet season and all of their goods and materials disappeared with them. It is a reassuring sign that some attempt is being made at least to construct some substantial buildings to be used as classrooms. They may not be very large buildings but they are serviceable and will suffice.

However, that is 1 community amongst 7 and it is a long road home. I appreciate the minister's sentiments on this matter. Certainly, he seems to be endeavouring to do the best he can for those people. As I understand it, only last week the minister visited one of the communities outside Nhulunbuy. I hope he was impressed by the people's efforts; they work hard at it and try very hard at their various community projects.

I think the most pertinent matter, which the Minister for Community Development mentioned a number of times, is the problem of increasing demand on limited resources. I appreciate the predicament. But I must say that the people in Nhulunbuy, myself included, and those Aboriginal people on outstations who are able to comprehend the media, wonder at the priorities of this government. Here we have a government the minister of which says quite correctly that it faces increasing demands upon limited resources, and yet this government can continue to spend money like water on white elephants. The people in my electorate ask themselves what priorities this government has.

The member for Sadadeen, whose intellectual zenith was achieved probably at about the time of his conception, has no idea what those people in those communities are faced with. Mr Deputy Speaker, you and I can leave the Northern Territory and go somewhere else. Physically and intellectually, we are quite capable of that. Many of my constituents - 25% of my electorate - are incapable of doing that. They are incapable of leaving Nhulunbuy. Because of their very limited skills and their extremely limited level of education, they are confined to that area of Australia.

I have a very real fear for those people. My fear is that, probably within 2 or 3 decades, Australia's economy will reach a plateau, if not go into real economic decline. Mr Deputy Speaker, you may not credit me with the ability to read but, in fact, I do read, and I read history books. My reading of history tells me that, in periods of economic decline, the people to get it in the neck first are those on the bottom of the heap. That has always happened. Make no bones about the fact that the people who will get it in the neck first in Australia will be Aboriginal people. The first of those to get it will be the most disadvantaged Aboriginal people, and the most disadvantaged Aboriginal people are also the very least educated.

I appreciate the problems of the Minister for Education and I appreciate the problems of the Minister for Community Development. They are doing a creditable job with their very limited resources. But when you see money frittered away on white elephants, then, like my constituents, I wonder at this government's priorities. People are being doomed daily - doomed not to be able to compete and doomed to be on the bottom of the heap.

Mr Dale: Tell us about the airport, Dan.

Mr LEO: The member for Wanguri, I would suggest, achieved his intellectual zenith at about the same time as the member for Sadadeen. Unfortunately, it also coincided with the start of his moral decline. However, this is a very real problem. It is all very well for people to sit in here and cackle and giggle about it, but those Territorians...

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! The honourable member for Sadadeen will cease his continual cross-Chamber chatter.

Mr LEO: These people are constituents of mine. They do not face dislocation like we do. We can sell the Star Village, move out of Nhulunbuy and go somewhere else to live. They do not have that option. They are doomed to stay where they are, and the only way that they will ever be able to move out of that situation is if their ability to cope and compete within our society is greatly enhanced. That will only be achieved by education. Therefore, as much as I applaud the Minister for Education's efforts and the Minister for Community Development's efforts, I am afraid it is to the constant shame of this government that it can squander money while people are missing out. People are being doomed to a fate which, quite frankly, I do not think anyone in this Assembly would wish on any animal.

Mr HARRIS (Education): Mr Deputy Speaker, I thank members for their comments. I must say that I am a little disappointed because I had expected the Leader of the Opposition to contribute to this debate. I tried to find out as much as I could about opposition members' concerns by making this statement in relation to homeland centres. You can see by the discussion that has taken place here today that a very real problem exists in Aboriginal education and the way we have to address it. I would have thought that the Leader of the Opposition, who is the opposition spokesman on education, would have contributed. I ask the Leader of the Opposition to tell me what he would like to see happen in relation to the homeland centre movement. It is important that we look at comments from both sides of this Assembly.

In relation to the member for Nhulunbuy's comments, education will not be reduced to allow for any other development. Education is priority one in any community, particularly in the Northern Territory. Consider the cutbacks that have taken place in the Territory from the Commonwealth government and the degree to which education has been affected. It has not been affected as much as many other areas. I can assure the member for Nhulunbuy that education is priority one.

I was very interested in the comments of the member for Arnhem because I share his concerns in relation to the education of his people. I can assure the member for Arnhem that the problem in these communities is the fact that they must grow. I have made the comment before publicly that the problem in relation to Aboriginal education is time. The basis is there but you need time for it to develop. We tried to rush. We tried to do in 20 years what it has taken 198 years to achieve, and yet we are told that we are not doing enough for Aboriginal education.

It needs to be put across to people in Aboriginal communities that they need to grow and develop. It takes time. To give an example, when I was a boy in Darwin, there was no secondary education. I had to travel 3000 km to receive secondary education. Now we have the best schools in Australia. We have high schools and we are developing secondary colleges. That has happened

over a period of 20 years. Darwin has developed and indeed Alice Springs and other centres have developed to the point where they have facilities that are equal to those anywhere in Australia. As time goes by, the same thing will happen in many of the Aboriginal communities.

No one is denying that Aboriginals want to live in their homeland centres. We have heard mention today that there are 360-odd homeland centres or outstations. There are approximately 600. There are 600 that could develop overnight. The concern that we have is that, unless we have some basis for funding and some direction and commitment from the Commonwealth government, we cannot provide education to all those communities. We just cannot achieve that.

I visited recently an outstation just out of Nhulunbuy called Baniyella. I must say that I was very impressed with the work that has been done there. The school had been built by the community out of bush timber and iron. After I had visited the school and spoken to the teacher and students, they asked me to meet with the community. I sat down with the community and we discussed the issue of education. The member for Nhulunbuy believes automatically that people need a building, and that desks and tables are necessary for the provision of education in those communities. I queried that. I said to these people under the trees on the beach: 'You have something special here'. We were sitting under a shelter made from 4 poles and some boughs over the top. It was cool; it was beautiful. They had something special. According to indications from the Commonwealth, they are getting a school. I said: 'You should think very carefully about what you want'.

There were 20 or 30 children sitting around at that meeting. I looked at those children and I thought to myself: where are they going to go when they get an education? Where are the jobs? There was nothing. I could not see any way that those children could work in that particular community. There were no houses. There were a couple of boats with outboard motors. I could send someone out tomorrow to teach them how to repair motors. But that is the problem. We can only start to provide the facilities and the educational prospects for children. But further down the line, there are real problems. I asked them what they thought necessary to provide education for their children. Is it necessary to have a building? Is it necessary to have what we accept in our society as the norm? That should be considered very seriously.

I have grave concerns in relation to many aspects of the outstation movement. Every member on the government side who has spoken in this debate has expressed concern at the growth of the outstation movement and its uncertainty. I have made it very clear to Senator Ryan that it is necessary for the Commonwealth to make a commitment in this regard.

What people do not seem to realise is that the Northern Territory has some 49.6% of non-English-speaking Aboriginals. No state has the number of homeland centres that we have and no state has to provide the necessary funds to provide education facilities to Aboriginals in isolated communities like we do in the Northern Territory. Consider programs like the TESL program - Teaching English as a Second Language program. The Commonwealth has included Aboriginals on this program and said that we would be funded accordingly, but it does not fund us according to the number of our Aboriginals who are non-English-speaking. English is their second language. It is easy to say that New South Wales, which might have 20 or 30 non-English-speaking Aboriginals, can provide funding for the TESL program.

The Commonwealth minister is aware of the concerns that we have here and she knows that they must be addressed. The Commonwealth minister has problems in relation to funding. She has the Senator Walshes and the Paul Keatings and those people to contend with. She fights very hard to obtain money for education but she has a problem. I am not going to get into what her issues were. I am just saying that there is a need for the Commonwealth to acknowledge that there is a very real problem in the Territory in relation to providing education facilities to Aboriginals in isolated communities, a problem that no other state has except perhaps Western Australia, but to a far lesser extent.

Mr Deputy Speaker, in relation to the comments made by the member for Stuart about the House of Representatives standing committee on Aboriginal affairs, we had not put forward a submission at the time when I made the statement. However, since that time, the honourable Minister for Community Development and myself have indicated to that committee a number of our concerns. One of those concerns was the uncertainty of the continuation of Commonwealth funds. I have raised the issue in this Assembly about the funding of assistant teachers. It is quite a serious situation because, if we have not reached a workable funding arrangement with the Commonwealth by the end of June, we will have to look very seriously at the future of some 30 assistant teachers.

I want to spell out one thing about the arguments that have been put forward about Aboriginal assistant teachers and staffing in Aboriginal schools in general. The member for MacDonnell passed across to me a schedule which indicates that the number of assistant teachers in Aboriginal communities has dropped over a period of years. The schedule shows the number of assistant teachers and the enrolments at the end of the period. It does not show the enrolments at the beginning of the period. It might be said that last year we had 25 teachers and this year we have 20. That is a reduction of 5. But in relation to the actual numbers of students enrolled, there has been no reduction whatsoever. The member for Stuart also raised this issue. He becomes more emotional about it than the member for MacDonnell, and he starts using scare tactics which do nothing to assist us in looking at the problems and nothing to assist the Department of Education in performing its duty. The 43 new assistant teacher positions for 1986 will, of course, be separate from the number that already exist. This will be an increase, not a redistribution.

The member for MacDonnell can laugh over there. One of the other problems which exists in relation to homeland centres is that many of the communities are splitting up. The assistant teachers in the communities are going out to homelands and, in many cases, they are finding themselves left with no one to teach. We have a very real problem in relation to that. You might have excess teachers at Maningrida and you might have a need for assistant teachers at Yuendumu. You just cannot move teachers from one community to another. The member for MacDonnell knows that. The member for Stuart knows that. These are problems that we have to address. I was hoping that their comments would address those particular problems. They are very real. I can assure you that, when we talk about the number of assistant teachers in schools being reduced, that is not the case at all. The actual enrolments have also reduced in those communities. The number of assistant teacher positions has indeed remained fairly constant. Again, statistics can be confusing. I am sure the member for MacDonnell is aware of this. The letters FTE - full-time equivalent - can create a great deal of confusion. If I say that there are 100 full-time equivalent assistant teachers, this could mean that 200 people

are employed since each of those people could be employed on a half-time basis. These are the problems we have in interpreting numbers of full-time equivalent teachers. It is all right for the member for MacDonnell to carry on like that. If you are talking about...

Mr Bell: You are talking about students of the university aren't you? Not assistant teachers in Aboriginal schools.

Mr HARRIS: ...assistant teachers in a community, you have to look at the overall picture. You have to relate that to the number of students in a particular community. Again, we have made sure that, if the number of students is there and the attendance at school is regular, we will provide the teachers required to make sure that those students receive a proper education.

We have other concerns. The cost of providing education to students in homeland centres has been addressed. That includes the cost of education materials. These were some of the issues that we raised with the House of Representatives committee. The training of staff is another major concern in Aboriginal communities. Another is provision of facilities for visiting teachers in homeland centres. I might say here that one of the concerns that I have at the moment in relation to the accommodation of teachers is that it is a very expensive business. You need to provide those sorts of facilities and security because, as the member for Victoria River mentioned, there have indeed been problems in relation to safety of teachers in recent times. It is necessary to make sure that those houses are screened, and it is a very costly business. I have spoken to the Commonwealth Minister for Education in relation to the provision of houses for teachers in some of the communities where the Commonwealth is providing funds for post-primary facilities, which we support wholeheartedly. My problem is that they are not providing the housing to go with it. Our concern there is that we will have a facility and we will still be worrying about where we are going to house the teachers. That is a major problem. You must have houses if you want teachers to go out to those particular communities.

I want to emphasise again that, in those communities where the government sees something positive happening, we will help. The communities must have a commitment. The families must have a commitment to their children's education, and they must make sure that their children attend school. If this happens, the government will make sure that it provides the facilities and gives every assistance. We talk about providing secondary facilities in the communities. We talked about Dhupuma College. When we have students who are at the stage when they can go to high school, we will address that problem. We will make sure that we are looking at providing facilities to cater for those concerns. But you cannot build a facility if you do not have the students to go into it. We have to grow.

My time is running out. I would like to read out a statement that was made by Susan Ryan in relation to this issue, because I think it is important. It relates to what I have been talking about:

'The Commonwealth policies in the field of Aboriginal education are developed in full cooperation with the states and the Northern Territory'.

She also welcomed cooperation from the opposition and the Australian Democrats when she was tabling a report in the Senate:

'The stakes are too high for any partisan squabbling or divisions. We all need to work together to make progress in the important areas the NAEC has outlined, since achievement of those aims will benefit and develop all Australians'.

Just before closing, I want to mention the fact that the Commonwealth Schools Commission and the NAEC report recommended that some \$25m be put into Aboriginal education. The Commonwealth government contributed \$1m. That is the sort of thing that we are concerned about. We need to have support. Senator Ryan has said on many occasions that she will give support, and she supports Aboriginal education. All I am saying is that we have a problem and it needs to be addressed. All governments need to make sure that they pull their weight and support the very real concerns that we have in the Territory.

I am very proud of the government's efforts in relation to Aboriginal education and I wish that the opposition would try on more occasions to support our efforts. I am disappointed that the Leader of the Opposition, who is the opposition spokesman on education, did not take part in this debate. I spoke earlier about his ego trip. Again today, he mentioned something about the university college being his idea. It was a completely different idea to what the government had put forward.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I commend the statement to members, and I thank them for their comments.

Motion agreed to.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION Member for MacDonnell

Mr BELL (MacDonnell)(by leave): Mr Deputy Speaker, I have reason to believe that I inadvertently misled the Legislative Assembly during the adjournment debate on Tuesday. My recollection is that I said that there is to be an 11-member board of management for the Uluru National Park, 6 of whose members are to be traditional Aboriginal owners, with the other 5 comprising a nominee from each of the Ministers for Tourism, for Aboriginal Affairs and for Home Affairs and the Environment. In the heat of debate, I made a slight error. The 6 traditional owners - Reg Uluru, Tony Tjamiwa, Barbara Nipper, Nellie Paterson, Yami Lester and John Liddle - are to be joined by 5 other people: the Chairman and Director of the Australia National Parks and Wildlife service, Prof Ovington, the nominee of the Minister for Home Affairs and the Environment, Mrs Penny Donald, the nominee of the Minister for Tourism, Ms June D'Rozario and 2 nominees from this Assembly. I apologise to the Assembly for having said that there was to be a nominee of the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs. That is not the case.

ADJOURNMENT

Mr HARRIS (Education): Mr Deputy Speaker, I move that the Assembly do now adjourn.

Mr BELL (MacDonnell): Mr Deputy Speaker, I wish to make some comments that have been on my mind for some considerable time. It is high time that I delivered this speech. I offer it in the hope that it will encourage other members to a wider view of the issue of race relations in the Northern Territory.

I have corresponded with some people who live in Arizona in the United States of America. On occasions, they provide me with cuttings from their newspapers in relation to Indian affairs in those particular states. The extent to which these cuttings reflect very strong parallels in the relationship between American Indians and the majority of US society and the relationship between Aboriginal people in Australia and the majority of Australian society is quite compelling. Many of the phrases used are very similar. For example, we are well acquainted with the problem of Aboriginal land rights. Frequently, we hear government members inveighing against a recognition of Aboriginal land rights. I will read from a newspaper in Arizona:

'Tried to block skiing in Lake Havasu Coves - Needles, California. Chemehuevi Indian tribe has claimed jurisdiction over the portion of Lake Havasu within its reservation boundaries and says it will support a proposal by California's Department of Fish and Game to ban water skiing in 5 controversial coves. The tribe's claim came Wednesday during a public hearing by San Bernardino County special district officials on a Department of Fish and Game proposal to place 600 manmade brush shelters in 7 Lake Havasu coves to create a new habitat for what experts contend is a seriously declining large-mouth bass population'.

So there is a ban over water skiing in 5 controversial coves. I am sure honourable members can think of local parallels in that regard.

'Hopis ask hand not hand-out in Congress. For the first time since 1890, a large delegation of Hopi tribal leaders has descended on Washington seeking a helping hand not a handout and hoping to demonstrate tribal unity'.

I offer that without comment.

'Tribes win fiscal windfall in Supreme Court ruling. A US Supreme Court decision today signalled the financial windfall for Navajo and other Indian tribes. The court voted unanimously that tribes have the right to tax mineral, oil and gas leases on tribal lands without the Secretary of Interior's approval'.

Good heavens, if that happened in the Northern Territory, I think we would have a revolution.

'The case involves Navajo lands in Arizona, New Mexico and Utah. It upholds a ninth US Circuit Court of Appeal's ruling against Kerr McGee Corporation which sought to avoid paying a tax on uranium, gas and oil leases the company has on tribal lands'.

Again, I am sure that will set honourable members cogitating. I have others to share with honourable members:

'52 000 acres set aside for Navajo's displaced from Hopi tribal land. Window Rock, United Press International. The US Bureau of Land Management has placed 52 000 acres in trust for the Navajo tribe as part of the Navajo-Hopi Indian Relocation Act. The action marked the first major land acquisition for the tribe under the legislation designed to provide land for Navajo's being forced to move from land given to the Hopi tribe'.

Mr Dale: Is that 50% of the state.

Mr BELL: Well, the member for Wanguri has asked what percentage of the state is that. It says here:

'Arizona third in Indian population. The American Indian population has climbed sharply to top the one million mark with more than half the total concentrated in 5 states, the Census Bureau reported Monday. The new study of American Indian areas and native villages reported that 1 366 676 Indians were counted in the 1980 census. It was the first time the Indian population topped one million since the census began including native Americans in 1890'.

Mr COULTER: A point of order, Mr Deputy Speaker! For clarification purposes, would it be possible for the member for MacDonnell to quote his sources and the dates of these articles that he is reading into Hansard.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: There is no point of order.

Mr BELL: Unfortunately, most of these are undated but the minister is most welcome to examine them himself. They come from papers in Arizona in the last year. Here we have one dated Friday, 8 February 1985. It appeared in the Phoenix Gazette: 'Youth's case leads to new policy for juvenile Navajo defendants'. In the context of today's debate about juvenile crime, it is perhaps of some comfort that it is not just the Northern Territory that has difficulties in that area:

'Window Rock, Arizona. The case of a 17-year-old Navajo who was held in a tiny cell in the Window Rock jail for 100 days had led to a court settlement that redefines the tribe's policy for handling juvenile offenders. The settlement means juveniles charged with crimes on the reservation now will be sent to a youth home in Blanding, Utah rather than being kept in the same jail as adult offenders. The agreement was filed last week in Navajo District Court here'.

'Tribes get Job Training Funds. Four American Indian tribes in Arizona have been awarded \$381 000 in federal job-training funds, the Department of Labor announced. Tribes receiving grants are the Papago tribe \$182 695 for training in adobe construction and for the Pisinimo demonstration farm'.

Mr Firmin: What are these all about?

Mr BELL: The honourable member for Ludmilla has asked what these are all about. Surely, there is none so blind as he who will not see. I trust that, when he reads and cogitates upon tomorrow's Hansard, he will perceive certain parallels.

Mr Dale: Tell us what you did on your holiday.

Mr Firmin: It's a show and tell through the papers of America. We haven't heard anything else yet.

Mr BELL: Here is another one:

'Power rate hike feared in Navajo tax case. Kerr McGee assets ruling in favour of tribe could hurt consumers. An attorney for Kerr McGee Corporation, challenging 2 Navajo reservation tax laws, says an unfavourable ruling by the US Supreme Court could lead to high utility prices for Salt River Project and Arizona Public Service Company consumers'.

I am sure that, if similar circumstances occurred in the Territory, there would be similar...

Mr Finch: Put the price of utilities up and you would be in trouble, wouldn't you?

Mr BELL: ...problems. Yes, I can imagine what the reaction of the Minister for Mines and Energy would be in that case. By the way, that comment comes again from the Arizona Republic of Sunday, 17 March 1985.

Mr Dale: Have you got any public notices there?

Mr BELL: One of the most compelling aspects of these particular newspaper cuttings is the extent to which they reflect very strong parallels in the relationship between American... I really do resent the interruptions from government members.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! Members will cease interrupting!

Mr BELL: I have an important point to make here because we are one corner of Australia. The issue of the relationship between Aboriginal people and the majority of society in Australia is a crucial one. To be informed that there are parallel problems in a country like the United States of America, I would have thought would be as illuminating to government members as it was to me. I suggest that it provides considerable food for thought. If these particular offerings have not been lucid enough, I am more than happy to discuss the relationship in the United States and its parallels in Australia with government members, in case they imagine that my introduction of material like this in an adjournment debate is in any wise frivolous.

Mr VALE (Braitling): Mr Speaker, there are several matters I would like to raise in tonight's adjournment debate.

The first is a rather pleasant one. I would like to welcome a new member of the Northern Territory Legislative Assembly staff, the new Deputy Clerk, Mr Ian McNeill, who has travelled from southern climes to the Territory. I hope that his stay in the Northern Territory will be a long and enjoyable one. I am tempted, having studied him fairly closely and having had a little chat to him several weeks ago, to organise a football match between members and staff and the press. I was reluctant to do it in recent years because the former Clerk, Mr Chin, would have been a little bit small to have on a halfback flank in the first ruck changing in the forward pocket. But jokes aside, I hope that Ian's stay will be a long and enjoyable one. I am certain that he will be a valuable acquisition, given his experience and former contacts in the federal parliament, particularly in the Upper House.

One of my favourite topics in recent years has been the progress of what I believe is a project of major importance to the Northern Territory: the Stuart Highway construction between the Northern Territory border and Port Augusta, a project that was commenced under David Tonkin's government in South Australia

in 1979. Its total length was then 807 km. I have reported from time to time in this Assembly on this project. To date, of the 807 km, 592 km have been sealed. That is 73.4%, leaving 215 km or 26.6% to be sealed. The estimated completion date of that has always been December 1986 so that it fits in with the South Australian sesquicentennial celebrations.

The disappointing news is that the contract is now apparently well behind. My information is that the federal Minister for Transport, the Hon Peter Morris, awarded a contract to a company called Hawkins. The company is from Newcastle, his home town. The decision was against the wishes and advice of the Highways Department in South Australia which believed that, whilst Hawkins may have had a good record in Newcastle, it was one thing to be able to build highways in the big cities and another to be able to move men and machinery to the outback and build. My advice is that the contract is now almost 3 months behind schedule and, instead of the project being completed by December 1986, it will now be completed in March 1987. That means that the thousands of Territorians who have waited patiently for this road to be completed will now have to forgo another Christmas before they will be able to drive on a sealed road between Darwin and Adelaide. I am further advised that the contractors have been slow in paying some of their subcontractors and, as a result, I sent the following telex on 19 March to the Premier of South Australia, John Bannon. To date I have not received a reply and that is not meant as a criticism. The telex read:

'There is a great deal of concern in central Australia re the South Australian section of the Stuart Highway between Marla and the Northern Territory-South Australian border. This section of the highway, as you will be aware, is presently undergoing construction and sealing with an estimated completion date of December 1986 as part of your 150 years birthday celebrations. Reliable sources in Alice Springs report that the contractors are way behind schedule and will have no chance of finishing this work by December 1986, and that the completion date will be many months into 1987. If this is in fact true, it will be a great disappointment to the many thousands of Territorians who have waited for many, many years to see this road completely sealed and it would now appear that at least one more summer will pass before this hope becomes a reality.

The second point I wish to raise with you is that concerning payment by the contractor on this section of the highway to his subcontractors in Alice Springs, and these are Territorian contractors. I have received a number of complaints in my office that the contractor's payments have been extremely tardy.

I would appreciate your advice on the 2 issues raised in this telex concerning completion date and subcontractors' payments, and will await your reply'.

As I said before, to date, there has been no reply from the Premier of South Australia, Hon John Bannon, but I propose to keep pressure on both his government and the federal government to provide some information on this in the not-too-distant future.

Yesterday's Centralian Advocate had some good news for central Australia: 3 large contracts, 2 of which are of interest to all Territorians, particularly the members of the Assembly from central Australia. I suppose one could be called 'a bridge under troubled waters': the construction of a

Tunks Road causeway over to the golf club. Tenders have been called and the closing date is 9 April. The second one relates to the extension to the Braitling Primary School. Again, tenders close on 9 April.

Mr Bell: One of those unsightly demountable schools.

Mr VALE: No, they are not demountables. I am very happy tonight also with the Minister for Transport and Works. Mr Speaker, you will appreciate this because the first stage of this work started when you were Minister for Transport and Works. I refer to the duplication of the Stuart Highway northwards into the foothills. We did not get much - from Smith Street to Woods Terrace. I had hoped it would go a little further.

I flag one concern to the honourable Minister for Transport and Works, and I hope he reads some of these speeches. It pertains to the T-intersection rule. I think that should be re-examined because some awful bottlenecks occur on some roads. It is all right if you start out on the northernmost edge of town and join the Stuart Highway because traffic does not come in from the left-hand side. But by the time you drive several streets down, there is quite a flow of traffic going to and fro. Sometimes a motorist can sit at a T-junction for up to 5 minutes. Traffic enters from the east side as well so it is necessary to wait there.

The last point I would like to raise concerns aviation fuel. Given the dramatic reduction in the price of aviation fuel, and indeed all petroleum products in recent days, and the high cost of long-haul air travel, I believe it is appropriate now for the federal Minister for Transport, the Hon Peter Morris, to insist that the airline companies, particularly for long-haul passengers, reduce dramatically the cost of their air fares for flights from Adelaide to Darwin, Darwin to Alice Springs, Darwin to Perth and so on. These passengers have suffered badly over a long period of time because the companies have always argued that the major factor in their air fare structure was fuel cost. Now they have received a 5.7% reduction in their acquisition cost of jet A1. I am of the opinion that, in fact, the acquisition cost has been reduced by much more than 5.7%. I call on the federal Minister for Transport and Works to examine that proposition urgently.

Mr SMITH (Millner): Mr Speaker, I rise tonight to pay tribute to one of the great native-born sons of Darwin, Delphin Cubillo. The story of the Cubillo family starts in 1874 when George McKeddy, a Scotsman, arrived in Darwin. He stayed for 53 years. His early companion was Annie, a traditional Larrakeyah girl. They had 2 children: Jack and Lilly. In turn, Lilly married a Filipino pearl diver, Antonia Cubillo, and Delphin was the eighth of that couple's 10 children.

In his long working career, he had a variety of jobs. He left school at 15, and worked as a messenger boy for the PMG for 2 years. During that time, he was the messenger boy who delivered the morse code message for transmission to the rest of Australia stating that the aviatrix, Amy Johnson, had reached Australian soil. He then worked as an assistant rigger on the wharf and, in 1936, was apprenticed to a Darwin dentist becoming, in the 1950s, the first gazetted senior dental technician in the Northern Territory. The last 7 years of his working life were spent as a security guard at the Darwin Airport.

The member for Port Darwin probably knows more about Mr Cubillo than I do. I understand that he was born and spent his early years in a house on a site

of the Workers' Club building. Later he and his family lived in Stuart Park for some time before finally purchasing a house in the bush at Nightcliff.

Delphin Cubillo was a remarkably talented man. He and his brother were part of a Filipino string band which played at many functions in Darwin, and played at Government House on a regular basis. He made pearl rings and bracelets and decorated catfish skulls. More intriguingly, he made artificial eyes and handpainted them to match the colour of the other eye. He was a very versatile man indeed. He was a great footballer for the Wanderers Club. He was a very small man, as those who knew him know, and when first selected for an A-grade team at the age of 16, in the words of my informant, he looked more like a 10-year-old than a 16-year-old. Despite his lack of size, he was an outstanding footballer. I understand that one of the great tragedies in his life was that some of his grandchildren deserted the Wanderers' camp and played for that arch rival, St Mary's.

Delphin married Theresa Clark in March 1936 and, in fact, at the time of his death, they were planning their 50th anniversary celebration. It is most unfortunate that he did not live to see that. As I said, Mrs Cubillo was a clerk and is herself a remarkable woman with a remarkable story to tell about her part in Darwin's history. They had 3 children: Murray, Inez and John. They had 12 grandchildren and 5 great-grandchildren. Delphin Cubillo was a remarkable man who had a unique view of the history of Darwin and the Northern Territory over the last 70-odd years.

Mr Speaker, I return to a point I have mentioned once or twice before and that is that we are reaching a stage in our history when we are losing many of those people who were born and bred in the Northern Territory and have had a unique view of the Territory's development. In my view, it is imperative that the life experience of these people be kept in one way or another. I have been critical before of the Oral History Unit in the Department of the Chief Minister for failing to do this adequately. Again, I make the call for the Oral History Unit to communicate with a wider range of people who have made a contribution to the Northern Territory. In my view, at this stage, they take a pretty ethnocentric approach as to who has made an important contribution to the Northern Territory and, by doing so, we lose out on a great deal of history and important insights into how the Territory developed for ourselves and future generations.

Mr Speaker, secondly, I want to pay tribute to a much-maligned group of people: teachers. This year, under great difficulties, teachers have been making the junior-senior high school system work. We all know of the quite genuine reservations that teachers at all levels expressed last year about the speed at which the government proposed - and finally decided - to introduce the new junior-senior high school system. Most of them had severe reservations but have worked extremely hard to make the thing work. The reason why it has been working so successfully is, without a doubt, the efforts - in some cases, the superhuman efforts - that teachers have made. It is a tribute to them that, this year, there has hardly been any fuss at all about the new system. There have been some minor problems but those have been ironed out.

But I want to say that there are some basic problems that teachers know about that are making it difficult for them at present. For example, there is a lack of resources in some schools. It astonished me to find out that the library at Sanderson High School has only about 1000 books and it has no early potential to increase that number substantially. 1000 books for a school of

about 500 students is completely and grossly inadequate. Something needs to be done about it.

Casuarina, which, of course, has taken the brunt of the introduction of the new system, is desperately short of space. I am advised that it needs at least 2 new science laboratories, at least 2 new art rooms and a couple of extra classrooms. I know that the minister will reply that they are on the program and the school will get them. I do not deny that but, at present, the fact that they are not there is causing that school enormous problems. It is diminishing the effectiveness of instruction that is taking place there.

The other matter is that teachers in the senior high schools are discovering that the workload has increased quite dramatically. I think that no one foresaw the difficulty that there is in taking 5 separate subjects of Year 11 and 12 classes, and having 25 students in each of those classes. It is proving to be a very difficult load for teachers to carry. I hope that the staffing exercise presently being conducted to determine the most appropriate staff levels for teachers in the senior colleges will take this into account. There are certainly teachers who are operating under the same conditions now as will exist in 1988 when the senior colleges are due to open. Those teachers need some relief because they are finding it very difficult indeed. A regular comment I am getting from teachers in the senior high schools is that they have never worked so hard in their lives.

I want to make the general point that teaching has become a much more onerous job since I was a teacher in 1973-74. I was a 4-year trained teacher, but the point remains that it has become a much more difficult job. The expectations of students and parents have increased dramatically. It is certainly not a job that I would like to do anywhere at present because of the difficulty and the demands that are placed on teachers.

I conclude by again congratulating teachers on taking up the challenge that was given to them by the government, no matter how misguided that challenge was. I congratulate teachers on making the system that was imposed on them work smoothly, despite some quite overwhelming difficulties.

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH (Koolpinyah): Mr Deputy Speaker, in tonight's adjournment debate, I will speak on one matter only. It is one which has interested me for some time. But I understand other people have thought about it in other places. I have not contacted any other people to get their ideas but I think their ideas would be much the same as mine. I intend to write to the Minister for Conservation to put the idea forward for consideration by silviculturalists in the Conservation Commission.

I refer to consideration being given to the establishment of a register of trees in the Northern Territory. I do not mean a register of trees to be entered on the National Heritage List. I do not mean a register of trees to become a list of sacred trees. All I would like to see is a caring attitude adopted by people toward certain odd, old or interesting trees in our community.

I have a sensible approach to this. I would not like a register of trees, if one is ever adopted, to mean that trees were never dug up or cut down or that they could be allowed to become a complete obstruction to any development. I do believe, however, that thought must be given to the increasing level of unnecessary tree destruction, both intentional and unintentional. I say again that I believe in a sensible approach to

preserving trees - we have cleared some from part of our property this year. I must say we did not go into this lightly. It was a very high stand of nice woolly butts and stringybarks, but it was necessary to clear them in order to increase the agricultural production on our property.

A lot of people are interested in planting trees. We had the Year of the Tree a couple of years ago. That was very commendable. People are planting more trees. I believe that, by planting trees, we change the balance of oxygen and CO₂ in the air to our betterment. I do believe that planting trees is connected with increasing rainfall or a change from drought areas to areas with some rain. That is not the point I am getting to tonight.

There are lots of odd, old or interesting trees around. I speak of trees in established communities more than trees in the bush because these are the trees that we see most of the time. I can remember, and so no doubt can other members, a beautiful fig tree that grew where the new Sheraton has been built. It was called Rocky's Place then. Overnight, this tree vanished. There was also a fig tree somewhere in the Nightcliff area. A couple of years ago, a contractor tried to spirit it away one night. He wanted to put up a piddling little block of flats or some other darn thing in its place.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! That last part of the member's speech would be regarded by most people, myself included, as being unparliamentary.

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH: Mr Deputy Speaker, I will withdraw whatever is considered unparliamentary.

No doubt the gentleman concerned had freehold title to the block of land but I do believe that, with a little thought and imagination, he could still have built whatever he wanted to build and still kept the tree there.

There was also a very nice fig tree in the lane beside the ABC in Darwin. It was a big, old tree. I do not go there very often but, when I went there one day to visit the ABC office, I noticed it had gone.

Whilst talking about the trees that have gone, it is worth mentioning all the time, trouble, expense and effort that went into keeping the tree at the Workers' Club when the new building was built a couple of years ago. Did it live or die? It died. Well, I am sorry about that. But an effort was made to save it, just as an effort was made to save an old fig tree by the Civic Centre. That has become a beautiful tree since it has been regenerated, and I think it is appreciated by everybody who goes there.

Unfortunately, in any tree destruction of the magnitude that we have seen around Darwin, people who care for trees do not find out until it is too late. In putting forward this idea for the establishment of a tree register, I believe some discretion should be permitted. I do not believe that it should lie heavily on the shoulders of people because sometimes it is necessary to get rid of trees for some reason or other. I know trees die. I know trees struck by lightning and die, and I know that the white ants get to them. I know they get chopped down. Trees suffer accidents and they do have to be done away with.

I do not speak as a one-eyed greenie but as a concerned and realistic conservationist. I have been such a person for about 20 years. In mentioning some interesting trees around Darwin, I realise my knowledge is not as extensive as that of some other people in this Assembly. There used to be a

very interesting tree in the grounds of this Assembly before Cyclone Tracy. It was an arid zone pepper tree and it is the only such tree that I have ever seen here in the tropics. It was quite an unusual tree for this climate. It was the type of tree that you usually grow in a very low rainfall area, something in the order of about 10 inches a year. There used to be lots of pepper trees in the country town in Western Australia where I grew up. There is also a very old tamarind tree in Mitchell Street, which I think has some historical value. I was talking to an old lady the year before last. The old lady appeared to be in her 70s, and she remembers standing under this tree. She told me about some incidents in her life with her mother, when she was a lot younger.

We are thinking more and more these days of conserving our history by looking after historical buildings and collecting historical artifacts. I am concerned with that latter aspect myself. But in lots of cases, especially in the Northern Territory, the trees are older than the buildings which we try to save.

That brings me to my final point in expressing my appreciation of trees. I express my disgust. I hope the culprits can be found who caused that wanton, senseless destruction of the palm trees in certain Darwin streets. One remedy might be to place the palms in decorative tubs which do not encourage people to destroy them. No doubt this is being looked at by officers in the council.

In conclusion, I would hope that other people in the community are also interested in the idea of some form of register. Again, I would like to stress that, if instigated, it be used in the interests of the community in an ordinary everyday way and not in a very highbrow way which would remove it from the realm of ordinary people.

Mr EDE (Stuart): Mr Deputy Speaker, I would like to begin with a few words about the oral history matter that was raised by my colleague, the member for Millner. I would like also to say a few words on a rather remarkable speech by the Minister for Housing. Finally, I will make a couple of points on education.

I agree with the member for Millner on the need for more work to be done out bush by the Oral History Unit. To give an example of this, there is a very old gentleman - in his 80s I believe - in my electorate by the name of Alec Wilson. On his own account, he believes that he found the Granites goldfield. He was the person referred to as the half-cast dingo catcher in the description of the Conniston massacres. He was the person who first met Dr Wickham when he came out of the bush with the fantastic story of Wickham's find, the great gold discovery. Wickham then disappeared into Western Australia and was never seen again. He participated in the search for the Kookaburra and he believes he found the marked tree which was the only reference point to Wickham's find. That was some 40 years ago. He still maintains that he could find his way back to it. There are probably a lot of exploration companies which would like to have his story for the future if not for now.

This old gentleman has been quite willing to tell his story to people over many years. It is quite a fascinating story. I cannot remember the whole thing. I would hope that somebody would collect the stories of old people like him to get a balanced history so that the full richness of the history of the Northern Territory may be appreciated.

During the last sittings, on 19 November, I asked a question in committee of the Minister for Housing. I was trying to establish the connection between the funds provided to the Northern Territory under the Commonwealth welfare housing project for Aboriginal housing and the actual delivery of that service. I had criticism levelled at me such as: 'The member for Stuart does not leave any stone unturned. He makes snide, almost racist remarks'. He said later: 'I do not know how many people who refer to themselves as Aboriginals are residing in the houses because we do not keep records. We do not ask people if they are Aboriginal or not'.

I do not know whether I should incorporate this in Hansard. I have here a tenancy application to the Northern Territory Housing Commission. It is given to every applicant who applies for housing in Alice Springs. There is an attachment to it which I am prepared to table if anyone doubts my word. The attachment says:

'Please indicate the applicant's and or spouse's ethnic origin. If mixed origin, indicate the one to which the person considers himself/herself to belong; eg Greek, Italian, Vietnamese, Aboriginal, European, other'.

I have no real problem with that. I simply raise it tonight because the minister said he could not provide me with details on where housing had been allocated. That is palpably untrue because the tenancy applications request that information. The Northern Territory government has the information on its tenancy applications. If those people say that they are Aboriginal, he has a record of that. He could have provided me with the information that I requested: the number of Aboriginal people who get welfare housing through the Commonwealth States Grants Proposal. As I stated, I do not believe that it is an aberration. I believe that it is the way the system provides the application forms. Since it collects information about ethnic origins, the minister could have provided me with the answer.

I want to move on to education in the Utopia area. For the first time in many years, we have the possibility that we will actually have education in the outstation communities. Those people who know Utopia know that it is very different from the old communities. Utopia is a place which never had a central community. People have lived in their separate areas from long before my time. The point is that, having for a long time provided education only at the actual homestead, the minister has, after a degree of pushing, but to his credit, provided another school at a place called Ampalatwatja. It may be known to older people as a community on Ammaroo. We have 2 schools there now. Schools will start up at Uncoola, Aniltjiy, Soakage, Mgwalaanima and Irultja. Those particular schools will have the potential to cover satisfactorily most of the education needs of the people in that area.

However, there are some problems. From my discussions with the community and the teachers in the area, I do not think they have been addressed. Are we talking about a one-day-a-week education program for those communities or are we talking about something a bit more substantial? As I understand it, Aniltjiy, Uncoola and Soakage will be outstation schools from Utopia, whereas Mgwalaanima and Irultja will bear the same relationship with Ampalatwatja. That is fine, but has provision been made for 5 extra teachers to look after those schools? Has provision been made for their accommodation back at the base schools? Will the teachers travel daily from the base school, or will there be provision for them to stay overnight and do 2 nights before returning to the base, and then go somewhere else and spend one night? Or perhaps they

will go out Monday, come back Tuesday, out Thursday and come back Friday. There are all sorts of requirements to be worked out to determine whether that will be an adequate form of education or whether it will just be a charade.

There is also a need to take on board 2 other issues. If we are to adopt this model of outstation development whereby the teachers move constantly to and from the base to the outstations, we need to develop the base schools. We have to ensure that the base school has the resource area available to be able to stock the schools and to be able to provide training for the assistant teachers, who are people taken straight out of the community. They also need to have a local area radio program so the people can use the ordinary outstation radio to those schools and talk to the students and the teacher both before and during school. That would assist the assistant teachers to conduct the classes when that teacher is at base. These are matters which I think can be sorted out but, from the discussions I have had, both with the community and with the teachers, I am not sure they have been addressed.

The next problem lies with the transportation of children to these schools. I will just give one example. On the route from Soakage to Utopia, you would have to go past Soapy Bore and you would have to pick up Kurrajong on the way out to the school. That would make it a bit unreasonable for the teacher because he would have to go past the school on the way back. It may be better to put the school at Soapy Bore. The teacher could pick up the Kurrajong and the Soakage children on his way out and take them to Soapy Bore. You would then have a class size of some 20-30 children. That is all very well if the teacher is going and coming back every day. However, if he is going out on Monday, coming back Wednesday, going out Thursday and coming back Friday, we have the problem of those children being out there away from their own group and having to find a place to stay. If that is what we have to do, I think that is what the community should be told. It should not be left up in the air on this.

I am not criticising the minister. In this instance, I think he has shown a very excellent and commendable determination to get schooling into this area because it is one of the largest areas, with close to 200 children. They have never had education nor access to education. I commend him for the fact that he is talking about taking education to those children. But I would ask him to talk a little more to the community, talk a little more to the Urapuntja council, discuss with it the issues that I have raised and work out what he honestly can do and what he cannot do. He should tell the people now so that they do not build up unreasonable expectations of what will happen only to find that those hopes are shattered. Shattered hopes destroy the confidence of people in the system that we have developed. It is very important that consultation takes place during the build-up to these programs so that people actually understand what they are going to get.

Motion agreed to; the Assembly adjourned.

Mr Speaker Steele took the Chair at 10 am.

MATTERS OF PRIVILEGE

Mr SPEAKER: Honourable members, on Thursday 20 March, 2 matters of privilege were raised in the Assembly following the tabling of a memorandum by the Leader of the Opposition, when he raised a separate matter of privilege on Wednesday 19 March.

The first matter was raised by the Leader of Government Business during question time. He requested that I refer the following matters to the Privileges Committee for examination and report:

'(1) whether or not the documents tabled yesterday by the Leader of the Opposition in question time were the property of the Federal Court of Australia or a judge thereof; and, if so, (2) did those documents have attached to them confidentiality in the right of the federal government of Australia, or a judge thereof, or confidentiality in the right of other parties, as the result of their being the property of the Federal Court of Australia, or a judge thereof; and, (3) if the answer to either point in (2) is yes, did the public disclosure of the content of these documents by the Leader of the Opposition in question time yesterday constitute a breach of privilege in the Legislative Assembly by the Leader of the Opposition'.

I have given the matter careful consideration. I do not propose to refer it to the Privileges Committee.

Mr ROBERTSON (Leader of Government Business): Mr Speaker, of course, I accept your decision without reservation. If I may, Mr Speaker, refer to a...

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The honourable Leader of Government Business will seek leave.

Mr ROBERTSON: I seek leave to make a brief statement in relation to the same matter.

Leave granted.

Mr ROBERTSON (Leader of Government Business): Mr Speaker, this morning on Territory Extra there was a reference to this matter, and I thought that any person listening to that reference would have thought that the action proposed to be brought in relation to this matter in the Federal Court would have been directed at the Leader of the Opposition. I take this opportunity to say that, if that is the case and if I were to remain here, I would defend to the utmost the right of a member of this Assembly to comment in the manner in which the Leader of the Opposition did. If there was a contempt at all, it would be a contempt by the party that provided that document. I hope very sincerely that the implication is not at large that that action would be brought against the Leader of the Opposition.

Mr SPEAKER: The second matter was raised later on Thursday 20 March by the Leader of the Opposition upon his receiving a letter from Mr P.J. Teitzel of Mildren, Silvester and Partners, Barristers and Solicitors of Darwin. In his view, the penultimate paragraph of the letter constituted a breach of privilege in that the matters raised there are intimidatory and threatening to the Leader of the Opposition in the exercise of his parliamentary duties.

Since the matter was raised, I received a letter from Mr A.G. James of Mildren, Silvester and Partners written on behalf of Mr Teitzel who is at present in Sydney. Copies of the letter have been circulated to honourable members. In the letter, Mr James, on behalf of and at the request of Mr Teitzel, extends his apologies for the incident and his regrets for any affront to the Assembly which may be perceived as arising out of the letter. Under the circumstances, I do not intend to refer the matter to the Privileges Committee.

Honourable members, in examining both matters of privilege which have been raised, it has come to my attention that the Criminal Code has a maximum penalty of 7 years jail for the intimidation or the threatening of a member whereas the Legislative Assembly (Powers and Privileges) Act has a maximum penalty of \$2000 or 6 months imprisonment. I suggest that honourable members might give consideration over the Easter break as to whether the question of the appropriateness of the penalties in the Legislative Assembly (Powers and Privileges) Act should be referred to the Privileges Committee for consideration and report.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

Mr B. COLLINS (Opposition Leader)(by leave): Mr Speaker, I accept your ruling on this matter. I simply point out that there is an inaccuracy in the letter that has been tabled from Mildren Silvester and Partners. The letter claims that I said that I personally had been threatened with the possibility of contempt of court. Mr Speaker, I point out that the wording of the original letter from Mildren Silvester and Partners to myself was quite clear and that, if any contempt were involved, certainly it did not involve me. Mr Speaker, at no time did I say that it did.

NOTICE OF MOTION

Mr B. COLLINS (Opposition Leader): Mr Speaker, I seek the leave of the Assembly to move a motion without notice forthwith. I move that this Assembly censure the...

Mr ROBERTSON: Mr Speaker!

Mr SPEAKER: Order!

Mr ROBERTSON (Leader of Government Business): Mr Speaker, we would wish to deny leave. Perhaps the Leader of the Opposition could give notice so that we can consider the motion under standing order 95.

Mr B. COLLINS (Opposition Leader): Mr Speaker, I give notice that I will move that this Assembly censure the Chief Minister and Treasurer because: (1) the Chief Minister did knowingly receive amounts of public money by way of tax-free travelling allowances to which he was not entitled; (2) in answer to persistent questions last week, he misled this Assembly by claiming he had stopped drawing travelling allowance payments for living with his family in Darwin in February 1982; and (3) the Chief Minister, by his answers in question time this morning, has clearly indicated he will not honour the obligation that he gave to this Assembly on 20 March 1986 by making all of this information available so that, to quote the Chief Minister, 'he does not leave this matter half resolved' and, in so doing, has brought himself, his government and this parliament into grave public disrepute and that the Chief Minister has no option but to provide this information immediately or tender his resignation to this Assembly.

Mr Robertson: Have you got that in writing?

Mr B. COLLINS: No.

Mr ROBERTSON (Leader of Government Business): Mr Speaker, I would very much appreciate this in writing so that I can consider the matter under standing order 95. I would also like to couple my consideration of that matter with a consideration of standing order 134 in relation to repeat debates.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT Proposed Changes to Land Rights Act

Mr PERRON (Attorney-General)(by leave): Mr Deputy Speaker, in February this year, Senator Gareth Evans, the Commonwealth Minister for Resources and Energy said: 'The Hawke government's primary objective is to utilise Australia's abundant mineral and energy resources in the way that maximises their contribution to the Australian economy'. The minister was addressing the New York Mining Club, the Asia Society and the American Australian Association, an important international forum comprising top level executives in the investment, banking, resources and energy fields. Exactly one month later, the same Senator Evans announced details of the federal government's proposals to amend the mining provisions in the Land Rights Act. I do not have a copy of the honourable minister's press statement but, no doubt, honourable members have seen it. One could be forgiven for thinking that the statement made to the New York forum and the press release were made by different people from different governments because the amendments to the Land Rights Act, so far as they relate to mining, hardly support the statement the minister made overseas.

There has never been a time when the mining industry, the flagship of the Northern Territory economy, has been under such threat. The threat comes not from external market factors but directly from a government which, for overseas consumption, boasts that its primary objective is to develop its mineral resources to benefit the nation's economy, but which, by its domestic action, constrains the very industry which creates so much of the nation's wealth in the Territory. No more so than in the Territory is the mining sector facing the full force of the Hawke government's discriminatory policies. We have witnessed these forces at work on our airports, our railway, our national parks, our finances, our uranium and in other fields. The latest announcements for exploration and mining in the Territory are almost the last straw - or should I tempt fate.

The Territory has been singled out once again for discrimination on land rights as the Commonwealth proposals to amend the Land Rights Act fail to allow industry reasonable access to Aboriginal land. They are in direct contrast to the promises and assurances given by the Prime Minister and his Minister for Aboriginal Affairs when they put forward their preferred model for national land rights only a year ago and reiterated time and time again. But then, Territorians are coming to know the record of the Commonwealth government for broken promises headed by a Prime Minister who invented the phrase, 'lies, lies, lies'.

Let me first outline the regime proposed for exploration and mining on Aboriginal land in Western Australia: there will be no veto; miners will be able to negotiate face-to-face with Aboriginal landholders; there will be industry representation on the panel or tribunal which will determine

disputes; and terms and conditions for compensation and royalty will be prescribed. In relation to the Northern Territory, the Aboriginal veto on mining is to remain in the act. What is more, if the veto is exercised, the area in question is to be frozen for 5 years. Areas of the Territory have already been frozen for 14 years. No similar provisions will exist in the proposals for our fellow Australians, certainly not for Western Australia. It is apparent that, in the Northern Territory, the ability of Aboriginals to control mining on Aboriginal land is paramount to their spiritual and cultural survival. In Western Australia, however, across a white man's boundary, the spiritual and cultural survival of the Aboriginals apparently is not so fragile. As was the case with Ayers Rock, the Territory is once again to be the sacrifice for the nation's conscience.

The Minister for Resources and Energy suggests that the veto will not be used for bargaining purposes and that the loss of financial and other benefits to the traditional owners will mitigate against the use of the veto. This is naivety in the extreme. The possible loss of financial and other benefits from mining has not deterred the withholding of consent to date, nor has it encouraged the timely development of mines which would deliver those benefits. It is a fact that, out of 26 offers of exploration licences over Aboriginal land in central Australia and 153 offers in the Top End, there has not been one agreement successfully concluded. The disturbing fact overlooked by the federal minister is that, whenever the veto is exercised, it is all Australians who lose the benefits. The loss is by no means restricted to traditional owners. Equally disturbing is the absence of any provision to enable the applicant for an exploration licence to put his case on a face-to-face basis with traditional owners.

The lack of action on any of the offers to date throws into question the role played by the advisers to the land councils, a role which should be investigated through an inquiry into the role of bureaux of the land councils. The constant complaint that I hear from companies is not only are the traditional owners in some cases anxious for mining to proceed but they believe the terms of the mining company's offer are not being truthfully presented to the traditional owners. Pathetic excuses that the land councils have been unable to negotiate exploration agreements due to the backlog from the freeze just do not stand up. Not one agreement has been put before me to date. What an indictment of the system!

Let me contrast that situation with mining off Aboriginal land. Gold exploration has steadily increased from \$764 000 in 1981 to \$9.43m in 1984-85. Diamond exploration has increased significantly over the past 5 years from \$3.4m in 1980-81 to \$8.4m in 1984-85. Recently, the combined land councils presented some material in support of the retention of the power of veto. It was full of halftruths and misrepresentations. Mr Deputy Speaker, I seek leave to table a copy of that document for the information of honourable members.

Leave granted.

Mr PERRON: The government made an assessment of that material against the facts. I seek leave to table the document for the information of honourable members.

Leave granted.

Mr PERRON: Mr Deputy Speaker, the Commonwealth's proposals and the inaction of land councils allow for completely open-ended negotiations at the mine development stage. I can imagine no greater disincentive to exploration or development than asking companies to commit hard-won dollars to the uncertain enterprise of exploration, burdened by the knowledge that, if they are successful, there will be further uncertain royalties and terms and conditions yet to be negotiated. I fear this will be the kiss of death for any start to exploration on Aboriginal land in the Northern Territory. Companies will be placed in a disadvantaged and unacceptable negotiating position that will lead to significantly higher costs. Land councils will know the value of a project but will not have shared the risk of discovering it. Land councils will know that there are no limits to what can be negotiated or what the federal government will tolerate. Land councils will know that there are no guidelines for any arbitration and that the company is easy game as it tries to protect the expenditure and effort it has already committed in the exploration phase. It would be a brave enterprise that chose the Territory for investment in preference to other areas of Australia under those conditions.

This is the regime being imposed upon the Territory alone by a national government which struts the world stage, preaching that its primary objective is to develop our abundant resources. Access to land for exploration is the life blood of the mining industry. The federal government is preventing access to nearly 50% of the Territory through its discriminatory land rights legislation.

It is also preventing access to the Kakadu region which is acknowledged as one of the most prospective mineral regions in the world. Active exploration was banned in the region 14 years ago while consideration was given to the area's future as Aboriginal land and as a national park. Before that ban took effect, major mineral deposits were discovered at Nabarlek, Ranger, Koongarra and Jabiluka. These deposits contain uranium equal in energy terms to the oil resources of Kuwait and Saudi Arabia combined. At least 75% of the area has never been properly tested for mineralisation. The Commonwealth's own advisers on mineral matters, the Bureau of Mineral Resources and the Department of Resources and Energy, have estimated that, even with only moderate exploration effort, the region would yield about 18 more deposits the size of Ranger. In addition, there is every possibility that there would be several gold and platinum deposits of major international significance.

Close to Christmas, the Hawke government quietly amalgamated stages 1 and 2 of Kakadu National Park. It should be noted that this action was done in such a clandestine manner that not even the Senate Standing Committee on National Resources was aware of it. That committee was in the process of examining the resources potential of the region when the gazettal occurred. That process of examination has not yet been completed. The committee is expected to visit the area and take submissions in May of this year. My government has already made submissions and will continue to stress the economic importance of the region to the Australian economy, an economy that shows signs of serious trouble. The economic value of the region through mineral developments is staggering. The area is probably the world's greatest uranium province, and the potential of only 1 of the known gold deposits could prove to have an in-ground value of up to \$500m, with an additional \$120m platinum value.

The contribution to the economy by Ranger alone is quite large. In 1984-85, the company paid about \$8m in wages, over \$16m in taxes and royalties

to the Territory and \$58m in Commonwealth taxes. That is a direct contribution of nearly \$110m to the Territory and Australian economies. With 18 more such mines, the federal Treasurer would have no trouble in balancing his future budgets.

The Northern Territory has proved that mining in Kakadu can be carried out under adequate safeguards. The mining operation at Ranger is one of the most regulated in the world. It is, of course, the Australian taxpayer who must bear the cost of the bureaucratic monster imposed by Canberra regimes. The Commonwealth has set in place a hierarchy of Commonwealth overseers and overseeing overseers who are responsible for surveillance and monitoring in the region. It set up the Office of the Supervising Scientist, the OSS, at a cost of \$4.7m in 1984-85. Another taxpayer-funded advisory body, the Alligator Rivers Research Institute, has the responsibility for researching the effects of uranium mining in the region.

Mr Deputy Speaker, both the Supervising Scientist and the institute have recommended that a trial release of water from the Ranger mine is sound technically and environmentally. Minister Cohen has ignored this advice and has decreed that no water be released. If this sound scientific advice is to be ignored, why do we need to employ experts and scientists?

The Coordinating Committee for the Alligator Rivers Region is another advisory body established by the Commonwealth. This committee, which holds meetings with up to 40 people present at an annual cost of some \$500 000, is to make recommendations to the Supervising Scientist. Minister Cohen has seen fit to appoint a representative of the Northern Territory Environment Centre to that committee. The organisation has a firm objective to close the mines. The appointment is a farce and a direct threat to the last vestige of usefulness of that committee. Moreover, the appointment is a complete about-face by the minister, who advised me in November last year that he had rejected that very same appointment. Despite the misinformation and outright lies from groups and organisations such as the NT Environment Centre and the Australian Conservation Foundation, the Alligator Rivers Research Institute has demonstrated that there is little detriment to the ecology of Kakadu from uranium mining. All in all, one wonders at the value of Commonwealth interference in the Territory's uranium industry. We would all be much better off if it pulled out altogether.

The Hawke government has seen fit to leave the Territory's uranium in the ground but, as a cynical election gimmick, it permitted South Australian uranium mines to go ahead. Some 13 000 t of uranium oxide is waiting to be mined at Koongarra alone. The uranium price is rising and the operators have a market for their product. The Aboriginals want the mine to proceed yet, after 18 months, the agreement offered by the company, which is acceptable to the landowners, had not been signed. The Hawke government's discriminatory policies are aimed at stopping that development. We all know why Roxby Downs in South Australia is able to develop ahead of this deposit which, for 4 years, has been ready to commence development. Queensland Mines is being thwarted in its attempts to increase its ore reserves by the totally outrageous demands of the Northern Land Council, demands that will only increase under the proposed new land rights act amendments. The company faces a prospect of dismantling \$60m of mining infrastructure out there. The Northern Land Council insists that companies be subject to the land council's authority when it comes to determining environmental operating requirements for mines. This is an attempt to usurp the authority and functions that are properly the province of government. No company can afford to subject itself

to such unauthorised, improper and potentially arbitrary controls. Of course, the Ranger mine will end up bearing the whole cost burden of the bureaucratic environmental crucifix that I have outlined and is being further burdened by court action by the Northern Land Council which wants an ever-increasing slice of the cake.

The result of all this is that Canada is taking the lion's share of the world's uranium market now. Australia and Canada each have approximately a third of the world's reserves of low-cost uranium. In 1985, Canada's share of the world market had risen to 31% with Australia tailing at 10%. In 1986, Canada's share is expected to increase further.

At the commencement of this statement, I warned that the mining industry in the Territory was under considerable threat from discriminatory Commonwealth policies. I reiterate that warning. The threat is manifest in the lack of access to land in the Territory. If the industry cannot gain access to land to explore, then we cannot find the mines of the future necessary to generate the nation's wealth; it is as simple as that. It is incomprehensible that, at a time when economic indicators suggest that the economy is in difficulty, the nation's managers should turn their backs on potential wealth-generating projects in the Territory. It is indefensible that the best resources potential within our borders cannot be realised for the benefit of all.

History will show Commonwealth indifference, insensitivity, incompetence and inequities to be the root causes of much of what is wrong in Australia today. We need the industry and the industry needs land. We stand willing to accept the procedures and regimes adopted elsewhere in Australia. Mr Deputy Speaker, in many ways the Territory is unique. In land administration, particularly land rights, we seek only to be treated like other Australians. I move that the statement be noted.

Mr BELL (MacDonnell): Mr Deputy Speaker, I commence by placing on the record of this Assembly my objection to the minister introducing statements in this fashion. To my understanding, it has always been the practice of the government to provide a copy of detailed statements of that sort so that reasoned debate can proceed in this Assembly. Quite clearly, the Minister for Mines and Energy was reading from a prepared statement and presumably it would have been in the interests of reasoned public debate, and should have been possible, to provide opposition members with a copy of that statement so that a considered contribution might be made on what is, quite clearly, a serious issue. I suspect that the minister had an ulterior motive in not wanting to allow the opposition the opportunity to see this statement because, of course, he knew that reasoned debate was the last thing he was interested in on this particular subject. He is interested in a few paragraphs in the local paper or a 2-minute segment on the television news.

However, let us look at the accusation he made. He said that Aboriginal land rights mitigate against mineral development in the Northern Territory. For the benefit of the honourable minister and his speech writer, I suggest that they consult the Oxford Dictionary. I think the word they were looking for was not 'mitigate' but 'militate'. I presume he means that it is his belief that Aboriginal land rights militate against mineral development in the Northern Territory.

There is a corollary to that particular assertion which, quite naturally, I do not accept for reasons that I will endeavour to explain to the honourable

minister. The corollary is that the fluctuations in exploration and mineral development in the Northern Territory, that he said were not the result of external market factors, are such a gross over-simplification that they should not be allowed to stand. Mr Deputy Speaker, you have taken something of an interest in the mining industry and have been employed by a major company involved in the development of oil and gas reserves in central Australia, and will be well aware of the multifarious nature of economic factors that contribute to the viability or marginality of particular exploration or development proposals. For the honourable minister to suggest that the development of mineral resources in the Territory is the result only of a recognition of Aboriginal land rights is tantamount to a gross over-simplification and a clear lack of understanding of the complex national and international economic forces that determine these matters. I would like to place on record my alarm that we have a minister of the Crown reducing serious matters of debate to simple issues of pro- and anti-Aboriginal land rights.

Mr Finch: He is talking about the economy of the country; that is what he is talking about.

Mr BELL: The honourable member for Wagaman is most welcome to stand up after I have finished speaking, but I would appreciate being heard in silence because I believe that I have a substantial contribution to make to this debate. He is most welcome to stand up, although I very much doubt that he will. I am quite sure that a government member will bob to his feet and adjourn this because nobody will be interested to speak on the government side once the subject gains a few paragraphs in the paper or is given a segment on the ABC or Channel 8 news tonight. However, I hope that I am wrong and I hope the honourable member for Wagaman gets to his feet. The other denizens of the government backbench are most welcome to provide a reasonable debate. Perhaps the statement was available to them a little earlier than I heard it read and perhaps they are slightly better prepared. Certainly, I hope so, but I think that, even if most of them had the statement for 6 months, their contribution would still be unreasoned.

However, I want to return to the substance of the minister's statement. He made some quite alarming assertions. He said that there was no reasonable access to Aboriginal land. As the member for MacDonnell, representing an extensive rural electorate, I find that absolutely breathtaking. Mr Deputy Speaker, you will be aware of the ongoing development of oil and gas reserves in my electorate, the ongoing seismic testing programs and the ongoing building of and negotiations for pipelines. Two pipelines have been laid and another is under construction in my electorate - all negotiated with the Central Land Council. I refer to the Palm Valley to Alice Springs gas pipeline and, more recently, the Mereenie to Alice Springs pipeline. Although I have not had the opportunity to visit the refinery in Alice Springs to inspect the facilities, I am certainly pleased that negotiations have come to fruition. The third pipeline has been successfully negotiated and is under construction: the Darwin to Mereenie pipeline. Members may be interested to know that the communities in the vicinity of that pipeline have approached me as their local member, as I am sure they have approached the Central Land Council and other officers, concerning the route through Tylers Pass across to the region of Haasts Bluff. We are dealing here with Aboriginal traditional owners for whom English is not a first language, and the communication process is therefore more complicated than usual, as I am quite sure the Minister for Mines and Energy is aware. For him to focus only on new exploration lease applications is to obfuscate the issue to the point of seriously

discriminating against a group of people that both governments in 1976 decided were worthy of special treatment.

It is really quite extraordinary, and a matter of great sadness, to see that the bipartisan support for Aboriginal land rights in 1976 has evaporated. Now the conservative parties, of which the Northern Territory government is perhaps the most rabid example, are hell-bent on destroying what is essentially progressive legislation, an attempt on the part of the majority of Australian society to restore some of the balance. I cannot say how much it disturbs me that people like the Minister for Mines and Energy and his colleagues choose to attack legislation of this sort viciously, and to do so in such an unbalanced and illogical fashion.

The minister has said that he knows that traditional owners want mining, and it is just these evil land councils who are preventing it from being carried out. I have accompanied the Minister for Education around my electorate. I am quite prepared to extend the same courtesy to the Minister for Mines and Energy. He will be quite convinced, I am sure, that the relationship between Aboriginal traditional owners and the land councils is a productive one. I have no evidence of the sort of malign accusations that the Minister for Mines and Energy makes against hard-working employees of organisations like the Central Land Council. Let me place on record that it does him little credit to attempt to smear an organisation in that way. Of course, there is a reasoned explanation for the minister's smear, as there is for the question concerning the recreation lake in Alice Springs this morning. Both the Chief Minister and the Minister for Mines and Energy can feel a by-election coming on. I am quite sure that, over the coming weeks, we will witness more and more of that appeal to an underlying racist sentiment that, unfortunately, has been so electorally decisive in the past for this bunch of scoundrels. They always like to return to the tried and trusted formulae.

A further comment that I wish to pick up in the minister's statement is his reference to Ayers Rock being a sacrifice. I presume that he refers to the Commonwealth government's decision to vest title to Ayers Rock in Aboriginal traditional owners and its subsequent lease back to the Australian National Parks and Wildlife Service. Before the Minister for Mines and Energy gets too carried away about this, it is probably time for a history lesson for him because he shared the frontbench with the erstwhile Chief Minister. Presumably, he was party to Cabinet discussions - as he must have been party to Cabinet discussions about the now Chief Minister's travelling allowance reimbursements and I would be interested to hear about that at some time.

The Minister for Mines and Energy will no doubt recall that Paul Everingham was very happy to see title to Ayers Rock vested in Aboriginal traditional owners. He will no doubt recall that that was part of the famous 10-point package. The Chief Minister, and presumably the minister by association, were quite happy to have the title to Ayers Rock vested in Aboriginal traditional owners. If he sees that as a sacrifice, I would be very interested to hear what he has to say about that. Objectivity is the least of his interests. When he uses extravagant terms like 'sacrifice', I really think that he should attempt at least, in whatever stumble-footed fashion he can, to justify the use of such extravagant language.

Mr Deputy Speaker, with those few comments, I wish to close. I would like to reiterate the comments that I made in relation to this statement: firstly, it has been introduced into this Assembly in an irresponsible and non-objective fashion; and, secondly, the minister has allowed his obsession

with Aboriginal people and the Commonwealth government to so blur his vision that objectivity has flown out the window.

Mr EDE (Stuart): Mr Speaker, I move that the debate be adjourned.

Motion negatived.

Mr FINCH (Wagaman): Mr Speaker, I welcome the kind but rather wimpish invitation of the member for MacDonnell for me to speak on this statement this afternoon. I do so in a firm belief that this is exactly the sort of topic that we should be debating and discussing in this Assembly. It is not only of great importance to the Northern Territory, but also to the economic future of Australia. Like the member opposite, I did not have the minister's statement before me, but I am absolutely amazed that the member for MacDonnell did not feel confident to speak on a matter that ought to be right at the gut of every one of us. It is a subject that is profoundly influenced by his party's policies. It has led to a rapid and catastrophic decline in the Australian economy.

The Minister for Mines and Energy mentioned a recent statement by the federal Minister for Resources regarding his government's approach to development of the nation's natural resources. The minister went on to discuss some of the factors that contribute to this development. Unlike the member for MacDonnell, I do not feel that this matter is irrelevant to this Assembly and one which should not be debated at length.

The member for MacDonnell seems to have a fixation about land rights, and I do not wonder why. There still is a bipartisan approach to the basic principle of land rights. However, what we have to do, as was clearly illustrated by the Minister for Mines and Energy, is to re-establish access to this nation's resources as the right of any government representing people in Australia. Not only do we see exploration rights hindered by the current policies of the federal government, but also discrepancies between its approach to the Northern Territory and the approach to the states. In Western Australia, there is virtually free access for mining on Aboriginal land. This is the result of a discriminatory policy by the federal government in respect of what happens in Western Australia and what happens in the Northern Territory. I suggest to the honourable member opposite that the same rules should apply to Aboriginal land as apply to all other land in Australia, for the proper and sensible development of this nation's resources - development that is of benefit to every citizen in the country. There is no doubt that this nation's economy is slipping for a great number of reasons, land rights and access to minerals being only one.

The honourable minister also mentioned the federal government's disjointed policy on uranium mining. It seems to be quite reasonable for uranium mines to be developed in socialist states, but not in the Northern Territory where, according to the minister, we have the equivalent of about 20 Jabirus. What that could do for this nation's wealth is almost beyond imagination. This nation's economy is in a disastrous state because of such narrow-minded thinking of the federal Labor Party.

The international scene relating to mineral development is becoming more and more competitive. Other countries such as Canada and South Africa are now developing their uranium mines. What is likely to happen, if it has not happened already, is that this country will lose so much credibility as an international supplier that soon it will be too late for us to re-enter the

marketplace at all. Running a country is a bit like running any business: you are judged on your performance and reliability. For far too long, this country has been held to ransom as a result of crazy socialist policies and crazy union interference in the proper management of our nation's wealth.

Primary products and all sorts of minerals are interfered with by unions which are intent not only on looking after their own members' interests but in looking after the political wishes of their federal ALP cohorts. In the last few days, a shipment of some \$40m worth of uranium has been held up by an industrial dispute that was based supposedly on some safety issue. Like hell, Mr Speaker! It is all about grabbing an extra week's holiday; it is all about grabbing another 3% over and above the superannuation entitlement. That is what it is all about; it has absolutely nothing to do with safety. False pretences are used to interfere with the good management of the sale and distribution of this nation's wealth for the benefit of all. While that dispute was going on, there was a ship tied up at the wharf. I am told that the direct cost associated with that alone was some \$60 000. When consideration is given to the trucks and cranes sitting out there doing nothing whilst a decision was taken, I understand that the cost of that exercise alone was almost \$200 000. That is incredible.

This nation is going broke and needs desperately to re-establish its credibility internationally. What do we do about it? We pander to unions. This is not a government. The federal government is not run by the federal ALP; it is run by the ACTU and the rest of its left-wing cronies who are trying to interfere with proper distribution.

There is no doubt that a sensible policy from the federal government would allow us to develop those deposits that have been identified already. Where negotiations have been completed in relation to land usage in the Kakadu area, at Koongarra and Jabiluka where millions of dollars have already been spent, such a policy would set the scene for what could be another massive injection into the nation's economy. That is not to mention the 14 or so other deposits located there - uranium, gold and many other minerals - that this nation needs access to in a proper and sensible fashion. I am quite happy to acknowledge that. But, because of the follies and offhanded policies of the federal government, we have had a premature termination of Queensland Mines' activities where, we are told by the honourable minister, some \$60m of infrastructure is to be pushed aside.

Mr Speaker, what we are talking about is the generation of wealth for this country that will lead to a better distribution of wealth to a greater number of people, including Aborigines. I cannot imagine how any Aboriginal group would support this federal government's policies when they themselves will be affected in the long term and, I dare say, in the not-so-long term. However, aside from that, the benefits to the young people of the Northern Territory in direct jobs would be fairly astronomical in themselves. The minister was quite correct in making this statement to the Assembly because, quite apart from all of the frivolous and time-wasting nonsense and nitpicking exercises we have heard over the last week, it is absolutely incredible that members opposite can attempt to pour water on matters of great significance, not only for the Northern Territory but for this nation.

As I mentioned, there is no doubt that these interventionist policies of the federal government and the unions are helping to inflict permanent damage on the credibility and reputation of this nation as a supplier. I find it extremely frustrating that we have billions of dollars worth of resources

sitting out there when this country is going broke, and we cannot develop those sensibly for the benefit of all. On the other hand, we have a federal government which is intent on developing artificial jobs, more bureaucracies and more bureaus to watch bureaus that watch bureaus. What did the honourable minister mention? Overseers watching overseers. My goodness, what an absolute waste of the public purse! This country has to be run as a sensible business - and that is what this statement is all about - that looks after the well-being of all. The only way to do that is to get rid of these ridiculous interventionist policies. We in the Northern Territory demand to be treated as others are treated. Why should the Territory be different from South Australia with its Roxby Downs? Why should we be treated differently to Western Australia where it has been clearly illustrated that Aboriginal land rights will not resemble in the slightest those that have been imposed on the Northern Territory by successive federal governments?

Mr Speaker, in contrast to the honourable member for MacDonnell, I support the minister's statement and I commend him for it. There is no doubt that, if we continue to debate these sorts of topics, this country and this Territory will be better off.

Mr D.W. COLLINS (Sadadeen): Mr Speaker, the member for MacDonnell was talking about the government side trying to cloud the issue. I think he was trying to say that land rights are not affecting mining in the Territory. I remember asking a question in the Assembly in November 1983 of the Chief Minister who, at that stage, was the Minister for Mines and Energy. I asked what was the actual amount spent on exploration on land which had been given to the Aboriginal people or land under claim, compared with the money spent on exploration on other Territory land. The reason I divided it that way was because roughly 50% of the Territory had either been granted or was under claim and 50% was obviously not under claim. It seemed a pretty fair comparison. In 1983, \$100 000 was spent on exploration on Aboriginal land and land under claim and something like \$33m on other Territory land. I have tried to obtain an update on those figures. The latest figures relate to a comparison between money spent on Aboriginal land and money spent on all other land, including land still under claim. Only \$2000 was spent on exploration on Aboriginal land.

The reasons why exploration money is not being spent on lands granted to Aborigines may be many and varied. However, I do not think one can gain a clearer indication of the situation and the effects of the Land Rights Act than to come back to the hip pocket nerve. It is very clear that mining companies are not prepared to risk dollars on exploration on Aboriginal land. There are many reasons for this. One is that, if a company spent considerable funds on exploration and negotiation, there was still no guarantee that permission would be granted to mine a discovery. With the changes to the Land Rights Act, the chances of developing a find may improve, but I believe that the same laws should apply to all Australians.

When talking about the effects of land rights on mining, it is very important to consider the money actually spent at the high risk stage of exploration. It is very clear that companies are dodging like poison land that is under claim by Aborigines, and that that is having a big effect. In the media over the last month or so, people have claimed that the reason for the downturn in mining exploration in the Territory is very clear. They say there is a general downturn in the value of minerals around the world and this is having a big effect. The main reason cannot be masked even though the member for MacDonnell may try to muddy the waters. The actual sums spent on exploration in the two categories of land give a very clear picture.

The member for MacDonnell said that the minister neglected to mention such things as the oil and gas pipelines and agreements with Aboriginal people in central Australia. He well knows that those discoveries were made well before 1976 - back in 1964 - and it is a credit to the people who made those discoveries that they were able to bring them to fruition. In that context, he gave high praise to the Central Land Council. I would suggest that it was otherwise and that some of the Aboriginal people in the area who wanted to see the developments proceed were strong enough to ensure that the Central Land Council actually did their bidding. This is the reverse of the situation which appears to apply with the Northern Land Council which has prevented Telecom from providing telephone services to Aboriginal people who want them. That is just not good enough, and I am glad that there are Aboriginal people in central Australia who have the strength to dictate to the Central Land Council.

The member for MacDonnell also mentioned the lake for Alice Springs. The Chief Minister referred to the possibility of a site other than the Telegraph Station which is so far away as to be of very little advantage to Alice Springs. I have had discussions with many Aboriginal people in Alice Springs, who have approached me at all sorts of odd occasions; for example during Henley on Todd. One Aboriginal man asked: 'When are we going to get that lake? Are you going to push for it? We want it'. He was just one of many. The member for MacDonnell can knock all he likes but there are some Aboriginal people whose cause he is supposed to champion. I think he is way off beam on that one.

The Aboriginal people of Alice Springs, particularly the traditional owners of the sacred site at the Telegraph Station, are aware that, besides the recreational value of the lake which they would share and enjoy, it would also aid in flood mitigation. I said before in this Assembly that, in a 1-in-100 year flood, there would be 2 m of water as far out as Bloomfield Street, which is well west of the railway line. There is a very large fall between where the Todd enters Alice Springs and where it goes through the Gap. That 2 m of water would not be sitting still; it would be flowing very rapidly. Studies by the Snowy Mountains Authority on the effects of 1-in-100-year floods suggested that the Telegraph Station itself stood a very good chance of being washed away. There would be millions of dollars worth of damage to Alice Springs. The loss of life would be horrendous. If a lake were built at the Telegraph Station, we would reduce a 1-in-100-year flood down to a 1-in-15-year flood similar to the one that we had in March 1983 which was designated as a 1-in-13-year flood. That did considerable damage to the power-station and water entered several houses. This lake is vital to Alice Springs. I think a figure of \$10m was quoted a couple of years ago for building a lake for Alice Springs. No doubt the cost would be higher now but it would still provide very cheap insurance indeed.

I am aware that the Aboriginal people know about this, and I agree with the honourable minister when he said that there are evil forces which are trying to prevent negotiations between the government and the local people. I believe that, without the huge pressure that was put on them by people like Charles Perkins, who came and camped in that particular area...

Mr Bell: Ha, ha!

Mr D.W. COLLINS: The cackly member for MacDonnell cannot contain himself.

However, at the time, a very tragic fire broke out in that valley in which a man and a young child were burned to death. It was put to me that an inebriated person poured petrol on that particular tent and set it on fire, but the family closed ranks on the matter and the police could not get any further with their investigations. It was terrible and tragic, and I know the Aboriginal people involved felt that it was a great tragedy.

I can assure the member for MacDonnell that, if left to make their own decisions regarding the sacred sites and the lake, I believe the Aboriginal people in Alice Springs would come to an agreement which would satisfy their aspirations and the aspirations of the people of Alice Springs to have a lake for the dual purpose of flood insurance and giving the town a lake which would greatly enhance the enjoyment of Alice Springs by its people and its many thousands of visitors each year. I support the statement.

Mr COULTER (Community Development): Mr Speaker, I must say that, not to have seen the opposition spokesman on mines and energy on his feet to contribute to this debate amazes me, but he is full of surprises. We have heard him speak on many occasions about his concern for the safety of uranium miners and yet he has nothing to say when he is given the opportunity.

The stalling tactics which have been employed against uranium development, in particular by the Northern Land Council, are nothing short of a national disgrace. I have spoken on this subject on a number of occasions as a backbencher, and I am proud to be able to stand today as a minister to talk on the same subject. I wish that I did not have to do it. I wish that the development of our uranium mines and our national resources could go ahead.

The other night the member for MacDonnell quoted from newspaper cuttings indicating how Canadians had come to agreements about where people could not waterski etc. I have a large collection of cuttings in relation to Canadian Indians and how they have come to grips with mining. We might all note that Canada is the world's leading exporter of uranium. It has taken that initiative from the Northern Territory because of the activities of the Australian Labor Party and there has been a downgrading of services to Aboriginal people as a direct result of that. But that is the way they want it, Mr Speaker. If we had development and prosperity, it would no longer be a social playground, would it?

I would like to quote from the Seattle Times of Sunday 15 December. It said that 'reservations became a kind of terra incognita in the state's consciousness' and that 'they were blank spots on the political map and black holes for economic planners, places that seemed to suck dollars in and spew nothing out'. That analogy can also be used in relation to a number of Aboriginal communities. The Aboriginal people themselves, in many cases, would not have it that way; they would rather get on with the development of their areas and enjoy the prosperity that comes with that development. But no, that is not to be because that would do away with the social playground and the bureaucracy that operates for those people. I refer to the land councils. In particular, the Northern Land Council has 81 people on its staff to ensure that development does not occur in the Northern Territory. It has an annual budget of \$4.2m to ensure that we do not have mining. The member for Stuart is proud to adopt an anti-uranium stance and fight for his political colleagues in Canberra who do not wish to see the Northern Territory develop.

Likewise, we had the scandalous extension of the Kakadu Stage 2 boundaries recently. Where else in the world would \$40 000m of resources be locked up because the minerals are in a national park - a national park that could extend anywhere at all. There is nothing in Kakadu Stage 2 that is not at Pine Creek or anywhere else in the Northern Territory. However, in the supposed national interest, we have declared it a national park. Goodparla, Gimbat, Coronation Hill and a number of other major areas with major deposits in the Northern Territory will not go ahead. Do the Aboriginal people want that type of development to go ahead, Mr Speaker? In many cases, the answer is yes. They would like to proceed with the development of uranium and mining in general - in particular in some of the pastoral areas where they are involved in private enterprise developments - to escape from their dependency on the social welfare system that I have spoken about in this Assembly on many occasions. But no, they are to be held down. If we went to the people immediately concerned, I wonder whether that is the way that they would want it.

Recently, a company was engaged in negotiations with a group of Aboriginal people in Arnhem Land. The people indicated that they would like to proceed with development in that area. Once again, the land council became involved, speaking on their behalf, and the project is under a shadow of doubt as a result. I reiterate that 81 staff are employed by the Northern Land Council and \$4.2m is provided to it by the federal government to ensure that development does not occur in the Northern Territory even though many Aboriginal people want it.

The minister spoke about Koongarra. The member for MacDonnell said that people can negotiate across the table for the development of such projects. This morning, the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs offered to the Chief Minister a report compiled by multinational mining companies in America and Canada demonstrating that mining can proceed in such areas. We will not be able to do it because of the Land Rights Act and because of the infrastructure that has been set up to ensure that that development does proceed.

Mr Speaker, I have spent a great deal of time out in the electorates this year. I have spoken to a number of Aboriginal people who want mining to go ahead. They want progress and facilities; they do not want to be locked into the social welfare system. They are prepared to be fully cooperative and pay their way in relation to those developments. I would like to pay credit to some of the Aboriginal organisations, in particular the Gagagju people, who want to proceed with development and who realise the benefit of coming out from under that social welfare umbrella and paying their own way.

I support the Minister for Mines and Energy in his efforts to battle on despite the pressures placed on him by organisations - and many of them are federally-funded - and despite the opposition here today by members opposite to development and prosperity. They would have Aborigines shackled into the social welfare system forever. It is a disgrace and everybody in this Assembly should voice his opinion on just how bad it really is.

Mr TUXWORTH (Chief Minister): Mr Speaker, the member for MacDonnell spurred me into interest in this debate this morning. He made some fairly provocative statements about the interests of Aboriginals and other people. One of his throwaway lines was that no one on this side of the Assembly is interested in Aboriginals - we are interested only in mining companies.

Mr Bell: I did not say that.

Mr TUXWORTH: I would like to pick up a couple of points that were made because we really do have a very serious situation in respect of exploration and mining on Aboriginal land. Aboriginals in our community, like a few other groups in Australia, have very privileged entitlements in relation to their land. Some of them have the capacity to say that there will be no exploration and no mining on the land whatever the rest of the community thinks. Throughout Australia, there would probably be 200 000 or 300 000 people who have that privilege. It also brings with it a responsibility.

Mr Ede: The farmers in Western Australia.

Mr TUXWORTH: I include them in the privileged group. I accept that. There are a few others in New South Wales. But the numbers of people who have that right are very few and the land mass that they control is very small.

Our situation in the Territory is quite different. We now have a situation whereby 40% or 50% of the Northern Territory's land, and about 8% of Australia's land, can be locked up for 5 years at a time and precluded from exploration and mining. Since 1982, when exploration applications were lodged with the land councils for exploration on Aboriginal land - and there are some 200 or 300 of them - there has been no progress by companies which wanted to explore. The Northern Land Council and the Central Land Council send letters back saying: 'Don't call us; we'll call you!' They have effectively prevented any exploration during that period. To some people, that might seem like a perfectly reasonable proposition. However, the rest of the community does not have that privilege and it is starting to ask whether it is reasonable to lock up highly-prospective areas of land and deny the community generally the benefit of that development for whatever reason. I apply that to farmers as well as to Aboriginals. We must start to take stock.

The Minister for Mines and Energy referred to resources locked away in the Northern Territory as a result of the inability to explore and mine. Their value runs into hundreds of millions of dollars. The economy of this country is not in a condition to afford that luxury. I think it would be perfectly reasonable for the Aboriginal community to recognise that the people of Australia generally make a pretty fair effort in contributing to the welfare of Aborigines. Over the last 20 years, billions of dollars have been spent on this. It is not as though the taxpayers have been niggardly in their contribution to Aborigines. Therefore, it would not be unreasonable for Aboriginals to say: 'People want to explore on this land. We will all get something out of it. Provided it can be done under reasonable terms and without disturbing the environment, we ought to get on with it'.

I have met Aboriginals who were beside themselves trying to obtain some development. They have suffered the same frustrations with the land council that the mining companies have suffered. Recently, I was at Oenpelli visiting the Nabarlek operation. A lady traditional owner wants to see her area developed on the Nabarlek leases. She upbraided me as the person who was preventing her from having her area developed. I told her that she would have to see the land council. She said: 'I have seen them and they told me that the Northern Territory government was holding it up'. I said: 'I would be happy to meet with you and the land council to straighten it out because we would dearly love to see your area developed if you have an ore body on it'. There are Aboriginals who dearly want to see some development, and there is a need for it to occur both in their interests and in the interests of the Australian community. We have a pretty serious situation because, as some speakers mentioned, there are advisers with vested interests who would like to see no mining take place.

I would like to pick up another point made by the member for MacDonnell. He said that we do not really take cognisance of all the good things that have happened with some mining developments in agreement. I ask the honourable member to cite an agreement under the Aboriginal Land Rights Act 1976 that has been signed voluntarily and did not involve one of the pre-1976 applicants.

Mr Bell: The Palm Valley to Alice Spring pipeline.

Mr TUXWORTH: That is utter rubbish! And that is the sort of thing ...

Mr Bell: Why is it rubbish?

Mr TUXWORTH: It is rubbish because those people who hold those blocks had rights under the Aboriginal Land Rights Act to obtain an agreement. The Aboriginals could not prevent the agreement; they had to sign. What remained was the terms and conditions. We are talking now ...

Mr Bell: So there was subsequent agreement under the Land Rights Act?

Mr TUXWORTH: The companies were entitled to an agreement. There was no provision for veto.

We are now talking about companies which want to explore and which are being told that they are not wanted. We need to examine whether that situation can be permitted to continue. It is not reasonable for the community as a whole, and there will be trauma and trouble until we resolve the matter. I am not saying that it has to be done because I want it; I am saying that there are Aboriginal people who want it to happen, yet they are being frustrated.

The member for MacDonnell also said that there are ongoing programs and people ought to appreciate that things are moving pretty well. It is true that there are some ongoing programs in some areas. When I was Minister for Mines and Energy, I found that oil companies had enormous demands put on them by Aboriginal land councils, groups and representatives for upfront payments under the table in return for the right to explore. On one occasion before the Labor Party came to power, I took a list to Canberra. It named people, companies and amounts of money involved in exchange for go-aheads for mining and site clearances. Some involved pastoral land. It came to millions, and the federal minister said: 'Oh goodness, I do not know what we are going to do with this'. I do not suggest that this is the rule; it is not. There are some people who try to do it properly and there are some who abuse the system. But let us not pretend that, because there are 1 or 2 companies involved in seismic exploration or drilling, the agreements were agreed to without any fuss. Many agreements have been made under some duress, and I regard that as regrettable.

Another important aspect of this needs to be acknowledged. Where there is an agreement for a company to explore or to mine, it should be acted on quickly. Members opposite would be aware of the Granites project. It took 7 years of negotiations to reach an agreement to mine. By no stretch of the imagination could anybody argue that 7 years is a reasonable time to organise a mining agreement for a project like the Pine Creek Enterprise Mine or the Australian Development Mine. It is unreasonable. The company at the Granites would like to extend its leases and undertake some more exploration and development but it cannot obtain an agreement. The gun is being held at its head and unreasonable demands for payment are being made. The company says

that it might as well be content with what it has now rather than allow itself to be exposed to extortion. That is not reasonable and, while the Aboriginal Land Rights Act can be used in that way, we will have continuing trauma.

Another project that I feel is worthy of mention is the McArthur River project. A great deal of effort was put into that project. Negotiations took place between the land councils, local Aboriginals, Mount Isa Mines, our government and the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs to provide the company with a corridor and islands necessary for the development of the mine project area. That worked fairly well. Representatives of the company came to see me recently to say that they now find their corridor, islands for the port and some of their sites are being set aside under the Heritage Act which may preclude development in the future. My colleague reminds me that a deep water harbour is included in that. Can anybody believe that that is reasonable, given the trauma that we had in arriving at that agreement? Further trouble is inevitable because people will not tolerate that.

Mr Speaker, I met the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs this morning and he outlined for me and some other Cabinet members the proposals for the mining arrangements. We have seen and heard them all before. The dilemma I have with the proposition is that the honourable minister believes it will change what is occurring. That will not be the case; we will simply be doing it another way and finding different ways to create a blockage.

With the new proposals, Aboriginal groups, if they wish, will have the ability to veto mining in an area and that veto will stay in place for 5 years before it can be reviewed. It would not take much imagination, given the history of the Aboriginal Land Rights Act, to see that a great part of the Northern Territory could become locked away for 5-year periods wherein no development or exploration would occur at all. That would be tragic. I would say to the honourable members opposite that I am not trying to be aggro or difficult, but some reason must prevail in this or the fight will go on forever. It is 10 years old now and I think honourable members would agree it is no further from solution today than it was in 1976. I sincerely hope that we are not here in 1996 arguing about the contents of the Aboriginal Land Rights Act and the damage that it is doing to the Northern Territory.

Mr EDE (Stuart): Mr Speaker, as the honourable member for MacDonnell pointed out, there were no copies of this statement distributed and a number of documents were tabled during the course of the debate. Possibly, I am the only one who actually has copies of them. We were not surprised at this statement because we knew that there would be some statement in relation to Aboriginal affairs this morning. I knew that we would not be able to adjourn it. When I rose to adjourn the debate, I knew that it would result in an uproar.

It is the old line: when this government is on the ropes, it raises an Aboriginal issue. It makes a whole string of superficial statements to divert attention from its own problems. We know from past experience that, whenever it is on the ropes, that is the action that it takes. Whenever it has a problem such as a discussion about the lack of morality - which is the kindest interpretation I can put on the Chief Minister's actions over travelling allowance - or incompetence or whatever ...

MR SPEAKER: Order! The honourable member is not speaking to the motion. Would he kindly confine his remarks to the debate.

Members interjecting.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The honourable member will resume his seat. If there are any further interjections from the sidelines, I will name the honourable members concerned. The honourable member for Stuart.

Mr EDE: Mr Speaker, this government uses every opportunity to trample on land rights. It has shown that it will not stop until every one of the hard-won rights of Aboriginal people has been abolished. To demonstrate that, I would ask it to look at its attitude to excisions and its refusal to legislate. Look at its actions over sacred sites. Look at what members opposite have said about pastoral properties, stock routes and stock reserves. Look at their statements today on the veto. What is their bottom line? People know, and the member for Wagaman pointed out, that their bottom line is that no recognition should be given of the Aboriginal people's special relationship with the land. They take no notice of their culture and no notice of their religion. This government will not stop until it has wiped out every legal safeguard that Aboriginal culture has. At every opportunity, it attempts to utilise the fact that we have a strong Aboriginal culture in the Territory to enhance its own tourist industry; it attempts to use Aboriginal people for such purposes, but it will not tolerate any of the disadvantages which are commensurate with the preservation of that culture.

When we examine the statement, we find a number of remarks which are patently insupportable. I would like to comment on some of those. The minister referred to the veto as the reason why miners will not explore in the Northern Territory. He talked about domestic constraints on the development of mines and attributed them to the veto. This came from a minister who grabbed control over mining in national parks from the Minister for Conservation, and a minister who disregards the environmental issues. It appears that he is prepared to disregard the real land management problems that have to be discussed. We talk about mining and competing interests; for example, tourism interests and pastoral interests. These interests are also competing with the rights of Aboriginal people.

He stated that the Northern Territory has been singled out once again for discrimination on land rights and talked of failure to allow the industry reasonable access to Aboriginal land. I have not heard anything from the minister or any of the other speakers today to indicate that any of them has actually read the contents of the proposals to amend the veto. I have been through them; I am constantly involved in discussions about them. If I have time, I will go through some of our proposals. The proposals reflect a reasonable balance of alternative factions and they are workable.

We heard reference to Western Australia. I am not going to carry a candle on behalf of the Western Australian government and its attitude over this issue. However, we acknowledge that the situation in Western Australia varies from the north, to the centre, to the south-west. I would have liked it to have examined how South Australia handled its own wide variations. South Australia has developed a system which suits it very well. A massive oil exploration program has been negotiated there to the benefit of all parties.

The minister said that, if the veto is exercised, an area will be frozen for 5 years. He neglected to state that, at the end of that 5-year period, the area will be offered initially to the group that undertook the original exploration. He appears to want to continue with the current situation whereby people can be subjected to harassment, week after week, even though

they have vetoed an application. If we believe that mining will benefit Aboriginal people as well as people generally, the best thing we can do is to say to Aboriginal people: 'You have 5 years to think about it. We are confident that you will see, from the way that we are developing the mining industry in the rest of the Northern Territory, that mining can occur without real damage to your culture'. If we believe that, we should support the 5-year provision that will be incorporated in the act. It is a positive move.

As I said, in respect of the minister's statement that the cultural survival of Aboriginal people in Western Australia is apparently not as fragile as it is here, I will not carry a candle for the Western Australian government. But we recognise, as we have in our proposals over national, non-uniform land rights, that there are historical differences between the states. If the minister wanted to make a comparison with the states, he would have been better referring to the situation in the top end of South Australia.

Mr Speaker, the minister made a rather amazing statement which is quite contrary to the line that this government has been running previously. In the past, it said that the veto had nothing at all to do with people's rights and their wishes to preserve their own lifestyle. The minister has stated previously that it was a cynical attempt to screw more money out of the miners. Now that that is no longer possible, he says that the possible loss of financial and other benefits from mining has not prevented the withholding of consent in some areas. The proposals remove the possibility of the government opposite and industry groups running the cynical argument that the only reason people want the veto is to use it as a lever to gain more funds.

Mr Speaker, he spoke of the number of exploration licence applications that have been held up. He would have been more honest if he had talked about the number of companies involved and the number who have actually submitted proposals and have stated their willingness to negotiate. It is far fewer than the number he so blithely quoted. When one considers that very few people have been involved, one wonders whether some of the miners are holding off for other reasons. Could it possibly be due to the low prices which many international commodities are experiencing at the moment? Could it be due to policies of the federal government quite apart from land rights - uranium issues, environmental issues or whatever? Could it be related to the arguments which the mining industry is making at this stage regarding the profit-based royalties of the current government? Do those issues loom as large or larger in the minds of the miners? Or is it possible that the industry expected that the veto and the people's rights were about to disappear and decided it would hold off for a couple of months?

Having stated his disappointment and unhappiness with the veto remaining in the legislation, he then went on to attack the land councils. That is quite incredible. Because he is unhappy with the land councils, he wants to remove powers from the traditional owners. It is like saying that, because he is not happy with a decision of a local government council, he wishes to take away the people's right to vote. Can't the minister get it straight that we are dealing with 2 different groups. He is being patently unrealistic by stating that he would take the power away from the traditional owners because of purported actions by the land councils. For the first time, the member for Sadadeen actually said something that made sense. He stated that, in the Central Land Council's area, the people control the land council and ensure that it acts in accordance with their wishes. This is true, and it is a credit both to the people in central Australia and the Central Land Council. Nevertheless, he did not talk about removing the veto in the Top End. He said

that we must remove the power of the veto from all of the people of the Northern Territory. This leads me to believe that this is nothing more than a cynical, political exercise. It has nothing to do with attempting to assist mining development and has nothing to do with attempting to assist people to come to grips with their changing social circumstances.

The minister tabled his reply to the package of information put together by the land councils. Unfortunately, I do not have time to go through all of it. I would ask him, however, to have another look at the figures from the Australian Bureau of Statistics for mining in 1983-84. My information is that those have since been revised upwards quite considerably and, if he continues to maintain that line, he might find egg on his face.

He stated that the Commonwealth proposals allow for completely open-ended negotiations to the mine development stage. That is patently untrue. If he had actually looked at the proposals, he would have found that there is a 6-month period during which people can negotiate mining agreements. There is no veto at all at that stage. If the negotiations are not fruitful, there is the requirement that 1 of the 2 groups can take the matter to arbitration. I believe that the minister and the government are attempting to talk the industry to death. They have never tried to make the mining proposals in the Aboriginal Land Rights Act work. They have satisfied themselves with knocking it at every opportunity. I challenge members opposite to show me 1 public statement that they have issued where they have said: 'This is the Land Rights Act in the Northern Territory. If you ask us, we will provide you with assistance in relation to the negotiations involved, advice on the time frames that can be expected and on previous proposals'. I have yet to see that. If they have done any such thing, they have kept very quiet about it.

I would like to speak about the minister's discussion on uranium before I turn to the actual proposals. His statement that there should be another 18 rangers in the Alligator Rivers area does not instil me with any confidence when I see the mess that he has made of supervising the 2 existing mines. Mr Speaker, can you imagine 18 times the number of infringements and 18 times the number of abuses of health and safety matters? If he wishes seriously to develop those other deposits, he should first demonstrate his ability to look after what he has.

I would like to go through the proposals very briefly. Exploration licences will not be guaranteed unless both the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs and the land council for the area have consented in writing to the making of the grant. Further, the land council cannot do that unless the people say that that is all right. A time limit of 180 days will be placed on its ability to respond in principle. This comes to grips with one of the biggest problems that miners have told me that they have. Many of the more reasonable ones have said that they recognise that, on any land in the Northern Territory and elsewhere, the owners have what amounts to a de facto veto because of their ability to tie the miners up indefinitely in wardens' courts before the mining companies even discover the resources potential of an area. It makes it uneconomic for them to continue. They said that the veto is not the problem. They said that the problem is that the process takes so long that it leaves them dangling year after year. That problem is removed in this proposal, but I did not hear the minister commending it because of that.

Previously, miners had to indicate the total proposal at the exploration stage. That was compounded by this government's refusal to countenance

disjunctive agreements. However, it was extremely difficult for people to put forward a proposal when they did not know what mineral they were likely to find. With the current proposal, the decision to approve or not to approve mining is clear-cut, and there is no longer any secondary or partial veto. There is a recognition that yes or no means approval or rejection by the people concerned for the concept of mining on their land. If agreement to exploration cannot be reached, there is a 90-day notification period. The negotiations for up-front money referred to by the Chief Minister are not available under these new proposals. The parties have to reach agreement and the only financial benefits are for compensation for actual damage. If the mining stage is reached, the land councils must consult. There is a period of 270 days during which negotiations must be finalised. The parties can agree to continue negotiations or they can go to arbitration. The new proposals provide for a very reasoned use of the mining veto.

Mr SETTER (Jingili): Mr Speaker, unlike most of my colleagues, I always enjoy listening to the member for Stuart because he waffles and flounders on. I look forward to the day when he makes some sense and we can understand him.

I rise this afternoon to support the minister's statement but, in so doing, let me say that I believe in equal rights for all Australians, and I speak of the 46 nationalities that I am told live in this community. Equal rights for all Australians is my policy. Mr Speaker, I draw your attention to the editorial in the NT News of 4 March 1986. The headline reads: 'Land Rights Hypocrisy'. The editorial said that the Hawke government's decision against national land rights leaves the Territory in the worst of 2 worlds. It referred to the federal government's decision to continue to leave control of such matters as the responsibility of the states while leaving the Northern Territory to endure the federal Land Rights Act of 1976. Since 1976, almost 50% of the Northern Territory has passed to Aboriginal control, unlike in the states where the control of land remains vested in those states. We are in a unique situation. Until April 1985, 94 land claims had been received, and only 15 had been determined. If one considers that the Land Rights Act is open-ended and there is no cut-off point, then it can be seen that, over the next 50 years or more, claims can be lodged and heard. The cost of this will be absolutely horrendous, and the end result will be that there will be no Crown land.

When first I came to Darwin in 1973, I visited the old Jabiru township and I walked across what is now the Ranger open-cut mine. Almost 10 years elapsed from that time until the Ranger mine was actually in production. That is the extent to which this Land Rights Act has retarded mining development in the Northern Territory.

At Jabiluka and Koongarra, the uranium remains in the ground. Look at the economic potential that they have for the Northern Territory and the number of jobs that could be created. The uranium is locked up there and, certainly under the existing federal government, will never be able to be accessed. There are many other examples of mines already discovered on what is now Aboriginal land or land under claim. Mining companies are no longer interested in exploration on Aboriginal land because of the difficulties in negotiating with Aboriginals, the land councils and - what is worse - their white advisers, those people who are making millions out of it.

We heard recently of a land claim lodged over the BHP gold discovery at Coronation Hill in the Alligator Rivers region.

Mr Ede: What are you talking about?

Mr SETTER: I understand that there is enormous potential at Coronation Hill but a land claim has been lodged over the area and that will ...

Mr Ede: There is not.

Mr SETTER: ... retard the development of that area.

Mr Ede: That is rubbish.

Mr SETTER: That is what I understand from reading reports in the media.

Mr Ede: Your understanding is not up to its normal high standard.

Mr SETTER: I stand to be corrected on that.

Mr Speaker, we have heard earlier of various mines opened recently on non-Aboriginal land, but none on Aboriginal land - or certainly not for many years. These Aboriginal people have been manipulated by the socialist left of the Labor Party and the land councils to suit their own political ends. For many years, this government has attempted to negotiate with the federal government to achieve sensible amendments to the Aboriginal Land Rights Act, but it is like crying in the wilderness. Why, Mr Speaker? Because the bleeding hearts in the south do not want to know about the well-being of the non-Aboriginal people in the Northern Territory. We are being used as a social experiment to the detriment of all Territorians. This issue is starting to react against them and the ANOP report of last year confirms that. Nevertheless, the federal government refuses to recognise the opinions of the greater number of Australians.

I refer in particular to the Aboriginal veto over mining, a veto which does not exist anywhere else in Australia. The Bulletin of 12 March 1985 carried an article by David Barnett which has the headline 'New Land Rights Plan Creates Australian Apartheid'. Barnett stated: 'National legislation proposed by Aboriginal Affairs Minister, Clyde Holding, will spread tensions and frustrations currently being experienced in the Northern Territory and may deny many Australians access to large areas of their country'. How right Barnett was. The Aboriginal Land Rights Act is retarding development and depriving the Northern Territory of much of its economic potential. In my opinion, this occurs to the detriment of Aboriginal people.

Some time ago, the then Chief Minister, Paul Everingham, proposed a 10-point package of amendments to the act. These were eventually disregarded by the federal Labor government at the time. To the shame of that government, no action has been taken to amend the act until very recently. Senator Bernie Kilgariff has also been working hard towards amending the current act. Even though the senator has worked extremely hard lobbying in the halls of Canberra, I hold out little hope of his succeeding in bringing forward amendments to that act which would be in the best interests of Territorians.

There was great concern in the states, and indeed amongst state Labor politicians and party members, regarding the proposal of Minister Holding to introduce national land rights legislation. I am pleased to say that he has walked away from that idea. I was in north Queensland some time ago and I spoke to some friends with whom I grew up. They happen to be members of the ALP and they were totally against the introduction of a national land rights

package. One fellow in particular was a union organiser yet he was absolutely and totally against the national land rights package as proposed at that time by Mr Holding. We saw the fiasco in Western Australia where the Labor government of the day, some 12 months or more ago, put forward a land rights proposal and, to its great embarrassment, it had to eventually back away from that for political reasons. There was an election coming up and it realised from the polls that land rights in Western Australia were not very popular at all. In fact, I am quite confident that, had it persevered with the original proposal, it would not be the government of today.

Mr Speaker, this government will continue to work for land rights legislation for the Northern Territory which is in the best interests of all Territorians. The members opposite are confused as they find themselves in conflict with their federal masters.

Mr LEO (Nhulunbuy): Mr Speaker, I happen to come from a mining town which is the subject of a land rights claim and I imagine that allows me to speak with some authority on this matter. There are a couple of myths that need to be dispelled. The first relates to the dreaded white adviser. If you went anywhere in my electorate and spoke to various Aboriginal people and told them directly that they were being directed by white advisers, they would fall over laughing or punch you in the mouth. It is an absolute fallacy. That is the first myth to get rid of and I can speak about it from certain personal knowledge.

Secondly, many people view Aboriginal people as one total group - 'Aboriginal people' means all Aboriginal people. Of course, that is not true. There are many families and many and varied attitudes to mining, health, education, community development, the outstation movement etc.

The people who live in the wonderland called Darwin, the members for Jingili and Wagaman and the 2 ministers who have spoken, need to come to grips with the reality of what land rights mean to Aboriginal people. I look at the social nightmare of Alice Springs and the social nightmare of Tennant Creek - and I am sure the Chief Minister would agree that it is a social nightmare.

Mr Tuxworth: I do.

Mr LEO: There is also the social nightmare in Katherine. I would not pretend for a second that race relations in Nhulunbuy are perfect but, compared to Alice Springs, Katherine and Tennant Creek, it has to be off the blocks by about 200 miles. It is a far more pleasant place to live. I admit that I have a degree of bias in this matter, but that is certainly my observation on various communities of comparable size throughout the Northern Territory.

I would suggest for the edification of most members that they go back to the Woodward Report. As Woodward said, it is inevitable that integration will happen; it is as certain as night follows day. However, there are 2 ways that it can happen. Throughout the world, where integration has been forced on people, it has been spectacularly unsuccessful. If, however - and I will admit it would be the first time it has been tried - people are allowed to intergrate at their own rate, they may integrate successfully and become a viable part of the broader community. The general development of a land rights policy is based on this premise. I would suggest that all members who have not read the Woodward Report do so for their own edification.

The question has been asked many times: are we any closer to the solution? It seems that we are not. Land rights legislation has only been in the Territory for 10 years. In the chewing gum society that we live in today, 10 years is forever. However, if we are looking 200 years ahead to cohesive, developed society, I suggest that 10 years is not very long at all. If we are to approach the social and economic development of the Northern Territory in a rational way, then I would suggest that people start looking 10, 20 or 100 years ahead. Try to imagine what the Northern Territory will be like if we end up with an Aboriginal population which is socially and economically at the bottom of the heap. We will have absolute disaster in the Northern Territory, and there is nothing more certain than that. I can appreciate the frustrations of mining companies. Their interest is profits; that is the only reason they are in business. Talking to Aboriginal groups is totally removed from profits, and from the interests of those mining companies. I can certainly understand their frustrations.

All we hear from this government, however, is continued, carping negativism. As the member for Stuart asked, how many positive statements have we heard from this government about those Aboriginal people, about their aspirations, about their social and economic development? All we hear is carping negativism. I hope that the next time the minister addresses this very important matter of the economic development of the Northern Territory, he does it with some degree of positiveness. Then, perhaps, we will be able to look ahead for perhaps 100 years and see a future for this Northern Territory.

Mr DALE (Wanguri): Mr Speaker, I have been confused about one matter only in this debate. It concerns what the Aboriginal people of the Northern Territory want. It seems to me that a veto on mining and not on exploration is like asking a team to come and play football with you whilst telling them that perhaps there will not be a football to play with. That is what the veto is all about.

The member for Stuart spoke about the veto taking away the negotiating ability of traditional owners. That is absolute nonsense. I would like to hear him explain how 'veto' means negotiate. He certainly was grasping at a straw that did not exist. Why is there a need for a veto? Is it to save the land for the Aboriginal people - land that they already have or have under claim? It is being used, particularly by Northern Land Council. It is very interesting that the member for the electorate which contains the Ranger uranium mine has not spoken on this subject yet. The negotiating powers of the traditional owners in that area have always been there. I can only see one fact resulting from the veto: it has prevented further exploration and mining. All substantial negotiations took place prior to the Land Rights Act.

We are no closer to solving the problems posed by the Land Rights Act but there is a great deal of hope for the social development of the Aboriginal people. This is particularly so when you take into account some of the royalties Aboriginal people could obtain if the other 18 potential mines could be opened up. Let me give some figures. Ranger made up-front payments of \$1.9m: \$200 000 was paid 7 days from execution of agreement between the NLC and the Commonwealth; \$200 000 was paid 30 days after the issue of authority to work on the mine; \$300 000 was paid 30 days after the primary crusher and concrete structure were completed to tipping truck level; \$300 000 was paid 30 days after the power generation plant was commissioned; \$300 000 was paid 30 days after a specific production target; and a further \$600 000 was paid to meet part of the NLC's administrative costs associated with the Ranger project.

Mr B. Collins: You are just jealous.

Mr DALE: The Leader of the Opposition says that I am jealous.

Mr B. Collins: You cannot see past the dollar signs.

Mr DALE: I am not jealous, Mr Speaker. What concerns me is the welfare of the Leader of the Opposition's constituents. This is because, only a couple of months ago, a lady who was a former constituent of the Leader of the Opposition came to my electorate office saying: 'Please, can you help us get a Housing Commission house because we do not see any of the royalties that have been paid to the NLC'. The majority of all Northern Territorians are against the veto for mining exploration, and I include the majority of Aboriginal people.

I would certainly like to hear the member for Arafura speak on this matter. I know that there have been allegations of misuse of royalties. What are the mining royalties being used for by the NLC? One wonders whether they are going into Aboriginal legal aid coffers. Are they being used to fight legal battles about whether or not school bussing contracts ought to be let? Where does it stop? Where does the money stop - not the buck - because the money is not getting through to the people? That is my concern as a Territorian. It is my concern that people who are on \$46 000 a year do not have to pay their legal expenses. We have an undertaking from the member for Arnhem that he would in fact pay for some expenses that he incurred with the Northern Territory Legal Aid Service. I agree that he had no legal obligation to pay those expenses. But, surely he had a moral obligation ...

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The honourable member is out of order. His remarks bear no relationship to this debate.

Mr DALE: I conclude my comments by saying that this government has concern for all Territorians. We want to see mining developed. We want to see Aboriginal people negotiate with mining companies for the betterment of all Northern Territorians but, moreover, for the betterment of Aboriginal Northern Territorians.

Mr B. COLLINS (Opposition Leader): Mr Speaker, the honourable member for Jingili said that the Northern Territory is a unique community. Indeed, the Northern Territory is a unique community. You need to talk to the visitors who come here to gain an idea of the uniqueness of the Territory because those of us who live here, being so close to the action, quite often cannot see the wood for the trees. In his contribution, the member for Wanguri as usual indicated that he was speaking on this subject as he does on most other subjects - from profound ignorance.

If you talk to people who visit us as our guests in the Northern Territory, the one thing that makes the Territory truly unique for them is the contribution which is made to the Northern Territory's lifestyle by our Aboriginal Territorians. We are indeed unique in that we have in the Northern Territory, as in few other places in Australia, a living culture of original Australians who have managed to preserve, for various reasons that I do not have time to go over now, a unique lifestyle and a unique collection of indigenous Australian languages which cannot be found in very many other parts of Australia. There are a multiplicity of contributing reasons for that. One is the original work of the missions in the Northern Territory, particularly that of what is now the Uniting Church. It had a far more enlightened

approach, I must say, than my own church. The work that those churches did originally and the public reaction in Australia to gross abuses of human rights, such as the Conniston massacre, enabled the Aboriginal people of the Northern Territory to preserve that lifestyle.

Coupled with that - and its a colourful part of the Northern Territory's history - was the aggressive and warlike nature of many of the Northern Territory's Aboriginal Australians. The Tiwi islanders were renowned for it. The people in Arnhem Land around the area of Port Essington were renowned for being extremely warlike. There were many incidents of encroachments into Aboriginal land that were resisted fiercely by Aboriginal people in the Northern Territory in a way that did not happen in other places in Australia. Indeed, many tragic stories can be told of some of those early intrusions, and the death or maiming of the people concerned.

For all those reasons, Northern Territory Aboriginal people have managed to preserve in very large part their lifestyle in a unique manner. When you go elsewhere in Australia, that culture, so precious to this country, has been lost and, in every case, the reason is quite simple. It is because the Aboriginal Australians have lost their languages, their religious observances, their art and their land. It is as simple as that. The honourable member for Wanguri asked why there was a need for a veto. He went on to say that the only purpose for which a veto is needed is for use in negotiating mining agreements to obtain more money. He went on to talk about all the money involved, and he asked why we need a veto.

When speaking in this Assembly on behalf of the 7000 or so Aboriginal Territorians whom I represent, I never talk about the land councils because I am not in here to defend what they do or do not do; I speak on behalf of my constituents. There are thousands of Aboriginal Territorians in my electorate and other electorates who live in small family communities. There are over 100 of them between Oenpelli and Yirrkala who are not interested in the Labor Party, the Liberal Party, the land councils, the mining companies or in money of any description whatsoever. There are thousands of Aboriginal Territorians who are in that position. In the main, they are inarticulate because they do not come to Darwin often. In the main, they are inarticulate because many of them have very little grasp of the English language. All they want is to be left alone. They do not want the mining companies, they do not want money, they do not want anyone coming near them - politicians, negotiators or anyone else. They want simply the opportunity, for whatever years are left to them in which to do it, to preserve the unique lifestyle that they enjoy. In my view, as a white Territorian, they have a right to continue to enjoy it. Unfortunately, this blinkered government, this government that cannot see past the dollar signs in its eyes, this government that continually equates the welfare of Aboriginals with how much money it can get from mining agreements or anything else, refuses to believe that any other perception of life is a relevant one. The member for Wanguri is firmly placed in that camp.

Mr Speaker, in an address delivered to a number of journalists from major Australian newspapers during his \$300 000 tour of Australia, the Chief Minister said - and I have quoted this before - that Aboriginal Territorians contribute nothing to the Northern Territory's economy, and he will stand condemned for all time for that contribution. If you want to be completely merciless about this and forget the human resource and simply talk about the financial resource, and if you go to Queensland or New South Wales, my case will be proven very easily. The fact is that we have a unique repository, in terms of Australian culture and Australian art form in the Northern Territory,

which is superior to any in this country. The simple reason for that is Aboriginal Australians in the Northern Territory have been able to retain control over their land. Land rights has never been an issue for the Aboriginal people of the Tiwi islands, unlike the Aboriginal people in central Australia, because they have never been placed under direct threat by the encroachment of cattle producers or mining companies. The Aboriginal people in Arnhem Land, who are still in the fortunate position of remaining largely untouched by these issues, provide an absolutely irreplaceable source of unique Australian art which is much sought after elsewhere in this world.

It may be of some interest to honourable members to know that Aboriginal art is our most productive indigenous industry in the Northern Territory. It earns an export income for the Northern Territory in excess of \$4m a year. It is an industry that is irreplaceable. What honourable members opposite can never see past the dollar signs in their eyes is that the culture that is at the base of that kind of production, if they want to look at it in economic terms - and I am talking the only language that they appear to understand - is not like our forests, an absolutely inexhaustible supplier. As it is used up, so it disappears. The cold, hard fact is that the production by young Aboriginal people of that kind of unique Australian lifestyle and contribution to our art, which it would be tragic to lose, is tied up with the observance of Aboriginal religion. That seems to be something that honourable members opposite cannot comprehend. The bark paintings and log coffins are uniquely bound into an Aboriginal observance of their religious life.

Mr Speaker, it is a practice of religion that I cannot accept. It is not something that accords with my beliefs or philosophy, but I respect the right of that religion to continue because those people who practise it daily in my electorate believe in it. As a result of those religious observances, Aboriginal artists - and thank goodness some young ones continue to take it up - do not simply copy those magnificent barks and other works of art from a book. Those barks are their pictorial representation of a living culture. If the government wants to continue to use that up without replacing it, it will be gone forever.

In Queensland, there is an organisation called Aboriginal Creations. It is a sad shadow of what we have in the Northern Territory. It is funded by the Queensland government and a great many part-Aboriginal people in Queensland work for it. It produces Aboriginal works of art which it sells through its outlet in Brisbane, and I have been there many times. You can buy a bark painting in Aboriginal Creations in Brisbane for \$30. That bark painting will be a copy of an original work of art from Milingimbi, Galiwinku, Yirrkala or Groote Eylandt, done in acrylic paint. Unfortunately, that is where Aboriginal Australians in Queensland are at.

Fortunately, we have the real thing in the Northern Territory, not acrylic copies at \$30 a pop. We have it because the Aboriginal people, who have produced that irreplaceable fund of unique Australian culture, have kept their land. That is the only reason for its existence. If they lose their land, that art form and their languages will go with it, the way they have everywhere else in Australia.

When the Chief Minister opened a tourist seminar in Kakadu National Park, he commenced his speech by saying that the secret to selling our 2 major national parks, Kakadu and Uluru, was in emphasising the Aboriginal aspects of both those parks. I agree with him completely, Mr Speaker. Indeed, honourable members will not need to strain their brains to recall the theme of

the advertising for Uluru: 'Land of the Dreamtime'. There were 2 Territorian lottery tickets with Paddy Uluru's face on the front of them. If you talk to the hotel operators in the Northern Territory, they will tell you privately, and indeed some of them have said it publicly, that what they want in the Northern Territory's tourist industry is not less involvement of Aboriginal people but more involvement of Aboriginal people because, along with our magnificent flora and fauna and our landscape, that is what makes the Northern Territory unique.

I am not putting us down but white people in the Northern Territory are very similar to white Australians anywhere else in Australia. We are the same highly-urbanised bunch of people who cling to the coast, apart from those brave souls who live in Alice Springs. In our outlook, our philosophy, our way of life and our appreciation of art, we are similar to Australians elsewhere. People do not come to see that. They come to see our national parks and the Aboriginal culture that exists here. If we keep using it up and do not replace it or we do not put into place a farsighted government with a real vision for what the Northern Territory should be 100 years from now, it will disappear in exactly the same way that it has disappeared everywhere else in Australia.

We heard the same tired, old arguments this morning from the member for Jingili about land rights being apartheid. It is about time that thinking members of parliament in Australia forgot about the rhetoric and the tired old lines that are trotted out and looked at the reality. I cannot say it any better than Mr Justice Brennan did in the High Court of Australia. He said that the difference between apartheid and land rights is the difference between a prison and a home. It is about time honourable members opposite starting realising that.

Mr Speaker, I have had some very firm views on the veto which have been extremely unpalatable to the land councils in the Northern Territory. Despite the threats of the withdrawal of political support - and I have had those threats from former Ministers for Aboriginal Affairs as well as Chairmen of the Northern Land Council - I have never been frightened to put my views on those issues. I said in this Assembly last year, and was attacked for it in certain quarters, that I have always objected to the veto being for sale. I believe that the principles enunciated by Mr Justice Woodward should be the overriding principles in respect of this most contentious issue of the mining veto. Mr Justice Woodward described land rights as the doing of a simple justice to Aboriginal Australians who have so far been denied it. Indeed, I agree with him on that as well.

To answer the honourable member for Wanguri's question, in my view the veto exists for the benefit of those thousands of Aboriginal Territorians who do not want mining on their land. In my view - and I say this unblushingly - they are entitled to that position. I profoundly object to the situation - and this is not a criticism of the land councils - where that veto can be negotiated away. I have always said that. Not unreasonably, the land councils have used the powers under the Land Rights Act that have been given to them in respect of that matter in the same way that any other Australians will use the provisions of any law to their benefit or to defend themselves in a court. Much to the discomfiture of some people in the land councils, I am pleased to say that I have succeeded in the representations that I made to the federal government in respect of changes to the Land Rights Act to cause that matter to be resolved. Indeed, the twofold changes that have been brought to the Land Rights Act - the provision of the 5-year, 'go away and do not come

back after we say no' clause to protect them against land councils, and the clarification of the veto position so that it can be only for the purpose of refusing mining on Aboriginal land - are part of the same package.

For the member for Wanguri's sake, the veto is for those people who want an opportunity in this affluent country of ours to ask for just a few more years. People say to me: 'Why do you argue in this fashion? It is simply a time-buying exercise? You are just putting off the inevitable'. That may well be true but I have been elected into the Assembly to put a point of view for those people in my electorate whose feelings and aspirations in these issues I know only too well. For the benefit of members, and this of course is where we come to the crunch in the land rights argument, there are thousands of Aboriginal Territorians who simply do not want mining or the money.

Mr Coulter: You're talking of 1% of Australians.

Mr B. COLLINS: The honourable members continue to distinguish themselves in this debate. With some degree of feeling, I say in response to the Minister for Community Development's interjection that they are 1% of Australia indeed. But we are not in this Assembly to pass laws for Australia. We are here for the good government of the Northern Territory and Aboriginal Territorians comprise 25% of our population. They are continuing to be dehumanised by brainless members of this Assembly like the Minister for Community Development and the Chief Minister who refuse to admit that they even exist.

When members opposite are talking about the Land Rights Act - and the Chief Minister opposite does it often - they say that the act has been in existence for 10 years and it has not worked. They actually believe that because they simply dehumanise and remove from their consideration the 25% of Territorians for whom the act has worked. They are the Territorians for whom that act was provided by the conservative government of Malcolm Fraser. With all its faults and failings, I can assure members that, for those 25% of our people, the Land Rights Act has worked.

The Minister for Community Development says that Aboriginal people in the Northern Territory comprise only 1% of Australia's population and therefore deserve no consideration whatever.

Mr Coulter: I said that 0.3 of 1% of Australia's population is ...

Mr B. COLLINS: He is elected for the good government of the Northern Territory. Once again, judging by their interjections and contributions to this debate, we see that the Northern Territory is doomed to many more years, if this government remains in office, of racial tension, of continual degradation of the Aboriginal contribution to the Northern Territory, and of the further degradation of Aboriginal people as human beings and Territorians.

We have, as the member for Jingili said, a unique style of life in the Northern Territory. We have a unique community. We have a precious Australian resource in the Northern Territory and, if we do not take some enlightened action, it will disappear in the same way and for the same reasons that it has disappeared elsewhere in Australia. I would suggest to members opposite, when they discuss the unconditional removal of the veto in their version of the Northern Territory Land Rights Act, that they are dooming that unique Australian culture, the Aboriginal culture and its languages and art in

the Northern Territory, to the same fate that has overtaken it everywhere else in this country.

Mr PERRON (Mines and Energy): Mr Speaker, if we followed the Leader of the Opposition's arguments to the end, we would all pack our bags and leave the Northern Territory so that the Aboriginals could have it all to themselves. Perhaps we could put a big fence around it so that no white man could ever step back over the borders. Typically, he took the time of the Assembly to over-dramatise the situation grossly, to have us all believe that to allow exploration and mining on Aboriginal land would destroy totally any ability for Aboriginals to maintain a traditional lifestyle. That, of course, is a load of tripe.

I would like to touch on a couple of points that members raised during the course of debate. The member for MacDonnell said that the investment of dollars in exploration and mining is influenced by many things of which access to land is but one, and indeed I agree. He mentioned low metal prices, federal uranium policies, and the Northern Territory's Royalty Act. Whilst it is true that those things do have an influence on mining companies when they are allocating their budgets, the fact is that, if you do not have access to prospective land, all the other factors are quite irrelevant. If you want to compare the relative importance of the factors which influence decisions about mining and spending money, you cannot escape that; if you do not have an area of land to explore in, you can forget the rest. You would certainly be wasting your time.

It is true that prices do have an effect. However, prices move up and down over comparatively short periods whilst mines are developed over long ones. There is an average minimum of 7 years between discovery of a deposit and developing a mine, and an average of 20 years overall. There are mines in the Territory, like McArthur River, which would certainly stretch the average a little bit. Mining companies are aware that today's metal prices are quite likely to be just a dip or a crest in the market curve. They know prices will change, and they do not lose their interest in seeking minerals which they believe have long-term futures. Uranium would be a good example.

That brings us to another point raised by the member for MacDonnell. He said perhaps mining companies are not interested in getting onto this land because of federal government policies, such as its refusal to allow the export of uranium. If this is true, why do we have companies in the Northern Territory today, as they have been ever since the Labor Party came to power, chafing at the bit to get into prospective areas for uranium? They know that the present federal government will not be there forever. They know that one day some enlightenment will fall upon this country as a result of hard times or wiser heads. One day enlightenment will come to this country, and it will realise it can no longer sit on the world's cheapest uranium and tell the rest of the world to go and jump in the lake. Those companies, a number of them tied in with foreign governments, are interested in our uranium. They are working really hard and are prepared to spend big money. It is not federal policies that are making the mining companies reluctant; it is more likely to be the lack of access to land.

The Territory's royalty rate was mentioned by the member for Stuart. I did not think he would mention it because one of his great faux pas of late was on the subject of the Territory's profits-based uranium system and whether or not it was a disincentive to mining. He said in a press release of 13 February 1986 that exploration and mining in the Territory was shrinking

because of poor international prices, coupled with the Territory's relatively high royalty rate. He went on to suggest a 20% reduction in the royalty rate for 4 years. The miners laughed at that, of course, because it takes 8 years to find the mines. It would not make much difference to exploration. He then said that Western Australia has experienced steady growth in exploration activity while having one of the highest royalty rates in Australia. He was quite correct in that, but it destroyed his first argument. It is not the royalty rate that they are interested in but accessibility to prospective land.

The member for MacDonnell made a couple of amazing statements which will certainly go down in history. One was that the proposed amendments to the Land Rights Act will create a balanced and reasonable regime. That was amazing. He said further that the 5-year freeze is a positive move. It certainly is not a positive move for mining in the Northern Territory. I guess one could argue that it is a positive move for those Aboriginals who do not want to know about anybody or any government and who say: 'Leave us alone. We will pretend that the rest of the world does not exist'.

We were told that we do not try to assist mining companies to consult with Aboriginal land councils so that they can learn how things are done and make some progress in negotiations. We are asked why we do not advise them how long these matters take. The problem is we do not know how long such negotiations take because we have never made it. No mining company has ever reached agreement with the land councils. We can be no help at all to anyone who wants to know how long it would take to negotiate access to Aboriginal land for exploration purposes. We do not know; no one has ever been successful. For all our sakes, I hope that somebody will be successful one day.

Land rights is now right out of hand in terms of the thinking of the original proponents of land rights legislation. When the bills were first introduced, the federal Hansard indicates that it was believed that 25% of the Northern Territory could possibly become Aboriginal land. Later, a figure of 28% was used by a former Minister for Aboriginal Affairs, Senator Chaney, the minister administering the act in the government that passed the legislation. That figure was used to combat the scurrilous racist talk abroad in the Northern Territory that 50% of the Territory could become Aboriginal land.

Those statements are quite famous; we have heard about them many times. We know that 48% to 50% of the Territory is now Aboriginal land or land under claim. We also know that, if the ability to buy and claim pastoral properties is not stopped by amendments to the act, over a period of time, with the income that is available to Aboriginal organisations today from government and from mining royalties, 90% of the Northern Territory could become Aboriginal land. As the honourable member for Nhulunbuy said, let us not think in terms of 5 or 10 years but rather in terms of 50 or 100 years. 25% of the population by then could own 90% of the Northern Territory under inalienable freehold. I guess that will be scoffed at as racist talk, just as the reference to 32% was scoffed at. It is now 50%.

The honourable member for Nhulunbuy spoke about mining companies' requirements being totally different from those of the rest of society. They are seen as profit-hungry people whose only interest is in making a dollar. I do not think that their needs are very different from the needs of the rest of society. To play an active role in the world today, we need some form of economic base. Our society has been structured such that the Crown owns all

the minerals. Laws across Australia allow mining companies with licences from the Crown to go on to private land to seek Crown minerals. That system was designed so that no Australian could sit back and say: 'I do not care how many billions might be under my land by way of value or strategic material, you are not going to get at it because I want some peace'.

The government has broader responsibilities ranging from defence to welfare. This country has to generate more wealth now than ever before. I have been told that, for the first time in history, this country's welfare bill exceeds personal income tax collections by the government. That is astounding. All the taxes paid by all the working people in this country is not enough ...

Mr Bell: How is this relevant?

Mr PERRON: ... to pay the welfare bill.

It is relevant in the sense that we are talking about access to the wealth of this nation on behalf of this nation. Do we want to continue forever as a handout society? Are we to continue adding to the list of people who say that they cannot make it in this society without handouts? If we are to keep adding to that list, we will have to keep adding to the wealth base of the country to afford it all. When I went to school, the country used to ride on the sheep's back. I do not know where sheep fit into our earnings these days; they are still significant but we are not riding on their backs anymore. I have not heard about sheep for years. Wheat is still a big export earner. I think there was even a time when Australia exported some manufactured goods because we had a work force that was a little more internationally competitive than it is today.

The wealth and power of the Arab nations in the world today results from the wealth that they have under the ground that other people want. We all know and the Arabs know that, when there is no oil, no one will want to know them. Australia has enormous wealth in its mineral reserves that the rest of the world wants to get at and which we should be exploiting under sensible policies to make the country able to support the lifestyle we all seem to think that we can afford to carry on with. In addition to our international responsibility to assist with minerals such as uranium to supply the world's energies, through a large exporting program for uranium, we could significantly influence the world's uranium industry. Instead, this country seems to have taken the attitude that we will bury our heads in the sand. We will lock up 50% of the Northern Territory and, if the miners want to explore it, they can take their grubby little profit-seeking hands away. Hopefully, the crunch will not come when those people who are producing some wealth for this country cannot quite go far enough to feed all the hungry mouths and satisfy the hands that are held out to the Australian government and to the state governments to try to obtain something for nothing. You do not get anything without earning it.

Motion agreed to.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

Mr FINCH (Wagaman): Mr Speaker, the honourable member for Stuart claimed that I stated during my speech that I was totally against land rights in all forms. Either the honourable member did not listen to what I said or ignored what I said. My statement was that I identified that there was a bipartisan

approach to land rights as it exists and that I supported those land rights generally. I also identified some disparity in land rights between states and a difference between Aboriginal land and the balance of Australia in a sensible utilisation of our national resources. Obviously Hansard will record exactly what I said. For the benefit of honourable members, the member for Stuart has deliberately misrepresented my position on land rights.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT
Electoral Distribution

Mr TUXWORTH (Chief Minister)(by leave): Mr Speaker, I wish to advise the Assembly that, as part of the ongoing electoral process, the government proposes to convene the Distribution Committee in order to conduct a redistribution of electors in the Territory. Honourable members will be aware that it is a requirement of the Northern Territory (Self-government) Act that the electoral populations of the electoral divisions of the Territory shall be of uniform size within a tolerance of 20% either way. As the last electoral distribution was conducted in 1983, and quite large movements in population have taken place since then, it is now time for another distribution to be held.

The Distribution Committee, constituted by the Electoral Act, consists of a chairman, presently Mr Norm Campbell, the Chief Electoral Officer and the Surveyor-General. The procedure for the conduct of an electoral distribution is laid down in the act. The committee is required first to invite suggestions from the public over a 30-day period. It then calls for comment on any suggestions so received. A further 14 days is allowed for this. Maps are then prepared for public display and objections are called for over a 30-day period. When this procedure is complete, the committee prepares a final report for the minister who in turn must table the report in this Assembly.

When making a distribution, in addition to ensuring that the electoral divisions are of a uniform size, the committee must give due consideration to each proposed division in respect of the following: community interests, including economic, social and regional interests; means of communication and travel with special reference to disabilities arising out of remoteness or distance; population densities and the trend of population changes; area and physical features of the proposed division; existing boundaries; and, lastly, any public suggestions or comments.

If the Assembly approves the report by resolution, the Administrator is required to declare the names and boundaries of the electoral divisions in the Gazette. The electoral office then prepares new rolls and advises those electors affected by the distribution. It will be seen that the conduct of an electoral distribution is a fairly lengthy process. Therefore, although it is approximately 2 years until general elections need to be called, it is proposed to convene the committee formally as soon as is practically convenient in order that the distribution may be concluded well in advance of the date for the next general elections. I move that the Assembly take note of the statement.

Mr B. COLLINS (Opposition Leader): Mr Speaker, there is no need for this matter to clutter the notice paper for any longer than is necessary so I will respond now.

The opposition supports the obvious need for a redistribution to be carried out in the Northern Territory because of the anomalies that clearly exist, particularly in some electorates. As the ABC quite correctly pointed out this morning, this is a lengthy process. I think the ABC said, incorrectly I believe, that it precluded the possibility of an early election. I agree that it makes it unlikely but there is nothing to prevent the government from calling an election on the current boundaries. Obviously, now that this announcement has been made, it is highly unlikely that that would occur.

The last time a redistribution was carried out, it was in fact a lengthy and exacting process. It is impossible to satisfy everybody, but the Distribution Committee in the Northern Territory certainly went to some lengths in respect of soliciting community views. It will obviously do that again. I would imagine that it will engage again in some fairly extensive travelling around the Northern Territory to obtain direct responses from organisations like town councils, sporting bodies and interested community groups. Redistribution excites people's interest, particularly in respect of the commonality of interest in an electorate. Many submissions were made the last time a redistribution was carried out. The committee has an obligation to consider those proposals carefully. It will be a lengthy process.

The Deputy Leader of the Opposition has a particular concern that he will raise concerning the Distribution Committee. I simply close by encouraging all Territorians who have real concerns about electoral boundaries to make their submissions so that the work can be expedited.

Mr SMITH (Millner): Mr Speaker, my particular concern is the proposed habitation review which I believe will be a joint Commonwealth/Northern Territory exercise. As I understand it, it is not proposed that the habitation review commence until 1 July. It is a major task which, on my information, will take 3 or 4 months to produce accurate figures. Until it is completed, it will be very difficult for the Distribution Committee to have any accurate information. I would think that the sensible approach, now that the Chief Minister has announced commencement of the electoral redistribution process, is for his government to consider bringing forward the habitation review as well. I stress again that, until the habitation review has been completed and it is known as precisely as possible where the people are, it will be very difficult indeed to draw up boundaries.

Mr TUXWORTH (Chief Minister): Mr Speaker, I take note of the point made by the member for Millner. However, I would like to point out also that one of our difficulties is the rate of growth in some areas of the Territory. I cite Katherine where we will build 370 homes in the next 12 to 18 months. Whether we have a habitation review now or in July, the population projection for Katherine will be an extremely difficult exercise. That is a vexing problem which the Distribution Committee will have to come to grips with. I guess we can only leave it to its best judgment. I would say in support of the committee that it has served the Northern Territory well in the past in relation to redistribution and the difficult exercise of increasing the number of seats. I think we would all agree that it is a difficult job. We will have to leave it to the committee's good judgment. However, I do take the point and I will raise it with the chairman.

Motion agreed to.

NOTICE OF MOTION
Censure of Chief Minister

Mr B. COLLINS (Opposition Leader): Mr Speaker, I withdraw the notice of motion of censure which I gave notice of this morning.

NOTICE OF MOTION

Mr B. COLLINS (Opposition Leader): Mr Speaker, I seek leave of the Assembly to give notice of a motion of want of confidence in the government.

Leave denied.

SUSPENSION OF STANDING ORDERS

Mr B. COLLINS (Opposition Leader): Mr Speaker, I move that so much of standing orders be suspended as would prevent me from moving a motion of want of confidence in the government forthwith.

The Assembly divided:

Ayes 6

Mr Bell
Mr B. Collins
Mr Ede
Mr Lanhupuy
Mr Leo
Mr Smith

Noes 19

Mr D.W. Collins
Mr Coulter
Mr Dale
Mr Dondas
Mr Finch
Mr Firmin
Mr Hanrahan
Mr Harris
Mr Hatton
Mr McCarthy
Mr Manzie
Mrs Padgham-Purich
Mr Palmer
Mr Perron
Mr Robertson
Mr Setter
Mr Steele
Mr Tuxworth
Mr Vale

Motion negatived.

NOTICE OF MOTION

Mr B. COLLINS (Opposition Leader): Mr Speaker, I seek leave of the Assembly to move a motion without notice that this Assembly censures the Chief Minister for giving a commitment to this Assembly on Thursday 20 March 1986 to provide this Assembly with all of the details in respect of his travelling allowance receipts in respect of both the years 1982 and 1983 and the financial year 1983-84. He has failed to provide those details to the Legislative Assembly and, because of his so doing, I call upon the Chief Minister forthwith to resign.

Leave denied.

SUSPENSION OF STANDING ORDERS

Mr B. COLLINS (Opposition Leader): Mr Speaker, I move that so much of standing orders be suspended as would prevent me from moving the motion forthwith.

The Assembly divided:

Ayes 6

Mr Bell
Mr B. Collins
Mr Ede
Mr Lanhupuy
Mr Leo
Mr Smith

Noes 19

Mr D.W. Collins
Mr Coulter
Mr Dale
Mr Dondas
Mr Finch
Mr Firmin
Mr Hanrahan
Mr Harris
Mr Hatton
Mr McCarthy
Mr Manzie
Mrs Padgham-Purich
Mr Palmer
Mr Perron
Mr Robertson
Mr Setter
Mr Steele
Mr Tuxworth
Mr Vale

Motion negatived.

MATTER OF PRIVILEGE

Mr B. COLLINS (Opposition Leader): Mr Speaker, I rise on a matter of privilege under standing order 83 of this Assembly. In accordance with standing order 87, I provide you with the matter complained of: page 20 from the daily Hansard dated Thursday 20 March where the Chief Minister gave a commitment to this Assembly regarding a most serious matter, concerning his improper receipt of large sums of public money in respect of tax-free travelling allowances paid over a period, on his own statement, of some 14 months. Over that period of time, on an unknown number of occasions, the Chief Minister of the Northern Territory filled out travelling allowance claims, paying himself in the vicinity of \$100 a day, tax-free, for the privilege of living in his own home with his wife and children. On that occasion, the Chief Minister said:

'I do not intend to leave this matter half resolved, with all the innuendo and suggestion that has been put forward by the Leader of the Opposition. I am going to have a comprehensive statement made up of all my travel since I have been in the Assembly because I have nothing to hide. I do not care what goes on the Table. People can have a look at it'.

In respect of that commitment given by the Chief Minister that he would table in this Assembly all of the documentation required of him so as not to leave the matter 'half resolved', and in respect of the contemptible behaviour

of this government which, for the first time in the history of this parliament, has refused to accept a motion of want of confidence in the government - indeed, the most serious motion that could be moved against this government or the Chief Minister - I raise this matter under standing order 83, as a breach of the privilege of this Assembly.

Mr SPEAKER: Members, I have listened to the Leader of the Opposition and, pursuant to standing order 84, I will advise the Assembly of my intentions on the next sitting day.

LAND AND BUSINESS AGENTS AMENDMENT BILL
(Serial 182)

Bill presented by leave and read a first time.

Mr SPEAKER: I have received the following letter from the Chief Minister.

'My Dear Speaker,

Land and Business Agents Amendment Bill (Serial 182)

Under section 50 of the Land and Business Agents Act, licensed agents are required to open a trust account at a bank in the Territory. At present, the definition of 'bank' under the act does not include state banks such as the State Bank of South Australia. Unfortunately, there are land and business agents who have already opened accounts with the State Bank of South Australia. These agents are accordingly in breach of the act. As things presently stand, these agents could be required to close their accounts with the State Bank of South Australia and open accounts with other banks. If the bill is not passed at the current sittings, hardship will be caused to the agents who are in technical breach, and the state bank will lose business. I therefore request, pursuant to standing order 179, that you declare the above bill to be an urgent bill

Yours sincerely,

Ian Tuxworth'.

Honourable members, I have considered the Chief Minister's request. In accordance, with standing order 179, I declare the Land and Business Agents Amendment Bill (Serial 182) to be an urgent bill.

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

Mr Speaker, under section 50 of the Land and Business Agents Act, trust accounts must be opened by licensed agents at a bank in the Territory. The present definition of 'bank' contained in section (5) of the act does not accommodate body corporates authorised under a law of a state or a law in force in the Territory to carry on banking in Australia. This bill remedies this deficiency. It was never intended that the land and business agents be prohibited from the use of facilities of state banks. To that end, land and business agents have already opened accounts with the State Bank of South Australia, following its commencement of operations in the Northern Territory last year. The commencement of the amending act has been backdated to save the prior use of the facilities of the State Bank of South Australia by land and business agents.

Mr Speaker, the matter is pretty clear. I wrote to the Leader of the Opposition about this matter which was brought to our attention quite recently. Somewhat embarrassingly for many people, it was learned that the act allowing land and business agents to open accounts did not allow them to open accounts with state banks that are set up under their own legislation. We propose to process this legislation through all stages at these sittings.

Debate adjourned.

HOSPITAL MANAGEMENT BOARDS AMENDMENT BILL
(Serial 183)

Bill presented by leave and read a first time.

Mr SPEAKER: Honourable members, I have received the following letter from the Chief Minister:

'Mr Dear Speaker,

Hospitals Management Boards Amendment Bill (Serial 183).

Pursuant to standing order 179, I request that you declare the above bill to be an urgent bill. The bill proposes amendments to include provision for the senior medical officer of a hospital to be an ex-officio member of the board. At present, the person in charge of a hospital is not necessarily the Medical Superintendent. The absence of senior medical advisers has been of considerable concern to the boards and this should be rectified speedily.

It is also proposed to remove the requirement for annual inspection of hospitals by the Secretary for Health and the board each June. June is a difficult month for persons in private industry, and some board members are thus required to participate at an inconvenient time. Consequently, it is complained that June inspections are sometimes scant. A reasonable spread of time for the hospital, the board and the secretary would be of benefit. In order to avoid hardship, it is necessary that the amendment be commenced as soon as possible.

Yours sincerely,
Ian Tuxworth'.

Honourable members I have considered the Chief Minister's request and, pursuant to standing order 179, I declare the Hospital Management Boards Amendment Bill (Serial 183) to be an urgent bill.

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

This is a simple bill which makes 2 changes to the principal act. The first change is to provide for the membership of each board to include the senior medical officer of the hospital and inspection by a board in the presence of the Secretary for Health to take place at any time during the year which is convenient to both the board and the Secretary for Health.

The opportunity has been taken also to update some references in the definition sections. Because of administrative changes in the Department of

Health due to regionalisation, it has been the usual practice to appoint regional Directors of Health as persons in charge of the hospitals in their regions. Because the medical superintendents of hospitals are not appointed persons in charge, the current Hospital Management Boards Act does not provide for their membership of the boards. The boards have expressed their concern at this situation and have requested that the act be amended to provide that the medical officer in charge of medical services in each hospital be a member of the hospital board.

The boards have also advised of problems caused by provisions of the act in relation to inspections of hospitals. The requirement that the annual inspection of each hospital, which must be made in the presence of the Secretary of Health during the month of June, causes great difficulty. They have asked for an amendment to allow the annual inspection to be carried out at any convenient time during the year.

I believe the amendments requested are reasonable and invite the support of all honourable members. I have also corresponded recently with the Leader of the Opposition and I thank him for his support in allowing this simple piece of legislation to pass through all stages during these sittings.

Debate adjourned.

TABLED PAPER
Ninth Report of Subordinate Legislation
and Tabled Papers Committee

Mr FINCH (Wagaman): Mr Speaker, I lay on the table the ninth report of the Subordinate Legislation and Tabled Papers Committee.

SUSPENSION OF STANDING ORDERS

Mr PERRON (Attorney-General): Mr Speaker, I move that so much of standing orders be suspended as would prevent the Commission of Inquiry (Chamberlain Convictions) Bill (Serial 172) passing through all stages at these sittings.

Motion agreed to.

COMMISSION OF INQUIRY (CHAMBERLAIN CONVICTIONS) BILL
(Serial 172)

Continued from 19 March 1986.

Mr B. COLLINS (Opposition Leader): Mr Speaker, the opposition supports the bill.

Motion agreed to; bill read a second time.

Mr PERRON (Attorney-General)(by leave): Mr Speaker, I move that the bill be read a third time.

Motion agreed to; bill read a third time.

LAW OFFICERS AMENDMENT BILL
(Serial 165)

Continued from 20 March 1986.

Motion agreed to; bill read a second time.

In committee:

Clauses 1 to 5 agreed to.

Clause 6:

Mr SMITH: Mr Chairman, I move amendment 61.1.

This is an amendment to clause 6 to omit from proposed new subsection 14(e) 'except with the consent of the Attorney-General'. The effect of the amendment is to take away the discretion of the Attorney-General to authorise the Solicitor General to take work as a legal practitioner or to engage in any other form of paid employment.

In our view, it is a matter of principle that the prime law officer in the Northern Territory should not have the opportunity to involve himself in legal practice or in any other paid employment. Our checks reveal that there is no provision in either Commonwealth or state legislation to allow the Solicitor General in those jurisdictions to have the right of taking on additional work. The principle is almost self-evident. It is that the prime law officer should be above the demands of taking up any other sort of legal work at all.

The obvious problem that could arise is a conflict of interest. Of course, if the government proposes to oppose this particular amendment, it will argue that the Attorney-General has the power only to approve legal practice for the Solicitor General when, in his opinion, there is no conflict of interest. We would put the counter argument that it would be very difficult indeed to come up with a situation where the supreme legal officer in the Northern Territory could take on legal work without there being a potential conflict of interest. In our view, it is essential that the Solicitor General be regarded as the full-time legal officer of the Northern Territory government and that he not have any freedom or flexibility to engage in legal practice of his own even if it is with the consent of the Attorney-General. It is a very important principle. It will safeguard the interests of the Northern Territory if our amendment is accepted and it will ensure that we have a Solicitor General who is committed to working full-time in the interests of the Northern Territory.

Mr PERRON: Mr Chairman, I have not been persuaded by the honourable member's arguments. This is clearly a matter where we have a difference of opinion. That is demonstrated by the situation in the states. It appears that a right to engage in some other employment, with the necessary authority, is given to the Solicitors General in Western Australia, Queensland, Tasmania and South Australia. However, the other states do not provide that ability. Clearly, it is simply a difference of opinion.

I felt that one of the most compelling arguments for such a provision was that one might need to recruit a Solicitor General at some time in the future. Bear in mind that few people in the country fulfil the requirements for such a job. One looks for an outstanding lawyer. The person whom the Territory wished to recruit might be involved in a case of some significance, quite unconnected with the Northern Territory. It could be anywhere in Australia. Indeed, it could be elsewhere in the world that such a person was recruited. To enable him to start with the Northern Territory, for example, he may need to continue on some special arrangement for a period of months or to conclude

by giving some advice for which he would be entitled to some payment. It may even be that the arrangement for the first 6 months of his engagement would be that he be paid half salary because he would be only working half-time.

The legislation is providing flexibility to allow, with the Attorney-General's authority, a Solicitor General to engage in some other employment, be it as a legal practitioner or otherwise. I direct the honourable member to proposed new paragraph 14(e)(ii) which refers to 'any other paid employment'. Nothing comes to mind at the moment of a situation whereby such a person may seek to contribute to some organisation or board that was quite innocent, harmless and divorced from government. The opposition's amendment would prevent him in any way entertaining any such offers.

I am not saying that it would be impossible to administer the legislation with the honourable member's amendment. I am saying that it is simply a matter of opinion. It seems that 4 states in Australia allow the Solicitor General to engage in some other work in certain circumstances. The other states do not. I think that the flexibility for the Northern Territory in recruiting a Solicitor General is desirable.

Mr LEO: Mr Chairman, in speaking in support of the proposed amendment, I must say that it gets back to that old adage: justice not only must be done but it must be seen to be done. Not only must the integrity of the Crown's chief law officer be intact, it must be seen to be intact. By allowing the bill to become law without the amendment, the public, and particularly the legal fraternity, would be justified in supposing that, whilst the integrity of the Crown's chief law officer may in fact be intact, it may not necessarily be seen to be intact. That is what is so important about this senior position within the Attorney-General's department. I appreciate that, under some circumstances, when the Attorney-General seeks to employ the best person for the job, certain transitional arrangements may be necessary. But there is a much better way to do it than by this open-ended provision in the bill.

While I accept the Attorney-General's assertion that it is neither his nor the government's intention to jeopardise the integrity of the Crown's chief law officer, this legislation will allow that to happen. It comes down to a fundamental matter of principle. The Attorney-General says that 4 states in Australia have this practice. I am afraid I do not agree with the practice of those states. It is contradictory and it is unsatisfactory. I suppose one could draw on examples from all over the world of where this type of legislation is unacceptable. I suppose you would find as many examples where it is acceptable, in Australia, in the Commonwealth and throughout the world. I must say that this is a matter of fundamental importance to the Northern Territory because the Crown's chief law officer is in a position of crucial importance. I do not believe that the position can be left as open-ended as this. If some transitional arrangements have to be made for the employment of a new Solicitor General, I urge the Attorney-General to implement them in some other way. As it stands, this bill will permit any Attorney-General to allow any Solicitor General to conduct whatever work he likes outside his office. I do not think that that is satisfactory.

Mr D.W. COLLINS: Mr Chairman, if I heard the member for Nhulunbuy correctly, he said that he could envisage situations where it might be advisable that the incoming Solicitor General might be allowed to continue some work of a legal nature so that we can attract the appropriate person to the office. He then went on to say that, if we pass the bill in its current

form, the gentleman in question will be able to do virtually anything he likes. He forgets, however, that there is a safeguard in that any such activity has to be screened by the Attorney-General. I have a great deal of faith in the common sense of Attorneys-General, whether of this side or the other side. If an application were made which, in the Attorney-General's opinion, could jeopardise the integrity of this particular officer, then the answer would be a very resounding no. I think the safeguard is there with the bill in its current form, and the flexibility is there if we need it. The occasion may arise in some circumstances where we need to allow the Solicitor General to do some other work, particularly if it relates to another nation or state and has no effect on the Territory. I believe that flexibility is important, and we must safeguard it. The Attorney-General will be the filter and I am sure that, if he made a bad decision, the opposition would give him a considerable bucketing. He would take that into account.

Mr SMITH: Mr Chairman, the minister has not been terribly convincing about his reasons for wanting this permanent power. As the member for Nhulunbuy said, we can accept that there may be some transitional arrangements that would be necessary and it should not be beyond the wit of our highly-skilled parliamentary draftsmen to design an appropriate clause. However, it is another case of brute force and numbers being used. I do not want to press that particular issue.

However, I want to express another concern. I would feel much happier about the existing clause if there were some requirement on the Attorney-General to report to the appropriate group - and probably the parliament - on the occasions where he has exercised his powers under proposed new paragraphs 14(e)(i) and (ii). I would ask the minister to consider an additional clause which would require the Attorney-General, where he does exercise those powers, to provide a section in the Annual Report of the Solicitor General's department which lists the occasions and the reasons for which approvals have been given. We do need a check. I do not believe that the present Attorney-General would misuse this power, but we never know what might happen in future. We need a public check to ensure that the Attorney-General and the Solicitor General do not get together and come up with a scheme or schemes to enhance the income of the Solicitor General, and perhaps provide for a backhander to the Attorney-General. There is no check written into this legislation that would prevent that type of occurrence. I think it is a real concern. I would feel much happier if a check along the lines I have suggested is facilitated. I would ask the minister to think carefully about that.

Mr PERRON: Mr Chairman, the best I can do for the honourable member is to say that I will take on board his suggestion for consideration in future amendments to this legislation. I am not convinced that it is entirely required. Having regard for the standing of the office of Solicitor General, I could see it only being on rare and unusual occasions that a Solicitor General would seek such an authority. Certainly, it would not be simply to earn a quid on the side; it would be for some unusual exercise. One possibility that has been suggested to me is that he might present a lecture at a university or at some occasion and be paid for it. One could perhaps say that the Solicitor General should always do that for nothing. I will not bother going down that track any further.

I think that there is value in retaining the flexibility. Of course, the opposition could ask at 12-monthly intervals whether the Attorney-General has exercised his powers under the provision. I will take on board the member's

suggestion that we consider an amendment at a subsequent stage to require reporting in an annual report.

Amendment negatived.

Mr SMITH: I move amendment 66.2.

This is to remove the proposed section 15, and insert in its stead the following:

'15. Removal of the Solicitor General from office.

The Administrator may remove the Solicitor General from office -

(a) if he becomes incapable other than by reason of temporary illness of performing the duties of his office;

(b) if he becomes bankrupt or insolvent, applies to take the benefit of any law for the relief of bankrupt or insolvent debtors, compounds with his creditors or makes an assignment of his remuneration for their benefit; or

(c) for any other cause which, in the opinion of the Administrator, is sufficient for him to be removed'.

Briefly, the redrafted provision relates to the removal from office of the Solicitor General. We have retained the grounds of incapacity and insolvency but we have widened the ground of misbehaviour to make it a more flexible provision which permits the removal of the Solicitor General for any reason that the Administrator thinks fit. We believe it is prudent to have the wider provision included. It is similar to a provision which exists in New South Wales legislation. Of course, in taking the decision, the Administrator will be guided by the advice given to him by the government of the day. One would accept that the government of the day would not be giving political advice on that sort of matter. But our fear is that the proposed section, as it stands, is too narrow. Without wanting to give particular examples of how it is too narrow, a situation may arise where the government feels that the Solicitor General should be replaced and yet not have the power under the proposed section to do it.

Mr PERRON: Mr Chairman, I can draw upon an argument offered by the member for Nhulunbuy in defence of the earlier amendment. In my second-reading speech, I said that I consider that the position of Solicitor General is an independent, non-administrative, non-policy-making office, more akin to a judicial or ombudsman appointment rather than a departmental head appointment, and that removal should only be for specific reasons. Under the opposition's amendment, the Solicitor General may be removed. The opposition has introduced 'may' whereas the bill has 'shall'. The amendment is fairly vague. It is difficult to anticipate what cause is sufficient to have this man removed. Presumably, there would need to be more justification than the Executive Council simply not liking the Solicitor General. Would the fact that the government did not like the advice that it received from the Solicitor General be sufficient cause to have him removed?

Of course, as honourable members opposite accept, the Solicitor General has to give his advice to the government without fear or favour. He is the adviser to the Attorney-General and we cannot have a situation where, if his

advice is not liked, his dismissal is arranged. In fact, the opposition's amendment could create uncertainty as to the reasons for a Solicitor General being removed. There appears to be no requirement to give any explanation; he could be removed because the Administrator felt that there was cause.

In reference to the honourable member for Stuart's speech in the second reading, he indicated that removal of the Solicitor General, under the opposition's amendment, would be a political decision. The present bill seeks to divorce the Solicitor General from political removal. Political removal can only bring into question the Solicitor General's ability to give advice without fear or favour.

Mr Chairman, I do not think I need to say much more than that. Members opposite have quoted references to one state that has such a provision available but, quite clearly, a number of states do not. It would be untenable to have the office of the Solicitor General such that he can be removed without any reason given. Every public servant has more rights than that if his employment is being terminated. Why shouldn't the Solicitor General have similar rights?

Mr LEO: Mr Chairman, I will be specific, and I hope the Attorney-General can enlighten me. What would happen in the case of a Solicitor General being charged? How could he prosecute himself? I appreciate that subclause 15(b) says, 'is guilty of misbehaviour', but that follows from proof that the person is guilty. But what if he has been charged with misbehaviour? How can he possibly prosecute himself? The Attorney-General must have some power to remove the Solicitor General temporarily. There is no logic in it as it stands at the moment, Mr Chairman.

If there is a clause that I have missed, I am perfectly prepared to admit that the Attorney-General has God and right on his side, but I am afraid I cannot find it.

Mr PERRON: Mr Chairman, perhaps he could plea bargain with himself and settle for a lesser charge.

Can I confess to not knowing how the system works, but I can assure the honourable member that ministers of the Crown and, I am sure, Attorneys-General, can be prosecuted under the law of the Northern Territory. Indeed, I have had more than 1 traffic charge myself as a minister of the Crown. The system still operates. As Attorney-General, I have been in the courtroom more than once, even in the witness box. The system can operate quite satisfactorily without our having to set such people aside.

The suggestion was that, if he were charged with some offence, that would be covered by 'guilty of misbehaviour'. I am not quite sure whether that is the complete answer to this question. Subclause 15(a) refers to his becoming 'incapable of performing the duties of his office'. If he were in a position of conflict whereby he had to prosecute himself, I guess it could be said in that circumstance that he would be incapable of performing the duties of his office. I will seek some advice.

Mr LEO: Mr Chairman, I will stay on my feet while the Attorney-General seeks advice. I require at least a very clear answer to that because the clause as it stands is somewhat dubious. Clause 15 reads: 'The Administrator shall remove the Solicitor General from office if, and only if, the Solicitor General, except by reason of temporary illness, becomes incapable of

performing the duties of his office'. I do not think that reference to 'incapable of performing the duties' relates to whether or not he should be prosecuting himself. It would place the Solicitor General in a completely ludicrous situation.

Mr Chairman, I was not attempting to suggest that Attorneys-General could not be prosecuted by the Solicitor General. Indeed, I know that they can be and that is a matter to be applauded. What this bill says is that, if the Solicitor General is arrested for DUI or speeding or whatever it may be, he is obliged to prosecute himself. Clearly, that is ludicrous.

Mr PERRON: Mr Chairman, I am advised that this is quite a normal matter. The role of the Solicitor General is that of legal adviser to government although, obviously, he does not become involved in every prosecution laid by the government. If he were arrested, for example, for DUI or any similar offence, he would go through the court process in the same way as any other person would at any time. Of course, if he chose to interfere in that process in any way whatsoever, he would be guilty of further offences with which he could be charged.

Perhaps the honourable member thought that he had found a loophole that made a farce of this legislation and that this man was somehow beyond the law. That is not the case at all. Indeed, any person in the Department of Law or in the judicial system who is charged with an offence has vested interests in such a situation. He simply has to stand aside from the processing of his own charge. Employees of the Department of Law and the court system are not immune from the law, quite clearly, and the Solicitor General is really no different from those people.

Amendment agreed to.

Clause 6, as amended, agreed to.

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

Bill passed remaining stages without debate.

MOTION

Noting of Ministerial Statement on Fishing Industry

Continued from 19 November 1985.

Mr LEO (Nhulunbuy): Mr Speaker, unfortunately the minister is not here. I do not know if he is very far away but I hope that he will hear my comments.

Mr Speaker, the minister's statement was accompanied by the Norgaard Report, a very valuable study of the future of what I am sure will prove to be a very worthwhile industry in the Northern Territory. Certainly, it will be a very worthwhile industry for the area of the Northern Territory which I represent, the Gulf region, and the electorate represented by the member for Arnhem.

The Norgaard Report contained many recommendations. I am sure that, given appropriate amounts of money and time, the recommendations in that report will be implemented by any reasonable government. However, there is a real dilemma. We can establish as many facilities as we wish, we can do what we think is correct in encouraging fishermen not only to fish off the Northern

Territory coast but also to process part of their catch in the Northern Territory but, if there is an unsatisfactory base for all of those actions, we will not get very far.

An example of what I am talking about comes from the 1985 Northern Territory Fisheries Landing Report. It outlined the catch for various fish products off the Northern Territory coast but the figures given for the value of the product landed in the Northern Territory seemed less than credible. For example, for threadfin mackerel, the average price quoted is \$1.50/kg. I have never heard of a minimum price for mackerel being quoted at \$1.50/kg let alone anything like an average price of \$1.50/kg. I am quite sure that all fishermen would be amazed at those prices as would all processors.

Mr Speaker, the average price quoted for barramundi is \$2.98/kg. That simply has not been the case in the last 5 years. The prices bear no relationship to the real price of those products. Another example is jewfish at \$1.47/kg which bears no relation to the true price of that product. Threadfin salmon is quoted at \$1.01/kg.

Mr Speaker, if you read that entire report, a reasonable analysis will tell you that 1 of 2 things is happening: either, through fear of prosecution by very diligent law officers who now have the task of enforcing the provisions of the Fish and Fisheries Act, fishermen are giving wrong product prices and weights or, alternatively, the Department of Ports and Fisheries is incapable of averaging prices correctly. I cannot believe that a department would not be able to average prices. Clearly there is a problem. Either the department is not doing its job or fishermen are being frightened off. It is as simple as that. Departmental officers should have a look at the report and at the average prices contained in it. The minimum prices are ludicrous. No fisherman would sell his product for the prices quoted there. The minimum price quoted for mackerel was 51c/kg, and that price has not applied for decades in the Northern Territory.

Mr Speaker, there is a fundamental problem with the implementation of the Norgaard report and the basis of our fishing industry in the Northern Territory. For a start, we are working on an unsound base. The base for development of any industry, be it in the Northern Territory or elsewhere in Australia or the world, is raw data. The raw data in this instance is the price of the products, the average catch and what is to be developed from it.

There are a couple of very strange proposals in the Norgaard Report. One that springs to my mind involves Nhulunbuy. The report suggested that there is a need for freezer facilities at Nhulunbuy. I must assure the minister - and I am sure that he is aware of it - that, despite the Norgaard Report, a person there purchases fish regularly from fishermen in the Gulf. There are freezing facilities there and I am led to believe that he has perhaps one of the biggest turnovers in wholesale fish products in the Northern Territory.

Another matter that fishermen have raised with me is the structure and size of the Darwin Port Authority and what it can do for fishermen. Like port authorities around Australia generally, the Darwin Port Authority is made up of ocean-going sea captains, for the want of a better word. They tend to be captains of deep sea cargo vessels, people of that nautical ilk. On the Darwin Port Authority, there is no representative of the fishing community. I am prepared to accept that results from an oversight, but it needs to be corrected if the Darwin Port Authority is to act not only with a knowledge of

those larger vessels that inevitably will come to Darwin but also with a knowledge of the needs of smaller fishing vessels that equally inevitably will use the Port of Darwin. I would suggest to the minister that he consider the composition of the Darwin Port Authority and its size. It is very cumbersome.

Then we come to the interests that are represented on that Darwin Port Authority. The minister holds up his fingers to show that there are 3 fishermen there. I am afraid that is not what ...

Mr Hatton: No, there are 3 people.

Mr LEO: Once again ...

Mr Hatton: Oh, they are so cumbersome.

Mr LEO: I have been told that there are over 16 people involved in the Darwin Port Authority. They range from people who liaise with the Harbour Master to people who perform other activities. That is what has been put to me. But if the minister says that there are only 3 people, I will take his word that I have been seriously misled. However, I would suggest that perhaps there is a need for at least some representation of fishermen on the Darwin Port Authority.

Another matter that has been brought to my attention is the availability of finance to fishermen. I know it is a very contentious matter. Too often in the past, the Northern Territory Development Corporation has made loans to fishermen only to see its money go down the gurgler. That really is unfortunate because the actions of those few have jeopardised the prospects of other fishermen obtaining loans and developing their businesses. As I understand it, the Northern Territory Development Corporation has not received applications from fishermen for quite some time. The reason is that, some 12 months ago, the rules for obtaining finance were made very tight. They required contracts for specific amounts of fish product under which only certain amounts could be sold. Such contractual arrangements can limit the initiative of fishermen. As a result, they have shied away from the Northern Territory Development Corporation and no longer seek financial help there. That is a real pity. Fishing constitutes a growth industry within the Northern Territory; it is potentially a major primary industry and also potentially a major secondary industry, with the growth of processing. Fishermen should be encouraged to develop their industry. This does not mean running to the NTDC every time they want a handout but the NTDC should be involved in that development. It is unfortunate that the actions of a few unscrupulous people in the past have made it extremely difficult for people who have a genuine interest in developing their businesses.

Nevertheless, I would ask the minister, the Treasurer and the Minister for Industry and Small Business to review the procedures adopted by the Northern Territory Development Corporation when making finance available to fishermen. A number of fishermen have remarkable ideas about how to improve their catch and the industry. Some of the ideas are experimental but, because of what has happened in the past, the fishermen are less than confident of gaining the financial support that perhaps they otherwise would from the Northern Territory Development Corporation.

The Norgaard Report was extensive. However, fishing is an ongoing industry. There are always new fish products, and new developments in their marketing and processing. The Norgaard Report presents a fair picture of the

Northern Territory fishing industry at the end of 1985. However, I am already aware of real changes in the industry. Some things come readily to mind. Marketing procedures now adopted throughout Australia for bulk fish products such as barramundi and threadfin salmon are tailored mainly to large wholesalers in the southern regions. That is a real shame because we get very little out of it. I have seen the boats unloading and I am sure most people in this Assembly have too. The boats unload their fish product into a van. It is wholesaled and sent directly to a larger port. Very little of that product stays in the Northern Territory simply because of the development of marketing strategies within the Australian fishing industry. The minister should not regard the Norgaard Report as the end of the line.

I ask the minister to consider an ongoing system of reporting the development of the industry and what is happening within the industry. These fisheries reports are printed on glossy paper and make the department look good on paper, but the inaccuracies in the figures are not good enough for fishermen. They are not receiving enough good marketing information, good product presentation information or information that allows them to develop their industry. It is largely only a cottage industry. Such information is desperately needed if we are to develop a viable fishing industry. In my own electorate, fishing offers the opportunity to develop an industry that might eventually replace mining. That is very necessary if Nhulunbuy is to survive in the long term.

I have few comments to make on the report. Certainly, I endorse what the minister has done to develop a comprehensive plan of the fishing industry in the Northern Territory. I ask him to read his departmental information sheets that are issued now and then and to check the figures. Certainly, I am prepared to accept them but they seem ridiculous to me. I certainly endorse what the minister has done, and with very few criticisms. I am sure that the Norgaard Report will be a worthwhile document for all people involved in fishing and all people interested in the development of that industry.

Mr PALMER (Leanyer): Mr Deputy Speaker, I have spoken in the past about the development of the fishing industry in the Northern Territory. It is not an easy subject to address. The development of the fishing industry is a vexed problem in that it is a largely unidentifiable resource. It is also a resource which requires a fair bit of infrastructure or capital to harvest. Before one can put that capital into the harvesting mechanism, one must guarantee one's markets. To secure the markets, you need the fishermen out on the water, you need to be able to process the product and you need to be able to do that quickly, efficiently and with some regularity.

The Northern Territory has none of those things except what we perceive as a very large resource of fish. We do not have the fishermen on the water, we do not have the onshore infrastructure and we do not have secure markets. It is a chicken and egg situation.

It is very difficult to start from scratch and to build up the fishing industry. Of course, in the past, we have had the barramundi industry and the prawn fishery. The barramundi industry is very insular; it is not very dynamic. It does not put much into the broader industry. It has its markets tied up. There are 35 licences or 35 000 net metres allowed in the industry and that will continue year in and year out, and not really do much for the development of the rest of the fishing industry in the Northern Territory.

As for the prawning industry, traditionally we have had boats from interstate or overseas which have been crewed by interstate or overseas crews. Consequently, no real base of wealth in the Northern Territory has been generated by the fishing industry. Not only is there no real base of wealth, there also has not been any great movement of young Territorians taking up a career in the fishing industry. Nor has there been anybody willing to finance them into a career in the fishing industry in the Northern Territory.

The long-term benefits to the Territory of the development of an offshore fishing industry surely lie in the development of the indigenous resources of wealth and skilled labour. Until the Northern Territory government can address itself to the fact that we need young skilled Territorians coming into the industry, with adequate financial resources to acquire high technology fishing equipment, then the provision of all the onshore infrastructural services will be purely speculative in that we will be trying merely to attract the passing trade of interstate or foreign-owned vessels.

I have written to the Minister for Ports and Fisheries with the proposal that he establish a maritime college to provide training in the fishing industry in the north of Australia for young Territorians. Hopefully, by some process, we can provide long-term, low-interest capital to allow young Territorians to get into the industry. At some not inconsiderable expense, the Northern Territory could purchase such a vessel. I believe it is essential that we purchase a training vessel so that we can train young Territorians in all aspects of the fishing industry: catching the fish, vessel maintenance, packaging and marketing. In that way, we could build up an indigenous resource of skilled labour, expertise and wealth. I would propose that any such vessel should operate on a commercial basis, with any profits made put back into a fund from which capital could be drawn to finance graduates of a maritime college into the industry. It is fairly difficult right now to canvass all the issues the formation of a maritime college in the Territory would encompass. There is one situated in Launceston in Tasmania, but I believe that is a fairly inappropriate place to train young men for the fishing industry in the northern part of Australia.

I will close by saying that I applaud the initiatives of the Northern Territory government in providing the onshore infrastructure for the fishing industry. But I think we should also look at the other things that are needed so that the fishing industry can fulfil its great economic potential for the Northern Territory, and Darwin in particular. I recommend to the minister that he take on board my proposals for the establishment of a maritime college. Hopefully, in the course of time, we could see young Territorians trained in the Northern Territory, able to raise capital in the Northern Territory and returning to the Northern Territory a base of wealth that will be required to continue with the expansion and development of the fishing industry.

Mr HATTON (Ports and Fisheries): Mr Deputy Speaker, I would like to thank honourable members for their contributions to this debate on the statement that I made last year. Perhaps I could address myself to a couple of the comments that have been made.

I have had an opportunity to look at the figures that the honourable member for Nhulunbuy was referring to in relation to fish prices. Those prices are in fact whole weight prices per product. Whilst the member suggested that they are exceptionally low - and I must admit that they do look low - I am advised that those prices were quoted directly off the returns

provided by fishermen. Therefore, if they are low, I would suggest that we examine more closely the fishermen's returns in case they are not stating all of their income.

Mr Speaker, another issue raised was the composition of the board of the Darwin Port Authority. I have had a number of discussions with fishing industry representatives through the Australian Fishing Industry Council, Northern Territory Branch. It has made representations for membership on the board of the Darwin Port Authority. That board comprises only 3 members. It does not comprise 12 or 16 as the member for Nhulunbuy suggested. I must admit that I have been scratching my head trying to work out how I can get anywhere near that number. We think we can get to 8 or 9 if we include the senior management staff of the Darwin Port Authority. Perhaps the member was referring to the fishing industry consultative groups which meet with us from time to time.

We have been consulting closely with the industry on the issues raised in the Norgaard Report and the strategy and approach that we are adopting and intend to continue with. I might say that we are working to encourage the industry to work with us in the formation of a fishing industry advisory committee so we can have a more coordinated approach to government and industry consultation. It may be appropriate in the future that a fishing industry person sit on the Darwin Port Authority board. Remember that it is the Darwin Port Authority and this strategy proposed by Norgaard does not encompass Darwin alone. It envisages the creation of ports in places such as Gove, Groote Eylandt, perhaps the McArthur River area and possibly over on the western side of the Northern Territory in the Joseph Bonaparte Gulf. That would enable fishermen to be able to bring their catch to shore with a minimum of sea travel and transport it to the central facilities in Darwin by road. In essence, the Norgaard Report talks about the importance of developing land-based facilities as a catalyst for the development of the industry.

In my statement last year, I mentioned that I had travelled overseas with Mr Norgaard and the Secretary of the Department of Ports and Fisheries. That provided us with the opportunity to investigate the concept that was being proposed by Mr Norgaard. We went to Denmark where this concept evolved. We saw clear evidence that, in the space of some 20 years, before which time there had been no fishing, the development and the commitment to the development of shore-based facilities had made Denmark into probably the premier fishing nation in the North Atlantic-European fishing area. There were ports constructed in protected basins with shorelines opening straight into the North Sea. The waves were over 10 m high but a series of breakwalls soon eliminated that wave action. In those areas, whole towns with processing and handling facilities have developed around that port facility. There have been major developments in that industry.

Alaska has followed this development concept for 4 or 5 years. Ports are being developed on the southern coast of Alaska in very remote areas. We went to Seward and Homer on the south coast heading out towards the Aleutian Islands. I can assure you, Mr Deputy Speaker, that it is quite chilly even in the spring and it is a long way from what some people would regard as civilisation. In those areas, with the development of ports, in the space of 3 or 4 years there has been development of fishing fleets, catching, landing and processing. In some respects, Alaska is similar to the Northern Territory. Its population distribution and its resource base has caused problems in that its catch traditionally has been shipped straight off to Seattle away from Alaska. They are now developing an indigenous seafood

processing industry. That is the essence of what we are proposing in this strategy development for the Northern Territory fishing industry.

Both the member for Nhulunbuy and the member for Leanyer spoke about finance and training. They are perfectly correct that this strategy is only a broad one. We must look continually at where we are going in a far more detailed way, and in consultation with the industry rather in isolation from it or in opposition to it. At the moment, there are 3 key areas that we need to address: finance for the fishing industry, training to improve the quality of the landed product and marketing. The Department of Ports and Fisheries is already working on those programs. Late last year, we hired a marketing officer who is already working on the development of marketing strategies for the Territory seafood products to build on the early work that was done in 1985. We anticipate achieving far more results in 1986. We will be working much harder towards the evolution of a coordinated program to meet those needs of training, finance, quality control and marketing and handling of product onshore.

The development of onshore facilities is already taking place at Nhulunbuy and down at Frances Bay with the extensions to the Fishermen's Wharf. There are also the industrial facilities at the end of that wharf and, of course, the construction of safe anchorage in the Frances Bay mooring basin is proceeding at a spectacular rate.

I believe the industry has an excellent future. It is one of the brightest prospects for future economic development and diversification in the Northern Territory. This government is working towards the development of the potential of that industry. Even though it is only 4 months since it was brought down, this brief report is probably becoming out of date. That is how fast we are moving in our knowledge and development of the industry. We will continue to monitor the industry and improve our ability to assist it to develop in the interests of the Northern Territory.

Motion agreed to.

ADJOURNMENT

Mr HATTON (Primary Production): Mr Speaker, I move that the Assembly do now adjourn.

I rise to pay tribute to a woman who gave a great deal to the people of Darwin before she was taken away from us last weekend. I am speaking of Mabel Griffin, the tremendously loyal supporter of the Nightcliff Football Club whose death early last Sunday morning was a tragedy to players, administrators and supporters alike. Mabel will be remembered by anyone who has been to Gardens Oval to watch the Tigers play because she was one of Nightcliff's most vocal supporters and usually among the first onto the field to congratulate or console the players after a match.

According to my information, she had followed Nightcliff since 1969. She was a tower of strength for the club. No job was too big or too small for Mabel Griffin, whether it was organising functions for the club, being a second mother to many of the players or simply washing guernseys and keeping them in good repair. Traditionally, the first players' tea of the year was held at Frank and Mabel Griffin's home and, whenever Nightcliff made a final - all too rarely, unfortunately - her home was thrown open for breakfast on the Sunday morning after the match. This season, she was given due recognition as Nightcliff's supporter of the year.

Football was Mabel Griffin's life and love. Her husband, Frank, is a life member of both the Nightcliff Football Club and the NTFL. One of her sons, Kevin, plays with the Western Australian Football League, Swan Districts Club, and represented Western Australia against South Australia last season. At 2.30 am on Saturday morning last week, she was hanging Tiger streamers from the Trower Road overpass. That afternoon, she was with Nightcliff at the Gardens Oval urging them to keep going despite their humiliating defeat in the grand final. On the Saturday night, she was singing at the post-game function at the Nightcliff Sports Club. I attended that function. Obviously, it was not a happy one after Nightcliff's rather poor performance in the grand final.

Particularly because of the events that followed later that night, I will always remember my last conversation with Mabel. We spent some time discussing football, discussing the game and where we were going. She gave me a garland of black and gold material which she asked me to wear. I did so proudly, they being the Nightcliff colours. She was consoling herself for the defeat and she had her ever-present streamer which she waved around regularly at football games. She was folding it up, and she said: 'Well, I will put it away, ready for next year'. They were the last words that she spoke to me. In the early hours of Sunday morning, her big heart gave way while she slept.

Mabel Griffin's death has cast a pall over her club and all those people associated with it. The grand final defeat is insignificant when compared with the feeling of loss in the club following her death. Some very upset Nightcliff people sang one of her favourite songs, 'Pearly Shells', at the sports club yesterday in her honour.

She leaves her husband, Frank, her children, Leanne, Kevin and Glen by her first marriage, and step-children Jacqui, Steve and Michael. Mabel's funeral is expected to be held early next week, and I understand that she will pass by the Gardens Oval once more and be given a guard of honour by Nightcliff players.

On Saturday night, Mabel wrote a note on the blackboard of the Nightcliff Sports Club which said: 'Love you forever, Tigers'. They were the last words she ever wrote. That blackboard, with those words written on it, has since been taken down and framed as a poignant reminder to the Tigers of one of their greatest supporters, and an inspiration to all future players with the Nightcliff club. In concluding, I wish to quote the words of a notice put in the NT News by Nightcliff Football Club:

'The agony of losing was too much, Nightcliff supporter of the year. Sorry Mabel, we broke your heart'.

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH (Koolpinyah): Mr Speaker, I rise this afternoon to bring to the notice of this Assembly an undesirable practice in the rural area that has been brought to my attention. Without putting too fine a point on it, I think it is a real scam. It concerns a certain real estate company, and I am pointing the finger at this company. It has sold land in the rural area in a certain subdivision and I believe it will be selling land in the same subdivision at some time in the future. At the outset, I say that the vast majority of real estate agents operate with a high degree of integrity, although there have been a few companies selling land in the rural area that have skirted around the boundaries of good business practice.

There was one particular company which did not exactly tell lies when it sold the land. It was not exactly a stranger to the truth, but it did stretch

credibility when it sold blocks of land. It would sell a block of land in an undeveloped area and promise the intending buyers that the power would be on shortly, the road would be built shortly and other services would all be in place shortly. Many unsuspecting people bought those blocks of land. When the services did not eventuate after they had taken up residence or paid all their money, they came to me and wanted to know when the government would put on all the services that the company had promised. Those deficiencies have been remedied over the years but the company's integrity was not unblemished.

However, this latest essay in sharp practice was brought to my attention at a time when nothing could be done about it. That was a shame because the victims have no redress now, and the company - unless it is stopped - could repeat the activity in the future. This particular company sold blocks of land in a subdivision. It did not do this with every block it sold but, in one case, a couple paid a deposit on a block, but were not there 24 hours a day to see what was happening. After paying the full purchase price, they went out to inspect their block and they found that the real estate company had brought a dozer in and trucked all the topsoil away. When they approached the principal of the company, his remarks were rather rude; it would be unparliamentary to repeat them. He made a vertical sign relating to a certain part of the human anatomy. The people had no redress.

I have been told since by the Department of Mines and Energy that the real estate company's action constituted illegal sand mining. Unfortunately, people do not want to create waves. They think they can put up with the illegal situations and they do not complain or bring them to the notice of officials while something can still be done. That is what happened in this case. I understand that illegal sand mining is an offence and that it has happened in other parts of the rural area. I have made my views known in certain quarters about this real estate company and its reprehensible practices. If it continues to operate in the rural area, its activities will be inspected more closely - by me, if by nobody else.

To turn to another matter, I am very suspicious of the Australian National Parks and Wildlife Service's motives in gazetting in tonight's NT News the closure to the public of 3 areas in Kakadu National Park. I believe that this is the beginning of the end. If these 3 closures had been initiated by the Northern Territory Conservation Commission, I could trust its actions completely because I know how it operates. However, because of its past actions, I do not completely trust the motives of the Australian National Parks and Wildlife Service in declaring areas closed to the public. I quote the NT News:

'The closure of the above area is necessary to protect a substantial and important bird rookery. Intrusion into rookeries may lead to their abandonment. As a result of this closure, the public will still be able to view the rookeries with little or no disturbance to the resident birds'.

I have no argument with closing rookeries so that the birds can be protected at a very fragile time in their lives, but it has certainly taken the service a hell of a long time to decide to close them. I therefore query the timing of this action. I also query the actual wording. One part of the notice says that 'closure of the above area is necessary'. The next sentence advises that 'the public will still be able to view the rookeries'. If they are closed, how can the public still view them, except by standing on the edge and looking in? Given the area involved, I think that would be an

impossibility. The 2 statements contradict one another which leaves me with very grave misgivings about the matter.

The third proposed closure is even more questionable and I believe it will lead to trouble, if not now, then in the future. The notice of this closure says:

'Restriction of access to this small area of 120 ha has been effected to enable Aboriginal people to continue undisturbed the historical use of the area for foraging and gathering'.

I believe that is the beginning of the end. If that area of 120 ha - which you might say is comparatively small - is to be used for foraging and gathering by Aboriginals, what happens when it is exhausted? You can be sure that, when they have used up the food potential of that area, they will make a request to the Australian National Parks and Wildlife Service for further areas to be closed off to the public.

This area used to be part of my electorate. Whilst I did not know the Aboriginal people there as well as I knew the Tiwis on Bathurst and Melville Islands, I did know about them. I believe that the days have long gone when Aboriginals relied for their subsistence on traditional hunting and gathering. In the Kakadu region, they receive royalty payments from uranium mining and therefore they are able to purchase the ordinary food that everybody eats. I know it is very nice for people to go hunting. Whitefellas also like to go hunting and foraging, but are areas closed off for them? No, they are not. In this day and age, with the food outlets available to Aboriginals, it is unnecessary to close off these secret areas to access by anybody else. I wonder where this will finish. I believe it will be this area today and other areas tomorrow. Soon, the whole area of Kakadu National Park will be effectively fenced off from ordinary people by the Australian National Parks and Wildlife Service. It seems to forget that its reason for existence is to administer a national park. A national park is for the nation. I consider myself part of the nation, as do many other people in the Northern Territory and in the rest of Australia. If parts of this park are closed to the nation, I do not believe it is truly a national park.

The Australian National Parks and Wildlife Service should attend to its housekeeping more diligently. I refer to weed control in Kakadu National Park. The service says it does not have the staff nor the budget to eradicate *Mimosa pigra* and other weeds in the park, but one has only to drive through certain areas at certain times to see these weeds flourishing as though they had actually been cultivated. I know they have not been, but they certainly have not been inhibited. The service would be better off tidying up the park than making inappropriate administrative arrangements. The eradication of noxious weeds is not newsworthy. It is not a very interesting job; it is dirty, hot and difficult work. I have done it myself and it is not pleasant. In most cases, the weeds cannot be eradicated mechanically. Chemical or biological means must be used. To my knowledge, the ANPWS is not a leader in biological experimental work; it relies on other groups to do the research. This leaves chemical means of eradication which is not easy work. I am left again with a sneaking suspicion that the service has an enormous area of park to administer, and it picks out the easy bits to look after, leaving the dirty bits to flourish like noxious weeds. It does not seem to have any regard for the future generations that will use Kakadu. I believe that it will not be very long before the Australian National Parks and Wildlife Service will be called to account by the Australian nation as a whole. I do not think it will receive much credit.

Mr EDE (Stuart): Mr Deputy Speaker, there are a couple of matters that I would like to raise tonight. The first relates to some information I received in answer to a query I raised during the budget debate. It concerned the Department of Transport and Works. You may recall, Mr Deputy Speaker, that funding for essential services to Aboriginal communities was removed from that department. However, it took on increased responsibilities with respect to Yulara. The difference between the costs of providing essential services to all Aboriginal communities in the Northern Territory and the increased responsibilities at Yulara was \$39 000. I queried that. I have since received the details, and I think that it is important that members listen to this because it places in context the amounts of money being spent by this government on essential services in Aboriginal communities.

The difference between the 2 costs was \$39 000. This rang some alarm bells too so I asked for details. I will provide a breakdown of the additional costs for the department in relation to Yulara: increased electricity charges - \$55 000; operation of water and sewerage services - \$603 000; and miscellaneous increases, including inflation and consultancies - \$553 000. The total is \$1.706m.

Members may feel that that is quite justifiable. However, my purpose is to demonstrate the amounts of money involved in providing essential services to all Aboriginal communities in the Northern Territory. The sum involved was not \$1.706m the additional cost for Yulara, but \$1.667m. In other words, the cost of providing essential services to all Aboriginal communities in the Northern Territory was \$39 000 less than the increased cost this government took on in relation to one place: Yulara. I do not think that anything that I have heard in the last couple of years has demonstrated to me more clearly the actual priority ratings of this government when it comes to providing essential services to communities outside the major towns.

I would like to discuss very briefly an organisation which is near and dear to my heart: the Central Australian Aboriginal Pastoralists Association. After much discussion a couple of years ago, this organisation was set up to fulfil 2 functions. The first was to revitalise the pastoral industry on Aboriginal properties. B-TEC was a priority. It hoped to eliminate brucellosis and tuberculosis through a process called vertical integration of the cattle industry. It hoped to be able to utilise the cattle off the properties by breeding in some areas, fattening in other areas, taking them through to the small abattoir at Amoonguna and then putting them through its own butcher shops to sell the meat back to the stores in the communities and, of course, to other people. In that way, the chain of integration of the pastoral industry would have been completed. That would have allowed the association to increase employment and money circulation within Aboriginal communities rather than maintaining the enormous leakages which are a feature of their current economic system.

The association decided not to bite off more than it could chew initially. Various people in the Top End and in the Pitjantjatjara lands decided that they would not come in at that stage so it concentrated initially on cattle stations at Yuendumu, Mount Allan, Mount Barkly, Willowra and Ti Tree in my electorate and areas such as Haasts Bluff in the MacDonnell electorate. The association negotiated CEP funds for fencing and for some of the initial requirements on the properties to start the process of eliminating brucellosis and tuberculosis from those areas. The results obtained during that period were nothing short of startling. Without exception, the projects came in under budget and well within time. In one case, the people did the job in

half the expected time, such was their enthusiasm and commitment to try to revitalise those pastoral properties.

Before I go on, I would like to put the cattle properties I am talking about into some sort of historical context. A graph was drawn by a person who was employed at that stage at the Institute for Aboriginal Development but who now works for the department. It showed the level of capitalisation per property in the period between 1964 to the current date and the way that that capitalisation had changed. It is quite staggering to look at the differences in the non-Aboriginal pastoral properties from 1964 to the present and then compare those to the Aboriginal pastoral properties. The non-Aboriginal cattle properties have increased their capitalisation through fencing, yards, bores etc by 4 to 5 times the 1964 level. However, the Aboriginal-owned pastoral properties basically have not moved from the 1964 situation.

The reason is that, during that period, the cattle properties worked under a system of grants from DAA which was called 'last resort funding'. If funds could not be found anywhere else, the DAA assisted. On the face of it, that sounds quite realistic and reasonable. However, a pastoral property was an enterprise and there was a community of people living around that pastoral property who had various needs such as ablution, water, housing etc. In any year that the pastoral property made a good profit, the department said: 'We provide funds as a last resort. There are funds available from the pastoral enterprise'. It did not matter that the people had their own priorities with regard to those profits and wanted to utilise them to repair fences, fix yards, put in new bores etc. That did not fit within the department's guidelines. Any time a pastoral property made a profit, and no pastoral property in central Australia makes a profit every year, it was syphoned off into community funding and was not used to build up the capitalisation of the properties such as occurred in the non-Aboriginal properties.

CAAPA had the idea of going one stage further away from the bureaucracy. It saw a way to utilise profits to generate within the pastoral property the ability to become self-sufficient. CAAPA recognised that the properties themselves were so far down the slide that they would need some funding. They sought funds from the Aboriginal Benefits Trust Account. The ABTA was quite happy, as was CEP, to continue some of the programs on those properties. However, CAAPA needed a further 10% of the total funds required. This was required for the administration of the whole unit. It was not available and therefore the project has not gone ahead. With the drought upon us, the purchase of cattle may not be the move to make. However, I hope that those funds can be made available so that the B-TEC program can be finalised, fencing can be repaired, and bores and yards can be built. In that way, when the drought breaks, it will be possible for the pastoral properties to buy the cattle to make them into viable enterprises. I know that the honourable minister is interested in this subject. He said before that CAAPA is a positive initiative. I hope that he will be able to find the funds to back up that statement.

I would like to refer to an item that has come to my notice. I must admit that I did not catch it at first but I have heard that Stapleton National Park has been renamed Litchfield Park. I will no doubt be picked up if I am wrong. I have nothing at all against the Litchfields. The Litchfield family has contributed to the Northern Territory over many years.

However, I am sorry to see the name 'Stapleton' disappearing from that park. I must admit that I have rather a proprietary interest in it in that

Stapleton was a great-uncle of mine. He came out to the Northern Territory from Canada where he had been involved in the telegraph industry. He was brought out by Todd to do some work in the Top End. Eventually, he went south to Adelaide on leave. He had sent the family ahead and he himself was travelling overland. He had to fill in for a certain amount of time at Barrow Creek. He was engaged in that particular occupation when there were killings there. He is now buried there. Even though I am a relative of the man, I must say that those killings sparked off massive retaliation. I note that there is still a Stapleton Creek and also Stapleton's Knob at Barrow Creek. I would hope these at least are preserved to commemorate the name of Stapleton, my mother's family, for their contributions to the development of the Northern Territory.

Mr BELL (MacDonnell): Mr Deputy Speaker, the scenic MacDonnell Ranges spread through my electorate over a region of some 200 to 250 miles. They spread out from Mt Liebig in the far west right across to Arltunga in the east, and further. I confess that the western reaches of the MacDonnell Ranges are better known to me than the ranges to the east. I have spent more of my time on that side. I doubt that my description of the MacDonnell Ranges as a scenic attraction is likely to be contentious among any of my colleagues who represent seats in central Australia. I regard it as a unique privilege to represent an area that is so rich in scenic beauty and so attractive to visitors to the Northern Territory. It is ripe with tourist potential and even now it is a big drawcard for the ever-increasing number of visitors to central Australia. Many of my friends take great pleasure in bushwalking through the MacDonnell Ranges. In the next 5 or 10 years, with the demand for more active recreation, the MacDonnell Ranges will become even more of a tourist attraction.

However, lest I be accused of plagiarism, I hasten to put on record that my suggestion that this area be included in a national park is not an original idea. The idea has been around for some 16 years. I believe that it was first mentioned by the then Reserves Board in November 1969. The proposal for a MacDonnell Ranges national park was supported by the then Chief Minister in May 1980. The ever-conscientious local member asked the Chief Minister in 1981 what he proposed in relation to such a national park. On 10 June 1981, I asked him when the MacDonnell Ranges national park, announced with much publicity a few days before the Northern Territory elections the previous year, would be gazetted. The Chief Minister's answer was that he could not say exactly. He said that he knew that the Conservation Commission was investigating the matter. He asked me to place the question on notice. Being as conscientious as you know me to be, Mr Deputy Speaker, I did that. His response was that the ninth Territory Parks and Wildlife Commission meeting in June 1979 endorsed a series of Conservation Commission principles and long-term planning objectives for a MacDonnell Ranges national park. Progress was stated as follows:

- '(a) The central MacDonnells national park has been approved and is being processed through the Department of Lands. This will eventually combine Simpson's Gap and the Alice Springs Telegraph Station National Parks into one major national park complex.
- (b) Agreement has been reached with pastoral lessees for the creation of a further reserve in the eastern MacDonnells.
- (c) Negotiations to acquire land for the creation of a west MacDonnells national park are at a sensitive stage and have run

into some difficulties. It is anticipated that the park will be gazetted once the negotiations and the necessary arrangements have been completed'.

That was in 1981. It seems to me that there is a serious possibility that the MacDonnell Ranges national park may have been stillborn due to the sensitivity of the negotiations. I certainly hope that that is not the case because, as I explained in my initial comments, it would be a great asset to the Northern Territory.

To sum up, it is worth pointing out that the need for a substantial MacDonnell Ranges national park has been recognised by the Territory government since 1969.

Mr Dondas: The 1969 Territory government?

Mr BELL: In the interests of the ever-punctilious Minister for Big Business, Small Industry and Large Tourism - I am sorry, the Minister for Industry and Small business - I will agree that the Territory government was not alive and well, but I think that I can get away with that by saying that it was a small 'g' government in the Northern Territory which had envisaged a national park in the MacDonnell Ranges since 1969. The MacDonnell Ranges national park is an area of national and international significance because of its spectacular scenery and environmental value.

The present visitation rates to the region are difficult to estimate, but they are at least 100 000 per annum and possibly as high as 250 000. It is worth noting that this figure is likely to increase dramatically with concerted campaigns that the Northern Territory big 'G' government is conducting to attract visitors to the Northern Territory. A second influence that is likely to influence that number is the sealing of the Stuart Highway. We can expect greater visitor numbers in that area. It is therefore important that there be a breadth of activities for visitors to the MacDonnell Ranges.

I believe that the Territory government has to make the running here. There is no overall plan for the possible impact of a large number of people. In addition, it is worth pointing out that the percentage of the Territory that is devoted to national parks is relatively low in comparison with that in the states. New South Wales has 4.17% of its area devoted to national parks, South Australia has 4.8%, Victoria has 5.62% and Western Australia has 5.57%. Even Queensland is ahead of us. It has 2.39%. I notice that the Australian Capital Territory has 30.21%, but I think that is probably one area where we can enjoy a little bipartisanship because my feeling is that, in many respects, the denizens of the Australian Capital Territory live in an artificial environment, and there we have a figure to prove it. I am sure that will bring a measure of delight not only to the Minister for Industry and Small Business, but also to the Minister for Mines and Energy.

To persist with this theme, the current situation is that there are already a number of parks in that area. We have Ormiston Gorge, the Simpson's Gap National Park, the Alice Springs Telegraph Station Reserve, the Arltunga Reserve, and the Glen Helen Reserve. It may not be realistic at this stage to include the Arltunga Reserve in that complex but I believe that the current relatively small areas would benefit a great deal by being linked so as to allow a greater range of activities. By way of comparison, I point to the park along the Great Dividing Range between NSW and Victoria which contains a very long walking trail which people can stay on for 3 or 4 weeks or hike on

for a day or 2. It is the sort of model that is worth looking at. The opportunity is there and, quite clearly, it is possible that the Territory government has within its grasp the possibility of a world-class park in the region of Alice Springs. Perhaps such a long-term proposal should be our aim for the bicentennial celebrations in 1988.

Mr VALE (Braitling): Mr Deputy Speaker, I will be fairly brief this evening. I would like to pay tribute tonight to a person with whom I worked for many years in central Australia, and who has now retired and lives in the United States. He has been referred to as the father of the oil and natural gas exploration industry in the Northern Territory. I refer to Dr Duncan McNaughton, a petroleum geologist who worked in the petroleum exploration industry for over 40 years in many regions of the world.

Duncan McNaughton was born in western Canada and studied geology at the University of Southern California, earning his initial degree in the 1930s, followed by his PhD in geology after World War II. McNaughton was a member of Canada's 1932 Olympic team and received a gold medal in the high jump. This was the last gold medal that Canada won in the Olympic track and field events. In the late 1930s, Duncan McNaughton was working for Texaco in South America. This was interrupted by the commencement of World War II, when McNaughton joined the Royal Canadian Air Force and became a pilot in the bomber command, flying Lancasters out of England with the famous Pathfinder group. Members would know that the Pathfinder group was involved in the bombing of strategic dams in Germany, as portrayed in the film of Paul Brickhill's book, 'The Dambusters'.

After the war, and after gaining his doctorate, McNaughton worked in the United States for Gulf Oil Corporation before becoming an independent petroleum consultant in the 1950s. His consulting career took him to many places in the world, including assignments in the United States, South America, Europe, Africa, South-east Asia and Australia. It was on a trip to Australia in 1960 that Duncan McNaughton examined the Amadeus Basin. This was after the major oil companies had walked out of the basin saying that they thought they were wasting their time because there was no potential to discover natural gas or crude oil. This is the area that is now gearing up to supply natural gas for the Northern Territory's major powerhouses.

It was on McNaughton's recommendation that the Magellan Petroleum Corporation acquired exploration permits in the Amadeus Basin. Shortly thereafter, he undertook geological fieldwork which resulted in Mereenie and Palm Valley initially being defined as petroleum prospects, prior to drilling. McNaughton consulted for Magellan continuously from 1960, and was involved in the company's ongoing exploration in Australia and its activities in the Amadeus and Ngalia Basins until his retirement in 1983. He now resides in Austin, Texas, with his wife Eileen who also was a frequent visitor to central Australia.

I raise this issue tonight 2 reasons. Duncan McNaughton played a major role in reactivating exploration in central Australia, early in 1960, after major oil companies had walked away from the area. He is regarded as the father of exploration in central Australia. I believe that, given his contribution to the oil and gas industry, not only in Australia generally but particularly in the Northern Territory, that the Northern Territory government should do something to commemorate that work. I have written to the Minister for Lands who has control over the Place Names Committee. I know that the Place Names Committee is reluctant to name areas or streets after people

whilst they are still living, but I would very much like to see the Northern Territory government name the road that runs off the Stuart Highway into the Brewer Estate after Duncan McNaughton who contributed so much to the Northern Territory over a period of 23 or 24 years.

Mr SETTER (Jingili): Mr Deputy Speaker, the House of Representatives recently passed the Bill of Rights. I understand it is currently before the Senate where a number of amendments are proposed. Whether these are passed or not will depend, as usual, on how the Australian Democrats can play the opposition off against the government to further its own political ends. It is therefore not possible yet to determine the final form of the Bill of Rights. However, let me say that, in the form in which it passed the House of Representatives, it is the greatest con job ever pulled on the Australian people. On that basis, it must not be allowed to succeed. Since federation, the Australian constitution has offered its protection to all Australians. It has provided protection for everybody's rights and liberties. I perceive no problem with our constitution. We all have the freedom of movement and speech and are able to carry out our lawful day-to-day activities whenever we want to. Why then do we need a bill of rights?

The present Chief Justice of the High Court recently said in a speech that, if society is tolerant and rational, it does not need a bill of rights. If it is not so, no bill of rights will preserve it. The Bill of Rights is based on an international covenant and the High Court has given the Human Rights Commission the power to override any section or part of the constitution if it considers it necessary in pursuit of its legislative goals. That is a very dangerous situation. Any legislation which allows an organisation such as the Human Rights Commission to bypass the constitution of this country must be viewed with great suspicion and concern. This bill dramatically increases the powers of the Human Rights Commission through section 27 which, under the heading of 'Performance of Functions of the Commission in Relationship to the Bill of Rights', defines that the commission shall perform its investigatory functions if it is requested to do so by the minister or when a complaint is made to the commission under section 26 which refers to complaints, or when it appears to the commission to be desirable to do so.

Let us examine the past history and performance of the commission operating under its current powers. The commission is a body of people who are elected. It is empowered to compel people to appear before it and to attend compulsory conferences without any legal representation. It is empowered to inflict fines or impose imprisonment on persons who fail to appear or who fail to provide information when requested to do so by that commission. The very fact that, under this legislation, people will be denied the right to legal representation in circumstances in which they may be faced with a fine or imprisonment is evidence of the lack of credibility of the federal government's arguments that the bill is all about protecting rights. What a load of nonsense that is!

The commission has suppressed recently a research paper on affirmative action, which it commissioned from Dr Gabriel Moens, describing his views as 'tendentious'. In reality, it was objecting to his conclusions that affirmative action was philosophically unjustified and inconsistent with the quality of opportunity. There goes free speech again. I suggest the commission has supported the rights of Women Against Rape to disrupt Anzac Day marches. It seems also that free speech is all right if it is exercised by a group with which members of the commission perhaps have some sympathy; for

example, the Pine Gap feminist protestors' claim that they had been tortured by police was supported by the commission. That was despite the fact that no charges were ever laid and notwithstanding the assurances of the then Attorney-General, Senator Gareth Evans, that there was no evidence of police brutality.

The commission has attacked the Queensland government over its industrial relations law, claiming that the legislation governing employment by the Queensland Electricity Commission amounted to an enforcement of slave labour. That is a ridiculous claim. I wonder what will happen to the rights of Queenslanders to an uninterrupted power supply if this legislation is passed. The commission has advocated laws banning any comments which could be described as 'racially intolerant', claiming that such a law is needed to protect people from - and wait for this - Irish jokes and the views of some academics. I could include Polish jokes in that. Free speech goes out the window. This is very dangerous. The Bill of Rights poses some major questions which will need to be answered before it will ever gain widespread approval in the electorate. The major question has to be asked: does the bill really protect rights or does it also give the government control over areas where it has previously had no right to enter?

It is a fact of history that no government-sponsored declaration of rights of the type proposed by the Australian government has ever succeeded in protecting the rights it set out to address. In fact, the opposite is true. Russia has a Bill of Rights sponsored by its government. The record of human rights violations by Russia is long and well known. The government gives rights and the government takes them away. A bill of rights can work to protect civil rights only when it is sponsored by the people to correct the abuses of a government. The Magna Charta, for example, the bill of rights of 1688 - and I recall that there was some debate about the date of the Magna Charta at an earlier time - and the American Bill of Rights owe their existence not to governments but to popular moves in their day to prevent arbitrary excesses by governments.

The Australian Bill of Rights is a sham. To call it a Bill of Rights is to pervert the English language; it would be better described as a bill of violations. It establishes the basis and provides the power for constitutional and social engineering by stealth for a massive and unprecedented shift in the balance of power from the states to the federal government, for an equally massive and unprecedented level of intrusion, backed by the authority of parliament and with sanctions of imprisonment, into the affairs of individuals, state governments, instrumentalities and local government authorities. It establishes a system of private inquisition more appropriate to a police state than to a so-called bill of rights. That is what it is all about.

On 12 December 1984, the present federal Attorney-General said: '...any rights now attempted by legislation can be altered by other governments. In other words, the rights are not permanent'. Mr Deputy Speaker, what we have in fact is a bill of impermanent rights. Let me instance a few of the excluded rights; they are not hard to find. The bill does not confer on the family the widest possible protection which many believe is the natural and fundamental privilege of families. It does not protect the rights of parents and legal guardians to choose private schools for their children. It does not protect the rights of individuals to establish and direct private educational institutions. It does not protect the rights of Australians to utilise their own natural wealth freely and fully and to dispose of it as they see fit. It

does not protect rights to private property and provide that private property may be acquired by government only on just terms. It does not protect individuals from discrimination in the work place because of their refusal to join a union. None of those protections is contained in this bill, nor will they be covered by this government.

Let us turn to the enforcement by inquisition and examine this most profound irony. The bill extols rights such as protection of privacy of correspondence, the right when charged not to be compelled to testify or confess to guilt, the right to remain silent and to consult a lawyer when detained in custody, the right to a fair and public trial and various other rights that accused persons enjoy presently under the laws of this country when facing trials. Yet, Mr Deputy Speaker, these protections do not apply to individuals ordered to appear before the commission to be established under this act. In other words, the rights that we have currently under the laws of this country do not apply when a person is called before the Human Rights Commission under this act.

That body, which is to be invested with inquisitorial powers more appropriate to a police state than a democracy - and it is the McCarthy era all over again - is both prosecutor and judge under this extraordinary law. It may compel individuals: to produce documents which the commission may keep for as long as it thinks fit, thereby violating people's rights to privacy and to correspondence; to provide under signature information in writing; to testify as to their actions under oath in hearings from which the public are excluded; and to disclose facts that may render them liable to criminal penalties - all without the protection of legal representation. While the testimony so given may not be used directly in courts, it may be reported by the commission in the reports that it makes.

Anyone who practises law knows that, once one knows the facts, one is able to prove the charge by various means. Individuals are to be compelled to attend compulsory conferences, again without legal representation. Refusal to attend and answer questions, to produce documents, to attend a compulsory conference or to be sworn can lead to imprisonment - all in the pursuit of the protection of our rights.

There are no protections against the commission. The commission is given a blanket charter to make its own rules. The most elementary rules of natural justice, rules which have been developed by the courts and by common law over the years, may be denied to those summonsed before the commission. I refer to the right to be told of the charge made at the outset, the right to cross-examine those who give testimony against you, the right to call evidence and, when the charge is grave, the right to legal representation.

The findings of the commission are beyond appeal to any court. Moreover, the commission is empowered to recommend the payment of compensation - a function that trespasses directly on the province of the courts - and to do this without any hearing of argument, without going through the ordinary processes of consideration fairly of cases for and against the payment of compensation. The end result of a finding by the commission may be the ruin of a career. This will all be done in the name of justice, all without the rules of natural justice as protection, in private and without legal representation. That is horrendous. It allows the government to delineate what are or are not rights, to bypass the legal system and to take to itself powers under the constitution which legally it is not allowed to take and provide the way to determine in the future what may or may not be the freedoms we enjoy.

The question all Australians should be asking is: 'Are we prepared to give the government power which, in the past, we have refused to give to it when asked?'. These are not political matters. They are not matters which are limited to partisan politics. They cross over all party boundaries and touch fundamental rights which we have all always had. History records that, where governments have fiddled with human rights without popular approval, denial of human rights has followed.

Mr Deputy Speaker, the fundamental protections of human rights in our country are to be found in the courts, in tolerance and fair play, a sense of justice, a belief in democratic institutions, in support for law, in respect by the majority of the rights of others and restraint in the exercise of power. Where are these cardinal virtues of democracy to be found in Russia, Afghanistan, Libya - all signatories to the international covenant on civil rights and political rights? Where are the deep and worrying threats to our society some would have us believe exist? Mr Deputy Speaker, I do not perceive any threats other than those looming at the moment.

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

Mr McCARTHY (Victoria River): Mr Deputy Speaker, the piece of legislation of which the honourable member for Jingili speaks is very dangerous. Perhaps if we have the time at some future date, we should debate it fully and agree on a motion that can be forwarded to the federal government to get rid of it. I do not know if we will have sufficient time to do that because I believe that it is held up in the Senate at this time, but is likely to go through in the near future. We may not have a chance to do anything about it at all but everything that the honourable member spoke of is true and it is an extremely dangerous piece of legislation.

The absent honourable member for Stuart raised the change in name of Stapleton Park to Litchfield Park. That place is of very great interest to me and I would like to assure the honourable member for Stuart that Stapleton Station has not been renamed; it still exists. Stapleton Park, now Litchfield Park, is only a portion of Stapleton Station and it is that portion that has been renamed.

In relation to a question from the member for Koolpinyah to the Minister for Industry and Small Business this morning, I would like to reiterate Batchelor's interest in the development of that park. We believe that the Batchelor-Adelaide River area is the natural gateway to Litchfield Park and it is raring to go at this time with major developments occurring in the town. We are only a few kilometres from the eastern boundary of the park, and I believe that we should be able to fulfil most of the needs of Litchfield Park, provided a reasonable road into it is built. I agree that the road out through Wangi and Berry Springs is very important and that the ring route is essential. I believe also that it is essential that Conservation Commission services be developed in the park as soon as possible. Conservation Commission personnel should be housed in the park and roads should be developed within the park. However, there should be no other major development in the park at this time.

That is not the reason I stood up tonight, Mr Deputy Speaker. I want to raise the issue of dogs. I am not referring to the dogs that wander around the suburbs of Darwin, Batchelor or anywhere else - although they can be a problem - but dogs in Aboriginal communities. We usually rise to talk about the health of people, and dogs come off second best. In Aboriginal

communities, there are a great many unhealthy dogs. Dogs are an essential part of Aboriginal life. Aborigines rely very heavily on the ownership of dogs and the animals become very much a part of the family. Unfortunately, whether through inbreeding or through the conditions they live under, dogs in Aboriginal communities suffer from many diseases and become infested with many parasites.

Over the last 12 months or so, substantial work has been carried out in the Victoria River electorate with some funding from the Department of Aboriginal Affairs and considerable assistance from the Department of Primary Production in Katherine. In addition, Arthur Palmer has worked on a submission for funding to rid dogs in Aboriginal communities of parasites. Of course, the concern is that the parasites in dogs cause health problems for Aboriginal people, and I am convinced that that is the case. Many people in health circles do not believe that there is any real connection between canine parasites and parasites infecting human beings, but others believe there is a strong relationship between the two. I am one of those and, certainly, the health workers in Aboriginal communities are of that belief.

At Peppimenarti, Dagaragu, Kalkarinji and at Yarralin, I have seen the effects of the treatment that dogs have been given to rid them of canine parasites. It has been very effective and there has been no increase in numbers because they have been able to develop a contraceptive that is injected at the same time and stops the female dogs from breeding as a result of their bounding good health after the injections for parasites.

Unfortunately, in many Aboriginal communities, the breeding grounds for parasites are very favourable. The parasites that infect dogs tend to breed in moist conditions. Of course, in the Top End we have moist conditions for at least 4 or 5 months of the year but, in most Aboriginal communities, there are moist conditions for 12 months of the year due to the poor state of services there. The poor state of services in communities can be attributed to a number of causes, one of which is vandalism. That problem is very real. As I have mentioned before, vandalism in Aboriginal communities concerns me greatly as I am sure it does most honourable members. It must be addressed soon or it will be impossible to pick up the tab. However, in at least 1 community something in the water affects copper pipes causing them to break down within 2 years. As a consequence, water leaks into houses and under them and creates a very real problem. It has reached a point where no one maintenance plumber can keep up with the work in an Aboriginal community of any size any longer. It is an impossible task for one man to be able to maintain it.

Mrs Padgham-Purich: There should be charges.

Mr McCARTHY: I agree that charges should be imposed for wanton damage. That is something that we need to address.

I believe it is important to work out solutions to the dog problem and the human health problem created by sick dogs. The only way to go about it is to improve the water and sewerage services in each Territory community. The problem is growing year by year. If we do not do that, the problem will be out of hand very shortly. It is probably out of control even now. If we do not fix it, we will face increasing health bills and higher costs to deliver health to Aboriginal communities, and that is already a fairly costly area.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I think I have made it clear that I am concerned about poor health in Aboriginal communities caused by the lack of reasonable water and sewerage services, and parasites in dogs. I call on the relevant ministers in this government to do something about the situation.

Mr D.W. COLLINS (Sadadeen): Mr Deputy Speaker, tonight I was very pleased to hear the member for MacDonnell suggest a long walking trail through the MacDonnell Ranges as a possible bicentennial project. He was very keen to have it converted to a national park, but I would support his proposal for the walking trail and I believe it could go ahead whether there were a national park or not. However, I would also ask that the member lend his support in a bipartisan way to a couple of other projects planned for the bicentennial celebrations in the Alice Springs area.

One is being considered by the Lions Club of MacDonnell: to mark out more clearly the relatively short walking trail between Flynn's grave, up the hill, and onto the MacDonnell Ranges to the point that we call Mount Gillen. There is a very rough trail there now. I have climbed it a number of times. The area known as Scree slope, where loose rocks slide down the hill, is fairly unsafe. If the club proceeds with the project, it will try to make this area and a few other steep patches safer. Also, it will position appropriate signs to assist people. This could be helpful to visitors to Alice Springs. It takes about an hour or an hour and a half to climb up to the top of the range to see the magnificent views.

The other project has been suggested by the chairman of the local group and it is known as the 3 peaks walking trail, taking in the 3 tallest peaks in the MacDonnell Ranges. It is hoped to prepare a walking trail to scale each of these peaks. It would take a weekend to cover the distance. The problem facing these 2 projects, as would face the long walking trail that the honourable member for MacDonnell suggested, is having to bow and scrape to the Sacred Sites Authority to see whether these things can be done. I hope these difficulties can be resolved and that the member for MacDonnell will join in a bipartisan way to seek a resolution of these difficulties. I was very interested in the suggestion made by the member for MacDonnell and hope all 3 projects can come to pass in due time.

Mr Deputy Speaker, the Joint Defence Base Research Facility, commonly called Pine Gap, is located Alice Springs. This joint base, which is situated some distance from Alice Springs beyond a couple of the ranges, requires the renewal of the agreement between the Australian and American governments some time this year. The existing agreement, which extended over some 10 years, expires this year. Apparently the peace group and other like-minded bodies will come to Alice Springs in droves this year. They came last year and the year before, if I recall rightly, and caused quite a stir. It is estimated that some 8500 protestors will come to Alice Springs and I have heard that some 2500 Commonwealth policemen will come as well. 2500 policemen might be good for business, if accommodation can be found for them, but they will not be good for the image of the town.

Mr Deputy Speaker, the aspect which I do not like is that, as a sop to the left wing of the federal Labor Party, the federal government will renew the agreement only for 1 year at a time. In other words, we can expect the same bunfight, year in and year out. That is not in the interests of the Territory and I believe that this Assembly should approach the federal government to instil some sense into this and obtain another 10-year agreement. People from both sides of the political spectrum, after being fully briefed, have said

time and time again that the base is in Australia's interest. I take a great deal of heart from people like Bill Hayden and Nigel Bowen. Even Gough Whitlam - who was going to do big things to the base with a stick and a basket of eggs - said that it is in Australia's interest. He said that after he had inspected it. This nonsense should be ended by a 10-year agreement and not a 1-year agreement.

In the last couple of weeks, Alice Springs had a visit from the famed Caldicotts. I was very interested to meet them, particularly Mr Bill Caldicott because he and I apparently attended the same school in the Adelaide hills. I do not recall him. I left the school after a year or so to move to Victor Harbour. However, I remember his brother John who, incidentally, is a member of the Liberal Party in South Australia. Anyway, it was quite interesting to discuss old times with these people.

However, we then discussed the more serious business of the purpose of the base, nuclear warfare etc. I did not convert them and they did not convert me. One of the things they said was that they had evidence from Pentagon papers that the USA is planning a first strike on the Russians and that it would have to be less than 1000 nuclear bombs because anything more would bring on a nuclear winter. I mentioned to them a whole list of Russian violations of treaties that had been made with various countries. They denied such things. They promised me the evidence of the Pentagon papers which reveal that the USA intends to make a first strike. I am waiting on them to deliver that evidence, and I certainly have my list of Russian violations of agreements. I believe the American society can be proud of the way it tolerates Australian citizens who go around the United States denigrating that society. If they tried the same behaviour in Mother Russia, which seems to be their pride and joy, they would find it an impossible task.

Finally, in the Centralian Advocate of a week or so ago, there was a long list of matters that my colleagues, the members for MacDonnell and Stuart, intended to raise in this Assembly. We have had 4 adjournment debates and they have raised very few of those matters. In fact, some of the matters they have raised have been totally innocuous. They complain that they never have enough time to raise all these matters. I think that, if the people of Alice Springs knew what their contributions were in the adjournment debates, they would sit back and have a great big laugh.

Mr SMITH (Millner): Mr Deputy Speaker, I rise firstly to express some sentiments that I am sure you personally would agree with, and that is to congratulate the RSL Rugby Union Club on its history-making win on Saturday. Both you and I were very proud but only bit players in the whole affair. Certainly, RSL has worked hard for quite some time to achieve that result on Saturday. I certainly would like to congratulate it. I was asked particularly to make a comment to the member for Casuarina who, unfortunately, is not present, so I will have to do it in his absence. The comment is: 'Don't cry for me Casuarina'.

Secondly and more seriously, I wish to bring to the attention of the Assembly a problem at Nightcliff High School. I am glad the Minister for Education is here. Since the 1970s, Nightcliff High School has had a severe and ongoing problem with its air-conditioning. I understand that it has been so bad at times this year that they have had to keep the kids in the schoolyard until 10 am so that the air-conditioning that was turned on at 8 am would have time to operate.

That reveals 2 problems. I understand that one problem is that the Department of Transport and Works has not been able to get to the school to turn the air-conditioning on manually until 8 am because apparently it does not have the capacity to roster people on before 8 am to do that job. The second problem is that the air-conditioning at Nightcliff High School is old and needs replacement. I understand that the Department of Education has allocated \$200 000 for its maintenance. In my view and in the view of people who are more closely involved with the problem, nothing is to be gained by maintaining it; it must be replaced by a system that works. It has been working, I am advised, at about 30% capacity since the early 1970s. It has not improved and I hope that the minister will look at that particular matter.

Mr Harris: We have looked at it already.

Mr SMITH: If it has been looked at - the old mirror job - I hope that the minister will do something about it.

Mr Harris: We are.

Mr SMITH: Mr Deputy Speaker, my third and longer item concerns the ongoing saga of the Northern Territory Tourist Commission and Capricornia Productions. Involved in that is another demonstration of the incompetence of the honourable Deputy Chief Minister. In September 1983, the government called tenders for a package of films, all of which were called 'Adventure Territory'. One of the projects was a 25-minute 35 mm documentary film for overseas and national theatre distribution. The second was for ten 8-minute narrated programs for local television. The third was for ten 4-minute narrated fillers to be used on television, at drive-ins or at picture theatres. In the conditions, the cost of accommodation, air fares and ground transport was to be met by the commission. The contract was awarded in November 1983 yet, 2 and a bit years later, we still have not seen these films. It was awarded in November 1983 to Capricornia Productions, headed by Mr David Waddington.

There are 4 strange things about the awarding of this contract. Mr Waddington has a poor reputation in the industry. In fact, in 1983 he had a proven record of not being able to deliver the goods. In fact, in June 1983, he had written to the then Chief Minister, Mr Everingham, saying that he had been unable to fill the subscription for the series 'Naked under Capricorn'. In other words, he had been unable to raise the money that he had promised that he would raise to film that particular series. However, despite his notification of that fact to the Chief Minister in June, at the time of the announcement that Capricornia Productions was the successful tenderer, a spokesman for the Tourist Commission stated that a prime reason for Capricornia Productions winning the contract was its work on 'Naked under Capricorn'. That was work that never took place.

The second peculiar fact is that, despite the fact that the tender stated that accommodation, air fares and ground transport would be paid separately, a reply to a question on notice that I submitted stated that, in the end, an all-in tender was awarded. The third peculiar fact is that the quoted price of Capricornia Productions as I understand it, without the air fares, accommodation etc, was \$556 000. The tender price was \$861 000. The only assumption that I can work on is that about \$300 000 was allocated for ground transport, air fares and accommodation, which is a lot of money indeed. The fourth peculiar thing is that, according to the reply to my question on notice, it had 2 years to do the job; that is, it was supposed to have the job finished by 31 December 1985.

The industry was in fact quite amazed at that because, in its tender contract, it stated that it had 2 lots of 12 weeks of shooting. On top of that, it had processing and editing and yet the Northern Territory Tourist Commission gave it 2 years to complete the job. But it has gone well over the 2 years and we do not seem to be any the wiser about what has happened. It has all gone wrong. We have not seen any of the films despite the fact that, in the November sittings, the minister said:

'I am advised that the rushes are now ready for viewing. I had hoped that they would be ready a week or 10 days ago. I have been told the main feature film is almost completed as far as the editing and the soundtrack are concerned. It is just a matter of having a look at it'.

Again, as a result of an answer to a question on notice, we find that the whole project is at least \$150 000 over budget. The quoted price was \$861 000 and yet the total price given to me by the minister in his answer to my question on notice was at least \$150 000 over that. The government had to employ a consultant to supervise the work at a cost of \$60 000. I understand that the consultant, if you can rely on the minister, was one of the Willesees, whose first name I do not know. The whole project went so badly that a consultant, who cost the Northern Territory government \$60 000, was employed to oversee the project. Despite the fact that the whole thing has gone over budget, despite the fact that it is a number of months late and despite the fact that a consultant was employed, we still have not seen the films. I think it is about time that the minister made a fairly clear statement to this Assembly about what is happening.

We have seen before the inability of the minister to handle his portfolio. Who can forget the letter from the Housing Commission Chairman to the minister in March 1983 asking him to approve a new set of arrangements on subsidised interest penalties on the sale of mortgaged property on the basis that it would save the minister the irritation of signing instruments almost on a daily basis? We have an almost similar situation here. On Tuesday 19 November in this Assembly, I asked the minister a series of questions about Capricornia Productions' tender. I quote his response:

'I can tell him that, upon assuming responsibility for tourism in September last year, I went through the supplementary estimates for the Tourist Commission. I noted the figure for film production which was \$650 000 or \$750 000. I never sighted a contract. I was particularly perturbed at the time to know that we were spending those funds on a particular film. I was advised, at the time, by the Chairman of the Tourist Commission that the amount was sufficient to produce not just one feature film but many, depending on the availability of the various time slots for which the commission was endeavouring to negotiate in Australia and internationally. The contract may have stipulated a number of dollars for film production. It may also have included the stipulation to provide additional funding during production stages'.

Mr Deputy Speaker, let us go through that again. When he took the portfolio over, obviously the minister was aware of some concerns with the performance of Capricornia Productions in fulfilling its contract. He asked some questions, but he did not take the trouble to sight the contract. It was too difficult, Mr Deputy Speaker. He did not take the trouble to see whether the contract stipulated the cost to produce the films. He did not take the

trouble to ascertain whether there was a stipulation to provide additional funding during the production stages. He was his normal lazy self, relying on a cursory glance at the information provided to him, and not bothering to check it out.

I am pleased that the honourable minister has come back into the Assembly because he might like to tell us what has happened to those films, when we are likely to see them, how much it has cost the taxpayer and the answers to other associated questions that I have already covered.

Mr DONDAS (Tourism): That just shows, Mr Deputy Speaker, that you cannot turn your back for one minute.

Mr Smith: I told you I was going to do it.

Mr DONDAS: Mr Deputy Speaker, I have a briefing note, dated 14 March 1986, from the Chairman of the Tourist Commission. Before going through it word by word, I indicate that the Deputy Leader of the Opposition was quite correct in saying that this particular contract was signed in 1983. I did not come on the scene until 1984. It is a bit hard to examine contracts if you are not involved. It is easy enough to throw darts in the air and say that the minister is lazy because he did not even bother to look at the contract in 1983.

Mr Smith: When you took over the portfolio.

Mr DONDAS: The Deputy Leader of the Opposition has asked me questions in relation to this and I have answered them with information given to me by the Chairman of the Tourist Commission.

A decision was taken by the commission in early 1983 to produce a film covering all tourism aspects of the Territory with the aim that it would be used as a major promotional and marketing tool for the Tourist Commission. It was to be a documentary-style film shot in super 35 cinemascope and would replace the audio-visual as being cheaper to transport and far more versatile to transfer onto TV video.

Let me explain that for the Deputy Leader of the Opposition. Our promotional staff in the Northern Territory Tourist Commission and the 9 bureaux move around their various regions in various kinds of vehicles. They undertake promotional activities in various shopping centres. Some of the video equipment is very heavy for women employees to carry. We decided this would be one way of making the equipment more manageable for promotional use in Australia and for sending it overseas.

Tenders were called for, and David Astley and Les Garraway were to present their final recommendation to the Tourist Commission. The tenders were discussed at great length and a final contract was awarded in August 1984. How in the heck could I be expected to look at a contract and a tender in August 1984 when I did not become minister until 21 December 1984?

Mr Smith: You told me a lie in answer to the question. It said December 1983. Get your story straight.

Mr DONDAS: You are in trouble, mate.

Mr Smith: You are the one in trouble. You have been giving me misleading information and you know what happens to people who do that.

Mr DONDAS: Mr Deputy Speaker, Capricornia Productions was then contracted to prepare the film. The contract stipulated a price of \$861 639 being made up of 3 equal parts: a pre-production payment, a mid-production payment and a third and final payment on delivery of the finished article. The term of the contract was for completion by 31 December 1985. The contract was to provide one 25-minute documentary, widescreen presentation, with ten 8-minute shorts suitable for TV and ten 4-minute fillers also suitable for national TV. You can read it in Hansard tomorrow.

As far as production is concerned, the first 2 payments, pre-production and mid-production, were made on 28 August 1984 and on 7 January 1985. By the middle of June, it was apparent that the production company had run into problems and Peter Willesee, a well-known film maker, was approached to provide consultancy advice to the commission.

Mr Smith: The middle of June in which year?

Mr DONDAS: I would ask the member to be quiet because I have only 9½ minutes in which to read this into Hansard so that he can understand what is going on.

The production company had to return to the Territory to reshoot all the wet season sequences and to incorporate Melville Island which had been missed out in the original shoot. A contract variation was requested by the producers, under the terms of clause 2.1 of the contract, subject to and considered in the light of the budget estimates provided by the agreement, and subject to complete satisfaction and approval of the consultant, which approval was not to be unreasonably withheld. At that time, I had to make a decision with the Chairman of the Tourist Commission whether to abandon the film after expending nearly \$600 000 or to continue, knowing that the film would blow out the budget by some \$250 000.

Mr Smith: \$200 000 now, eh?

Mr DONDAS: We have not determined the final price yet. \$600 000 could have gone down the drain but the Chairman of the Tourist Commission ...

Mr Smith: Sounds like another Dondas disaster.

Mr DONDAS: ... decided that he would spend the additional money. The commission has the 25-minute film and two 48-minute documentaries. It is apparent that the 8-minute and 4-minute fillers cannot be covered with the existing budget, and the commission at this stage does not intend to produce them. The main use of the film will be as a major cinema release as a documentary and, whilst one major distributing company in Australia does not use them, the other major distributing company does. The commission is confident that it will accept the film, particularly as it will be offered on a free-use basis.

As intended, the film will replace the 24-minute audio-visual which is still in wide use after 5 years but has become extremely expensive to transport. It has 16 pieces, including projectors and computers. The film, of course, will simply be carried in one film can. The commission has in its possession some 100 000 feet of top quality film negative, which constitutes a

major library on the NT and will produce an immediate savings of \$150 000 in the production of its new TV commercials. The film library will be offered to all government departments and authorities, a number of whom have indicated their interest. This will mean immense savings in any future film production.

Whilst it is acknowledged that there is no excuse for the film budget blowing out by \$250 000 and ending up with a final cost of \$1.039m, I really feel that we have ended up with what we wanted, albeit with not all of the finished product. In the long run, it will prove to be a good financial investment, rather than just writing off \$600 000. There are a number of credits outstanding. The commission intends to ensure that these credits are paid by Capricornia Productions as quickly as possible.

As the Chairman of the Tourist Commission said, there are obvious advantages in having this film footage. We have a letter from the North Australian Film Company which says:

'Thank you for the opportunity for Ron Lowe and myself to meet with you in Alice Springs on Wednesday 5 February. As we mentioned to you, we now have a film crew based in Darwin. At present, we are filming projects for the Department of Primary Production and the Education Department'.

As a matter of fact, that was the crew that was here today making a film on the Assembly.

'We would like to utilise some of your existing footage in programs we are producing for various government departments. As discussed, we are willing to negotiate a reasonable rate for the use of the appropriate footage and, no doubt, this would depend on whether the production is geared for television broadcasting or just produced for in-house viewing'.

He is going to call in in the next couple of days and hopes to bring those films.

An interesting point is that, as we move into satellite communications, I am told that the Northern Territory will need at least 20 hours of film footage a week to cover the time that we have booked on a particular satellite. It would require 10 to 15 film crews moving around the Northern Territory, day in and day out for the whole year, in order to produce that quantity. A film crew came out from Italy the other day and shot something like 25 hours of film to obtain 60 minutes. Film production is expensive. At that time, the Northern Territory Tourist Commission thought that, if the film company went down the gurgler, \$600 000 would be lost. The Deputy Leader of the Opposition would have then said that it was my fault that it went broke. As if I am out there carting the bloody camera equipment around, paying the docketts and signing everything. He would say I was trying to hide the fact that I was slack and responsible for the company going broke. What a load of nonsense, Mr Deputy Speaker! I could use another expression but I will not.

This film footage is very important to our development and our promotional material.

Mr Smith: When are we going to see the films?

Mr DONDAS: I beg your pardon? You can wait until I have finished.

The Northern Territory Tourist Commission has the footage available to complete its productions much more quickly. Our international people are asking us for more footage. They would like videos to run in their shop windows so that the people walking by can see a bit of the Northern Territory. That would not have been possible before because most of the footage we have is pretty old. This film is not. I have seen it, Mr Deputy Speaker, and we are waiting for an opportune time to invite the members of the Assembly to view it. It is a matter of arranging an appropriate time when we are all available. Whether members will like it or not, I cannot know and I do not care really. The point is that the Northern Territory Tourist Commission has some good footage that it will be able to use over the next 3 to 5 years. In the long term, I think it will save money.

The Deputy Leader of the Opposition also knows how expensive it is to make commercials, especially for elections. It costs about \$4500 to \$6000 a minute sometimes. We now have some 100 000 feet of film yet he is complaining about a lousy little overrun of a few dollars ...

Mr Smith: What, \$0.75m?

Mr DONDAS: ... but the important thing is that we have it now. If the Deputy Leader of the Opposition cannot wait until such time as we have a premiere, I would be only too happy to try - I emphasise 'try' - to have a special screening for him. In November, I was told that the rushes would be ready. However, they were not ready in November and probably were not ready until the middle of January. By that time, many people were away and, of course, I was getting ready to go on my junket.

We are in the adjournment debate now and can talk about junkets. The Deputy Leader of the Opposition tried to outsmart me. He heard that I was leaving on 12 February. He thought that, if he issued a press release early in the morning on 12 February, I would not be able to reply. Smarty got out of bed early in the morning and issued a press release: 'Dondas is going on a junket. He is going to spend large sums of money. What is he going to do?' However, he did not know that I had changed my mind and decided to leave on Sunday. In the meantime, I held a press conference which put the Deputy Leader of the Opposition to shame. Not only that but, when I came back, I had the bikkies, and that stuck in his craw. He does not like the idea. He is jealous that Thai International will come here ...

Mr Smith: It was coming before you went to Thailand.

Mr DONDAS: Singapore Airlines will probably come here eventually. KLM will and we might even get the flying tiger. There is nothing that he can say inside this Assembly or outside the Assembly that will stop me from doing my job. If I have to move around to see people, I will because we cannot stand at the Port of Darwin, with arms open, waiting for everybody to come.

What he does not realise is that we are not only talking about tourism; we are talking about trade and we are talking about the development of the Northern Territory. We really are selling the Northern Territory. It is a non-stop effort. Of course, over the last few days, there has been a lot of discussion about T/A. I am not going to raise the issue of T/A because there has been debate on it before. But what has not been said is that the Leader of the Opposition spent \$12 500 last year traipsing around the countryside, talking to casino operators ...

Mr Smith: You asked him to go.

Mr DONDAS: What good did that do us? Tell me.

To answer the Deputy Leader of the Opposition's question, the film is finished. I have seen the film. I will arrange a viewing for the Deputy Leader of the Opposition and any other member of the Assembly - that is, unless the Chairman of the Tourist Commission has already arranged a small premiere in Darwin.

Mr LEO (Nhulunbuy): Mr Deputy Speaker, after an act like that, I can understand why the honourable minister is so involved in films. What a performance! Who could compete with a performance like that?

Mr Deputy Speaker, I have a matter to raise which is of great concern to my constituents. It is my understanding that the government has formed a backbench committee to examine the matter of consumer affairs. It would seem to me that the government has found a convenient way to occupy the time of its backbench. It is an unfortunate way to occupy the time of its backbench because the matter of consumer affairs, not just in Nhulunbuy but in the Northern Territory, influences the entire wage-price structure within the Northern Territory. In Nhulunbuy, competition is a very limited activity carried on amongst retailers. There is competition in respect of certain commodities which are marketed but, in respect of many commodities, that regulating influence which exists in the broader Australian community is not present; that is, there is no competition. To assign the important matter of consumer affairs to a government backbench committee to keep it occupied and out of the hair of the frontbench is little short of being negligent.

A committee of inquiry deliberated for some time on the question of freight rates into and out of the Northern Territory. That became a committee to justify doing nothing. I sincerely hope that this committee on consumer affairs does not become a committee to justify doing nothing about consumer affairs. The legislation in the Northern Territory is sadly lacking. By Australian standards, it is pitiful. It holds out no hope for the consumer. If our consumer legislation is compared with that afforded Australians generally, it is clear that consumers in the Northern Territory are well and truly behind the 8-ball. They are sunk before they even start. This backbench committee, this sop ...

Mr Manzie: Give an example.

Mr LEO: An example. I ask the Minister for Transport and Works to check fuel prices throughout the Northern Territory. He can do that at his leisure. He should check fuel prices throughout the Northern Territory and try to justify them in consumer terms.

Mr Palmer: What about fuel price subsidies?

Mr LEO: I hear 'fuel price subsidies' from the member for Leanyer. I must inform him that there is no price subsidy for Nhulunbuy because fuel is imported directly into the port, just as it is in Darwin. Check the prices out. Find out where the consumer stands with fuel prices in Nhulunbuy. I can assure you that it happens in other places in the Northern Territory, where the fuel price subsidy has no application at all.

Mr Manzie: I want an example which involves the consumer, not price fixing.

Mr LEO: I am afraid many consumers happen to purchase petrol. If I have to conduct this running debate, I really do not mind, Mr Deputy Speaker, but I would seek your intervention at some stage so I can get on with it. If the minister does not like it, fine! He can get up and say what he likes about it.

However, I would suggest that this backbench committee, this sop for the government, will have to come down with some very hard recommendations on what needs to be done about consumer affairs if it is to maintain any credibility. It needs to say something about what needs to be done to regulate prices where there is no other regulating influence such as competition within the market. It will have to do that, otherwise it will be seen for what the electorate perceives it to be: nothing more than a way to occupy an otherwise very unoccupied backbench. That backbench committee will have to come up with solid recommendations that this government will have to bite the bullet on.

Another equally serious matter concerns the Minister for Health. A Sister Eileen, a person of religious bent, was employed by the Department of Health as a family counsellor. Nhulunbuy, like so many towns in the Northern Territory, has very little in the way of social infrastructure. It is generally mum, dad and the 2.7 kids; there are generally no grandparents, uncles or aunts to turn to in times of domestic or other social crises. The maintenance of a counselling service in extremely isolated communities should be a very high priority for the minister. I appreciate his endeavours in trying to find somebody to fill the role that Sister Eileen played in the community of Nhulunbuy. However, all those endeavours to date have not produced a community counsellor. For communities such as Nhulunbuy and Groote Eylandt, it is essential that there is somebody people feel they can speak to in complete confidence about matters that can have very tragic consequences. It is probably well known in this Assembly that the rate of family break-up in isolated mining communities is very high. It leads to very traumatic family experiences. I would urge the Minister for Health to replace the sister, no matter what it costs. I urge to him to replace that much-needed counselling service in Nhulunbuy because, in the short time that she has been gone, the community is already feeling the effects of her departure.

Mr PALMER (Leanyer): Mr Deputy Speaker, what we have just heard from the member from Nhulunbuy is the typical carping whingeing crap for which this opposition and that member in particular are famous.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! I ask the member for Leanyer to ...

Mr PALMER: Carping, whingeing excreta, Mr Deputy Speaker, for which ...

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: The member for Leanyer will withdraw the first remark.

Mr PALMER: Mr Deputy Speaker, I withdraw the opening paragraph.

What we have heard from the honourable member for Nhulunbuy is typical of his and the opposition's carping and whingeing. He has denigrated the formation of what he calls a 'backbench committee on consumer affairs'. He has not done himself nor the Assembly the courtesy of finding out who is on that committee. He now proceeds to walk out of the Assembly because again - and this is typical of himself and his party - he does not want to

listen to the reply. He gets up and he goes. He crawls snivelling out the door because he is not prepared to listen. The committee is comprised of the member for Wanguri, myself, officers of the Department of Community Development and either the chairman or, in his place, the vice-chairman of the Consumer Affairs Council.

The member for Nhulunbuy said Northern Territory legislation in relation to consumer affairs is the worst in Australia. I have yet to see that it is the worst in Australia. One of the functions of the committee is to do exactly that: to review the legislation and the policies under which we operate and to compare them to policies and legislation in the states, taking into account, of course, the provisions contained in part V of the Trade Practices Act. That is one function of the committee.

He spoke about fuel prices. He said we should look at the fuel prices in Nhulunbuy. How can there be an examination of the fuel prices in Nhulunbuy, and a report to government, without someone or some committee being empowered to do that? The member for Nhulunbuy wants the government to do nothing. He wants the government to stand back and give him ammunition to carp and whinge. I am only too happy to be on such committees because I have seen what they can achieve. A number of policy initiatives of this government have come from such backbench committees. Those committees are comprised of what the member for Nhulunbuy alludes to as lazy backbenchers. I would like him to come out to my electorate some day and perhaps represent the number of people I have in my electorate because he has nothing to do - absolutely nothing to do. It is even difficult to get opposition members to attend committees of this Assembly.

In closing, all I would like to say is that I fully support the Minister for Community Development for establishing this committee. I am sure that, in due course, it will prove its value in relation to consumer affairs in the Northern Territory.

Motion agreed to; the Assembly adjourned.

Mr Speaker Steele took the Chair at 10 am.

MATTER OF PRIVILEGE

Mr SPEAKER: Honourable members, a matter of privilege was raised by the Leader of the Opposition in the Assembly yesterday, relating to an allegation that a breach of privilege had occurred because the Chief Minister had not tabled certain documents. I have examined the matter and do not intend to refer it to the Privileges Committee.

SELECT COMMITTEE ON CONSTITUTIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Mr SPEAKER: Honourable members, I have received the following letter from the Special Minister for Constitutional Development, seeking his discharge from further attendance on the Select Committee on Constitutional Development:

'Dear Mr Speaker,

In view of my intending resignation as a member of the Legislative Assembly, I request that I be discharged from further attendance on the Select Committee on Constitutional Development.

Yours sincerely,

Jim Robertson
25 March 1986'.

Mr TUXWORTH (Chief Minister)(by leave): Mr Speaker, I move that Mr J.M. Robertson, member for Araluen, be discharged from further attendance on the Select Committee on Constitutional Development, that the Chief Minister be appointed to that committee in his place and that the resolution of the Assembly of 28 August 1985 establishing the committee be varied by inserting after paragraph 2 the following paragraphs:

'2A. In the unavoidable absence of the Chief Minister, a member of the government nominated by the Chief Minister may attend any meeting of the committee and participate in its proceedings as a member of the committee.

2B. In the unavoidable absence of the Leader of the Opposition, a member of the opposition nominated by the Leader of the Opposition may attend any meeting of the committee and participate in its proceedings as a member of the committee'.

Mr B. COLLINS (Opposition Leader): Mr Speaker, the opposition supports the motion. In doing so, we wish to extend to the honourable member for Araluen the thanks of the opposition for the contribution he has made as chairman of the committee.

Mr TUXWORTH (Chief Minister): Mr Speaker, I would like to place on record my thanks and the thanks of my colleagues for the efforts of the honourable member in the preliminary days of setting up the new constitutional arrangements for the Northern Territory. It will be a long hard road and he has made a tremendous contribution. I thank him for it.

Motion agreed to.

SESSIONAL COMMITTEE ON THE ENVIRONMENT

Mr SPEAKER: Honourable members, I received the following letter from the honourable member for Stuart seeking his discharge from further attendance on the Sessional Committee on the Environment:

'Dear Mr Speaker,

I ask that I be discharged from further attendance on the Assembly Sessional Committee on the Environment.

Yours sincerely,

Brian Ede'.

Mr B. COLLINS (Opposition Leader)(by leave): Mr Speaker, I move that Mr B.R. Ede be discharged from further attendance on the Sessional Committee on the Environment and that Mr Bell be appointed to the committee in his place.

Motion agreed to.

DISTINGUISHED VISITOR
Senator Bernie Kilgariff

Mr SPEAKER: Honourable members, I draw your attention to the presence in the gallery of the Hon Bernie Kilgariff, Senator for the Northern Territory. On your behalf, I welcome him to the Chamber.

Members: Hear, hear!

NOTICE OF MOTION
Want of Confidence in the Government

Mr B. COLLINS (Opposition Leader): Mr Speaker, I give notice that I will move that this Assembly has no confidence in the government of the Northern Territory.

SUSPENSION OF STANDING ORDERS

Mr ROBERTSON (Leader of Government Business): Mr Speaker, I move that so much of standing orders be suspended as would prevent the Leader of the Opposition from moving his motion forthwith.

MOTION
Want of Confidence in the Government

Mr B. COLLINS (Opposition Leader): Mr Speaker, I move that this Assembly has no confidence in the government.

Mr ROBERTSON (Leader of Government Business): Mr Speaker, I move that the question be put.

The Assembly divided:

Ayes 19

Mr D.W. Collins
Mr Coulter
Mr Dale
Mr Dondas
Mr Finch
Mr Firmin
Mr Hanrahan
Mr Harris
Mr Hatton
Mr McCarthy
Mr Manzie
Mrs Padgham-Purich
Mr Palmer
Mr Perron
Mr Robertson
Mr Setter
Mr Steele
Mr Tuxworth
Mr Vale

Noes 6

Mr Bell
Mr B. Collins
Mr Ede
Mr Lanhupuy
Mr Leo
Mr Smith

Motion agreed to.

Mr SPEAKER: The question is that the motion be agreed to.

The Assembly divided:

Ayes 6

Mr Bell
Mr B. Collins
Mr Ede
Mr Lanhupuy
Mr Leo
Mr Smith

Noes 19

Mr D.W. Collins
Mr Coulter
Mr Dale
Mr Dondas
Mr Finch
Mr Firmin
Mr Hanrahan
Mr Harris
Mr Hatton
Mr McCarthy
Mr Manzie
Mrs Padgham-Purich
Mr Palmer
Mr Perron
Mr Robertson
Mr Setter
Mr Steele
Mr Tuxworth
Mr Vale

Motion negatived.

SUSPENSION OF STANDING ORDERS

Mr TUXWORTH (Chief Minister): Mr Speaker, I move that so much of standing orders be suspended as would enable me to move a motion in relation to Mudginberri abattoir.

The Assembly divided:

Ayes 19

Mr D.W. Collins
Mr Coulter
Mr Dale
Mr Dondas
Mr Finch
Mr Firmin
Mr Hanrahan
Mr Harris
Mr Hatton
Mr McCarthy
Mr Manzie
Mrs Padgham-Purich
Mr Palmer
Mr Perron
Mr Robertson
Mr Setter
Mr Steele
Mr Tuxworth
Mr Vale

Noes 6

Mr Bell
Mr B. Collins
Mr Ede
Mr Lanhupuy
Mr Leo
Mr Smith

Motion agreed to.

MOTION

Endorsement of Government Support for Mudginberri Abattoir

Mr TUXWORTH (Chief Minister): Mr Speaker, I move that this Assembly endorses the Northern Territory government's support for Mudginberri abattoir and deplores the activities of the Leader of the Opposition in his attempts to destroy a vital Northern Territory industry and for his support of the illegal picketers and the activities of the Australian Meat Industry Employees Union in supporting those picketers.

Mr Speaker, this is one of the most significant motions that will ever come before this Assembly. It is time that we got away from the subterfuge and the smokescreen of the Leader of the Opposition. The Leader of the Opposition claims to be a profound and honourable upholder of the institution of parliament, the institution of government and the institution of our legal system. That is absolute tripe and hypocrisy. The Leader of the Opposition has been talking on radio and in the press about the damning documents that he has on Mudginberri which will bring the government down.

Mr B. Collins: I never said that.

Mr TUXWORTH: His staff have been selectively briefing the media, and they all know it, about this damning information that is available on Mudginberri that will bring the Northern Territory government down and cause grave concern amongst the members of the Country Liberal Party in the Northern Territory.

Mr B. Collins: I never said 'bring the government down'.

Mr TUXWORTH: Mr Speaker, yesterday, references were made by the Leader of the Opposition. Last week, we heard the throwaway line: 'You leave me no option. I will have to bring on Mudginberri'. Today is the day for bringing

on Mudginberri and I invite the Leader of the Opposition to produce his damning documents because the Mudginberri issue is alive and well. If there is any damning document or if there is anything wrong with what this government has done in relation to Mudginberri, let us get it all out. This man is keen on getting it all out into the open. So am I.

We are into the fifth and last day of this Assembly sittings yet, despite all that background of threat and innuendo, we have not heard one word. We had a question that was designed to prove that the honourable Minister for Primary Production was a liar. That fell flat on its face. To save face, the Leader of the Opposition referred the matter to the Speaker as a matter of privilege so he could get himself off the hook. That will not work. Today is the day to bring it all out. The Leader of the Opposition talks about the propriety of the parliament, the honour of members and the rights and duties of ministers and office holders of the Assembly. He is pretty good with his mouth. He has a fairly loose lip when it suits him, but it is different when it comes to practice.

I will draw attention to an issue that is quite relevant under these circumstances. Last year, the Leader of the Opposition was challenged in this Assembly because of the amount of time that he was devoting to his law course. Everybody knew...

Mr B. Collins: A point of order, Mr Speaker! Even the Chief Minister should appreciate that this matter is so far off the question before the Chair that it has to be absolutely irrelevant.

Mr TUXWORTH: I am going to prove just how relevant it is.

Mr SPEAKER: The matter referred to is not relevant.

Mr TUXWORTH: Office holders in this Assembly have a very important job to do which leaves no spare time. It commands our complete attention. The point that I am making is that the Leader of the Opposition has been having a lend of us all. He does not support the government of the Northern Territory, and neither he should because he is in opposition. However, he does not support the activities of the industries of the Northern Territory, and the contempt he has shown for this Assembly and for other institutions of law in the Northern Territory is well known to everybody. A matter of weeks ago, the Leader of the Opposition was removed from the Assembly for referring to people as liars and bastards...

Mr B. COLLINS: A point of order, Mr Speaker! The honourable member knows full well that no reflection can be made in this Assembly on the conduct or character of any other member, except by way of a substantive motion moved against that member.

Mr Dale: He cooks quickly in hot water.

Mr B. COLLINS: Move the motion, and I will debate it!

Mr SPEAKER: Order! Honourable members will cease interjecting. The Chief Minister will stay within the boundaries of the motion.

Mr TUXWORTH: Mr Speaker, I am trying to demonstrate to you, Sir, and the Assembly that the honourable Leader of the Opposition has absolute contempt for the operation of this Assembly and the legal system of the Northern Territory and those in other parts of Australia. My reference...

Mr B. COLLINS: A point of order, Mr Speaker! Those remarks are highly insulting to me personally. I dispute their accuracy. They are a direct reflection on my character, and it is completely contrary to standing orders to make such personal reflections other than by way of a substantive motion. I shall be happy to accommodate the honourable Chief Minister if he wants to move such a motion.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! I will read the motion again for the benefit of honourable members:

'That this Assembly endorses the Northern Territory government's support for Mudginberri abattoir, and deplores the activities of the Leader of the Opposition in his attempts to destroy a vital Northern Territory industry, and for his support for the illegal activities by the Australian Meat Industry Employees Union picketers'.

My ruling is that the motion is a substantive motion and that the honourable Chief Minister can continue.

Mr TUXWORTH: Mr Speaker, for the benefit of the members of the Assembly, I am trying to demonstrate the absolute contempt that the Leader of the Opposition has for this institution. There is absolutely no doubt that he uses this institution as a personal grandstand. He will do that on every occasion possible and the facts, the realities and the issues are simply things that he plays with. He bends and twists them to obtain whatever political advantage he can, and to hell with the Northern Territory.

As I said a moment ago, the Leader of the Opposition has had 4 days of question time in which to raise questions. He has been involved in trivial debate. He has been outside of the Assembly more often than he has been in it, and he has done all that he could to grab the headlines. In fact, he has turned part-time employment into an art form. However, enough is enough and today is the day for us to talk about Mudginberri.

I have moved this motion because it has the support of all Territorians. Territorians are horrified by what the union movements in the Northern Territory are doing to our industries. Yesterday, we saw a fine example when the unions walked off a wharf and left thousands of tourists stranded. They could not get back to the wharf and they could not ride on buses; it was an absolute shambles. The Minister for Tourism can confirm that it took 13 months to arrange the visitation of that boat to Darwin. That visit was then wrecked in about 13 minutes by some half-a-dozen unions. Would the tourists or the shipping line ever wish to return? No way.

Mr Speaker, I have moved this motion because the Leader of the Opposition has lost the support not only of the wider community that looks to him to stand up to these thugs when they do these things but also the support of many other people who count. It is time that somebody spoke up for them. Only 16% of the people of the Northern Territory believe that the Leader of the Opposition is doing a good job. Only last week, Aboriginal communities rejected him and his party for their stance on Aboriginal land rights. His contempt for this Assembly is so well-known to the government that we felt it was important today to bring him to book. His time wasting, his grandstanding and his abuse of Assembly procedures are over.

The fact is that we had an election in 1983 and we were elected to govern. We will not be deterred by the activities of this political outcast. We have

a very serious problem. We have a man who holds office in this Assembly but who is prepared to walk around the Northern Territory and the rulings of courts as though they do not exist. He is prepared to condone illegal activities as though their perpetrators were ill-treated by the courts. That is not proper for an office holder of this Assembly.

Mr B. Collins: I have never falsified a T/A claim. I have never had to pay back \$10 000 I stole from the public purse.

Mr ROBERTSON: Mr Speaker, a point of order! I ask the Leader of the Opposition to withdraw that allegation. That is beyond the pale.

Mr B. COLLINS: Mr Speaker, I withdraw the allegation unreservedly.

Mr TUXWORTH: Mr Speaker, we have a 2-issue man leading a no-policy party. His tools of trade are slander, personal attack, muck-raking and long-winded rhetoric. I will bet, however, that we do not see any documents.

Mr B. Collins: I will bet we do not. I have been asking for your T/A forms for 2 weeks and we still have not seen them.

Mr TUXWORTH: Mr Speaker, we do not have any documents.

Mr B. Collins: No, we do not. You told us last week you would bring them in.

Mr TUXWORTH: You told us last week about the documents that would bring down the government. Today, when we want them out on the table so we can debate them, there are none.

Mr B. Collins: Would you like me to do it now? Suspend standing orders.

Mr SPEAKER: Order!

Mr TUXWORTH: Give them to the Clerk and circulate them.

Mr B. Collins: Oh no. I want to speak on them, thanks very much.

Mr SPEAKER: Order!

Mr TUXWORTH: You can speak on them.

Mr B. Collins: Okay. Suspend standing orders.

Mr TUXWORTH: We now have a situation where the no-policy party and the cardboard cut-out members of the opposition do not participate in this Assembly any more. They are not even allowed to ask questions. They all have to go through the Leader of the Opposition. They have surrendered their parliamentary duties to him. I wonder how the voters of Millner, Nhulunbuy and MacDonnell are going to take it when they find out that their local member does not do anything any longer because the Leader of the Opposition...

Mr B. Collins: Can we sit next week and the week after?

Mr SPEAKER: Order!

Mr TUXWORTH: We sit as often as is necessary.

Mr B. Collins: 21 days a year?

Mr TUXWORTH: People in the electorate will hear the news about how the members of the opposition have defaulted.

I raise this as a matter of great concern because the Leader of the Opposition has come out in open support in the press for a union that is in contempt of court. I would like to read the comments of Mr Justice Lockhart who, in a contempt of court judgment on 11 September 1985, made the following comments:

'The meat union has adopted the stance that it is above the law of the land. Our society simply cannot function if individuals, corporations or unions take this approach'.

I guess that would apply to office holders of this Assembly too. To continue from the document:

'It shows contempt for the institutions that society has created to resolve its disputes. If conduct of this nature is permitted to continue, it must result in the erosion of public confidence in law and order, and the administration of justice.'

It will inevitably mean that people will think there is one law for a trade union and another law for everyone else. The result, if unchecked, would be anarchy'.

The judge also said:

'This case is as plain an example of criminal contempt as there can be'.

Let us not make any bones about this. Mr Speaker, if you or I were in criminal contempt, you know where we would finish up. Yet, when unions in this country are in criminal contempt, they walk 10 feet tall and thumb their noses at everybody in the community. We have one law in this country for the unions, and another for ordinary citizens.

The Leader of the Opposition is great on propriety. As office holders, we have a responsibility to set aside occasionally our politics and to say to the unions that have been held in criminal contempt of court: 'Enough! You cannot do that. We cannot maintain society if you hold that line. Back off. Change your course'. At least, we should speak out against them. But the regrettable part about it all is that the Leader of the Opposition issued a press release on 3 September giving unqualified support for the outlawed union picket at Mudginberri abattoir. He said that his party had already spoken out on the dispute, but he was happy to defend the meatworkers' union again.

At this point, the Leader of the Opposition is in a position of conflict. He cannot be an office holder in an institution such as this Assembly and walk around in the public domain, Mr Speaker...

Mr B. Collins: Stealing public money.

Mr TUXWORTH: Yes, Mr Speaker. He cannot walk around in the public domain, supporting an organisation that has been regarded by the judge as a clear perpetrator of criminal contempt.

He then went on to say that Mudginberri employees, in defying the picket union, should realise that, under a Territory award, they were not registered with the Conciliation and Arbitration Commission and had no avenue to fight wage deals with employers. He said that the federal government was the only government which had tried to resolve the dispute but this was thwarted by employer groups who refused to attend meetings called by the Prime Minister. What absolute balderdash! If ever there was rubbish thrown on the people of the Northern Territory, that is it.

The unions had an agreement of employment with their employer. At least, the employees did even if the unions did not accept it. The union members wanted to go back to work. We had a willing employer, we had willing employees and we had a union from down south which was about to use as much thuggery as it could possibly inflict on the people of the Northern Territory, and engage in criminal contempt of court proceedings to ensure that the Mudginberri meatworks in the Northern Territory did not operate.

Mr Speaker, I say to members of this Assembly that, given his role, the Leader of the Opposition cannot walk the streets, defy the courts and thumb his nose at the institutions of this land. He cannot tell the judges to go to hell and support people who are acting illegally. None of us can. If we want to assume that position, there is the door and we had better start walking through it. It is just not on.

I want to make it quite plain that, so far as I am concerned, the sort of example that is required from the Leader of the Opposition in this matter is required by us all, and it is absolutely paramount. We cannot support organisations or members of the community who are actively operating in contempt of court and using devious means and support of other ministers of the Crown to be able to achieve their ends. If that continues, we will have anarchy because it will not be changed unless there is anarchy.

Last year, for political reasons, the Leader of the Opposition said: 'I support the unionists because they are a part of my base and I cannot do anything else but support them...'.

Mr B. Collins: I said that, did I?

Mr TUXWORTH: Last week, in a fit of pique and full of the hypocrisy, the Leader of the Opposition tabled a letter that he regarded as an affront because it was a threat and demanded that it be referred to the Privileges Committee for protection and action. He cannot have it both ways. He cannot demand the privileges and protection of this institution and then support people who are acting illegally and say: 'To hell with the courts because it does not suit me today?' It is a very important issue.

I will not go into the details on the documents which the Leader of the Opposition received from the unions. Other people believe that they were given to him in contempt of court. Nor will I go into the details of the papers that he presented here from lawyers, papers which he felt were an attack on him as a member of parliament. He may be absolutely right. If he is right, as a member of this Assembly I would have a duty to stand up and say: 'If that has been done by lawyers, unions, industry or whomever, then we as office holders support the Leader of the Opposition under the laws of our institution'. The same responsibility falls to the Leader of the Opposition in dealing with the picketers who are squatting illegally in a national park, preventing the operations of a meatworks, and ensuring that people go broke

and that future meatworks agreements in the Northern Territory cannot be put in place along the same lines.

I say again to the Leader of the Opposition that he cannot have it both ways. If he wants the protection of this institution, and all the things that go with it, then he has to stand up for the other institutions that make up our Westminster system. He must damn the unions and support the courts.

Mr B. Collins: When did the courts join the Westminster system of parliament? They are supposed to be separate from it.

Mr SPEAKER: Order!

Mr TUXWORTH: Mr Speaker, the courts are separate from the Westminster system of parliament and I am the first to acknowledge it. But what is the system without the courts? What sort of a system would we have without the courts - if we just had this Assembly? The judicial and legal systems form integral parts of the process by which we maintain order in society.

The Leader of the Opposition cannot have it both ways. The other day he made a comment in the Assembly that reflected his whole attitude to the legal system of this country. When he was advised that certain matters were being referred to the court and that people believed that documents had been given to him illegally, he said that he did not give a damn what the judge said.

Mr B. Collins: That is not what I said.

Mr TUXWORTH: He did, Mr Speaker. No member and office holder of this Assembly can move about the community saying that he does not give a damn what a judge may say about a matter that has not been decided.

Mr Ede: Who is going to decide that?

Mr TUXWORTH: Mr Speaker, people are deciding that at the moment. To make a statement like that before it has been decided is to show absolute contempt for the operation of the system.

Mr B. Collins: It would if I had said it.

Mr TUXWORTH: You did say it.

Mr Speaker, the point I make again is that this man has no respect for our institutions. He is setting a dangerous example for young people like those in the gallery.

Mr B. Collins: I will send out for a strolling violin player for you, Ian.

Mr TUXWORTH: If the honourable Leader of the Opposition will be patient.

Mr B. Collins: You have only 2 minutes.

Mr TUXWORTH: We have more time than that.

Mr Speaker, let me deal with the significance of the Leader of the Opposition's actions. Setting aside for a moment that the Leader of the Opposition has thrown the system of the parliament and the courts to the winds

because it does not suit him politically, we have the more important issue of the meat industry and its relationship to the Northern Territory. Clearly, the Leader of the Opposition does not want an export meat industry in the Northern Territory because he cannot maintain his present stance on the one hand and have a meat export industry on the other.

Neither does the honourable Leader of the Opposition care about the jobs lost in this whole process. It is not a lot of jobs - some 40 or 50 only. Members on this side of the Assembly spend whole days trying to create opportunities for people who are crying out for work. We get on with it, but the Leader of the Opposition is openly supporting people who are in criminal contempt of the court and who are preventing Territorians from working. The shame of it all is that the people who are in criminal contempt are outside of the law of the Northern Territory and cannot be touched. They come from another place. They are located here in their dozens.

Mr Speaker, let us deal for a moment with the hardship that results from this. A great deal of hardship is experienced by some families which are a part of the meat export industry, particularly the buffalo industry. It is a fairly tenuous market at any time, and they have to ride with the market very carefully to ensure that everybody stays in business. We cannot allow people from outside to come to the Territory and act in contempt of court, outside the control of the Northern Territory, to destroy an industry with the support of the Leader of the Opposition. It does not wash.

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

Mr ROBERTSON (Leader of Government Business): Mr Speaker, I move that so much of standing orders be suspended as would prevent the Chief Minister from completing his speech.

Motion agreed to.

Mr TUXWORTH (Chief Minister): Mr Speaker, the other important point that needs to be made is that the Leader of the Opposition, in supporting the unions that are picketing, also supports the principle of Northern Territorians, members of unions, being expelled from the meatworkers' union because they do not conform with what some people down south believe that Territorians should be doing. Whatever the rights and the wrongs of the case, when people in here start to argue that Territorians ought to be expelled from unions because union leaders in Brisbane and Sydney believe that they are not conforming with the national interests of the union movement, we have a pretty serious problem.

The reality is that we now have our own Norman Gallagher of the north. We have a man, the leader of the Labor Party, who indulges in activities designed deliberately to ruin people. The Leader of the Opposition does not represent real Territorians who want to get on with the job. Neither could he claim to represent the members of his electorate by seeking to destroy an export industry in an electorate that has so little going for it in terms of natural employment that its constituents need every bit of help they can get. The Mudginberri meatworks has existed there for a long time and we should try to keep it running forever. We hope that one day Aboriginals will be employed at that meatworks so that we create local employment. That would be a tremendous reason for the existence of the meatworks. But, we will never achieve that as long as the Leader of the Opposition sides with unions which are breaking the law. I accuse the Leader of the Opposition, and I do so quite deliberately,

of working with 3 federal ministers to ensure that the Australian of the Year, Mr Pendarvis, and his company were destroyed and that the meat export business run by him was ruined.

I will go through the important facts now. Mudginberri, its owners, its employees and those who deal with it are entitled to the protection of the law of the land. Whether we like it or not, and whether it suits political expediency or not, that is a fact. The Mudginberri meatworks owners and their employees have done an industrial deal to ensure that they all stay in business. It might not be as good a deal as people get elsewhere, but it is better than nothing at all. They have gone out and fought hard to win markets. They have sat down and worked out acceptable industrial awards that have been approved by the court. They have legal tenure over their meatworks with the opportunity of having it renewed. The employees are loyal and willing to work. The employer wants to get on with the job. The only people wanting to stop it are meatworkers' unions and 3 federal ministers, with the connivance of people from the Northern Territory.

The Mudginberri meatworks is viable. It is also quite vital to the B-TEC program which is of crucial importance to the cattle industry of the Northern Territory. Nowhere is it more important than in Arnhem Land because, if there is one problem that is likely to bring our B-TEC program undone, it is the difficulty of eradicating TB from buffaloes. We do not have many options in overcoming that problem. Operating meatworks such as Mudginberri as part of the disease control program is a very important part of the B-TEC strategy. In terms of disease control, we cannot afford to have the works closed this year, opened next year and closed the year after. We will never have a disease control program. Next, we will find out that the cattle from the Northern Territory are not allowed to be exported because we cannot control disease in the buffalo herd. The Mudginberri meatworks creates dozens of jobs in the Northern Territory. Many people are involved in supplying and supporting the Mudginberri meatworks and it creates millions of dollars worth of exports which this country needs desperately.

At the last two EPAC meetings I attended, the only topic for discussion has been closing the trade gap. If we do not close the trade gap, we are ruined. But, what do we have? We have the Leader of the Opposition supporting illegal unions so that we cannot close the trade gap. Regrettably, we are all being destroyed by our very own Normie Gallagher - the Norm of the north. The Leader of the Opposition has a responsibility to support Mudginberri, its employees and the job that they are doing. He is paid to represent them, whether he likes them or not, because they are doing a good job for the Northern Territory.

Let us look for a moment at why the Leader of the Opposition would behave as he has. In the political rough and tumble of the ALP, if you do not toe the party or the union line, you do not get approval from the ACTU headquarters - you go straight off the ALP executive and out on to the footpath. The Leader of the Opposition has already had that humiliation once. He did his time in the sin bin and they let him back in. I am glad that he is on the executive; it is important that we have him there. The Northern Territory voice can be heard. It is better to have a voice than not. However, we cannot have a situation where unions who are operating illegally in the Northern Territory are being supported by a man simply because he will be thrown off the ALP executive if he does not give them his support. We are now in a situation where we are captives of bloody-minded unions and ALP factionalism. It is not good enough. The truth is that the Leader of the

Opposition is simply not strong enough to stand up to people who are breaking the law and to tell them to get out of the Northern Territory and to encourage other people to go back to work. He is totally insensitive to the needs of the Northern Territory. You do not have to be smart to work that out when 16% of the population knows that he is here and everybody in the community knows that he is a 2-issue man. I do not have to elaborate on what the 2 issues are. The whole community knows what the 2 issues are.

Mr B. Collins: One of them is travelling allowance and honesty.

Mr TUXWORTH: Nor does the Leader of the Opposition understand the basic desire of Territorians to be free of union manipulation and oppression. We want to be independent and able to do our own thing. We want to work hard and we want to get on in life. The Leader of the Opposition does not understand that, and that is why he is supporting the AMIEU.

Mr Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition constantly tells us how he has the ear of federal ministers: 'Oh, Bob will fix it. I will fly down and see Bob and I will see Peter'.

Mr B. Collins: When have I said that?

Mr TUXWORTH: Mr Speaker, for the picketers to operate in the Northern Territory and to have the Leader of the Opposition's support is bad enough, but they did that with the cooperation and the connivance of 3 federal ministers. There is no way that they could have remained there under those circumstances. Under those circumstances, the Leader of the Opposition had a duty to stand up to the 3 federal ministers and say: 'You are wrong. We need this industry for the Northern Territory and you ought to fix it'. I give him credit for standing up to Peter Walsh. He has done that occasionally in here. He refers to Peter Walsh as Mad-dog Walsh, the machine-gunner; we all know that. But there is also a responsibility for him to stand up in this case.

The Minister for Home Affairs and the Environment, Mr Cohen, has allowed illegal picketers to camp and squat in a national park in contravention of the plan of management of the park. You and I, Mr Speaker, as long-time Territorians, know exactly what happens to people in the Northern Territory if they go into national parks and misbehave: they are dealt with by the system. We had a situation whereby 20 or 30 picketers were thumbing their noses at the system because the federal minister would not issue the orders to have them removed.

The Minister for Primary Industry, Mr Kerin, has a responsibility to provide meat inspectors for the whole of the export industry - not only for those industries that suit him but for the whole of the export industry. He refused to supply export meat inspection services because he would not direct the inspectors to walk across the picket line, illegal as it was. It was illegal because it had been regarded by the court as criminal contempt and because they should not have been squatting there anyway. The Leader of the Opposition had a responsibility to stand up to Minister Kerin.

The third federal minister whom the Leader of the Opposition should have taken to task was Minister Willis. As Minister for Industrial Relations, Minister Willis should have supported a legal agreement by the employees and the employer, ratified by the court and regarded as a reasonable way of doing business by everybody concerned except the meatworkers' union. It told the minister in Canberra to get back in his box and keep his head down. If the

minister in Canberra does that, that is a matter for him. Both sides of this Assembly have a responsibility to take him to task for it.

The fourth minister in all of this must be the Prime Minister because you cannot have 3 federal ministers thumbing their noses at the law of the land without the consent and the support of the Prime Minister. Federal ministers have statutory responsibilities which they must carry out. Already a challenge in court has shown that the federal Minister for Primary Industry has been acting outside the law of the land. He is now trying to introduce regulations into the parliament which, thankfully, have been held up by the Senate. The regulations would enable him not to provide meat inspectors at Mudginberri if he does not want to. All he would have to do would be to make a backroom determination. The Leader of the Opposition has a responsibility to take him to task for that.

The meat industry in the Northern Territory, particularly the buffalo industry, is in a fledgling stage. It is really struggling. Markets are volatile and the capture of buffalo and the operation of the works are not easy. We all have a responsibility to ensure that it develops and thrives and creates jobs. We have an obligation to support the law of the land and the institutions of the courts. On those 2 counts, the Leader of the Opposition has failed. He has shown utter contempt for the way this Assembly operates, and he has shown utter contempt for the procedures of the court. He cannot stay. My government has given moral and financial support to Mudginberri from day one.

Mr B. Collins: I would not talk about morality if I were you.

Mr TUXWORTH: We have given moral and financial support to Mudginberri from day one, and we make no apology for it, to oppose a determined thrust by a union based in Sydney and Brisbane to come to the Northern Territory to destroy one of our most important industries. We are not embarrassed about it. The Minister for Primary Production yesterday started to give details of our support. We are not ashamed of it at all. We are not frightened of the retaliation that will come. We know there will be retaliation; there always is.

The Leader of the Opposition has made great play in the media about the damning documents he has ...

Mr B. Collins: Who was running around with little bits of paper yesterday about travelling allowance?

Mr TUXWORTH: ...concerning the connivance of the Northern Territory government with Mudginberri meatworks. He was going to bring great disgrace upon us and bring the government down. He will have his time to bring them out in a few minutes.

We have to anticipate what will happen this year. It will be a very difficult year because it is the crunch year for the unions. I have been advised by the union movement that it is not prepared to allow Mudginberri meatworks to open this year unless there is an agreement that is satisfactory to it and which gets it out of its predicament. That might be perfectly reasonable from where it sits, but the fact is that the union movement's actions and its resulting troubles are its own problem. Other people, such as the federal government, this government, Mr Pendarvis and the employees of Mudginberri should not have to pay for the illegal activities of the AMIEU.

The Mudginberri issue is not dead, and I expect this year that more meatworks will be caught up in the same problem. We have to make a decision as to whether we will bail out and give in to this oppression by the unions. We need to know whether the Leader of the Opposition intends to support further illegal pickets in the Northern Territory or whether he will work with the Northern Territory government to ensure that the union movement does not win this case. We cannot afford to stand by and watch people from outside the Northern Territory ruin industries that we have spent so much time trying to build up.

Let me say this to the Leader of the Opposition: enough of the hypocrisy. He talks about the theatricalism and the hypocrisy he has seen in his parliamentary career, as though nobody else had ever noticed it. No one really cares what he says. We have had enough of it; we are all sick to death of it. Enough of the parliamentary abuse! This man walks around the town complaining about the operation and abuse of the parliament and how the government will not let him do what he likes. The role of this Assembly is not to let the opposition do what it likes but to conduct its business. The parliamentary abuse is over, and so is the grandstanding. There is always room in this Assembly for legitimate argument, for the moving of motions for debate...

Mr B. Collins: Here comes the new age.

Mr TUXWORTH: ...but the time for grandstanding is long gone. If the Leader of the Opposition behaves like a normal parliamentarian, we will get on fine. If he wants to behave like a yobbo, then the scene will be different.

Mr B. Collins: If I behave like a rabbit, will I get big ears and a pair of glasses?

Mr TUXWORTH: The Leader of the Opposition likes to refer to...

Mr B. Collins: And no brains, and sticky fingers.

Mr TUXWORTH: The Leader of the Opposition likes to refer to my big ears, my glasses and my buck teeth. God made me the way I am. I am not ashamed.

Mr B. Collins: God did not make you a thief. The devil made you do that.

Mr SPEAKER: Order!

Mr TUXWORTH: The Leader of the Opposition does not have what it takes to insult me. It is as simple as that.

Mr B. Collins: I agree with that. Nobody can insult you. New-age thinkers are impervious to all that. I have read the book.

Mr TUXWORTH: You cannot insult me with what you think about me personally.

I want to discuss the right of the Leader of the Opposition to be here. He is pretty quick to challenge my right to be here and to give gratuitous advice about how I should resign because things do not suit him. I do not care whether things suit him or not. I am not resigning and I am not asking him to resign. I want the Leader of the Opposition in this Assembly for the next 20 years. He is the best political asset that the CLP is ever likely to have in the Northern Territory.

Mr B. Collins: That is a tired old line. Can't you think up something a bit more original?

Mr TUXWORTH: He is the best political asset that we are ever likely to have in the Northern Territory.

Mr B. Collins: Are you going to talk about Mudginberri? You have had 45 minutes.

Mr TUXWORTH: Mr Speaker, if I can continue without the interjections, I will be pleased to do so.

I will say again that the Leader of the Opposition's presence in this Assembly is the best asset that we could ever have. You will never hear me seek his removal from the Assembly. I do not want him to resign; I do not want him to go anywhere.

Mr B. Collins: Good. I am delighted.

Mr TUXWORTH: I am happy for him to run around the Northern Territory with his loose lip, saying whatever he likes about anything because, every time he opens his mouth, we will pick up a few more votes. Regrettably, Territorians not only reject him, but also despise him.

Let me go over this very important statement by Justice Lockhart again because it is one which the Leader of the Opposition must address.

Mr B. Collins: Well you didn't.

Mr TUXWORTH: I would like the Leader of the Opposition to clarify why he finds it absolutely proper for the leader of a party in this Assembly to support unions who are in contempt of court. He needs to explain that because no one in the community understands it. If he thinks it is proper, we need to understand why so that we can see how the system will work in the future. Justice Lockhart said the union has adopted the stance that it is above the law. We have the Leader of the Opposition supporting a union that is regarded by the court as considering itself to be above the law. As the judge said: 'Our society simply cannot function if individuals, corporations or unions take this approach'. If members of this Assembly want to support any organisation in the community which is not prepared to abide by the laws of the land, then we really should not be here:

'It also shows contempt for the institutions that society has created to resolve its disputes'. I would be the first to acknowledge that the institutions that we have are not perfect and we will have problems from time to time in the way we create rules and the way they are interpreted and the decisions that are handed down. But the name of the game is that, when we do have a referee's decision, we stick with it.

'If conduct of this nature is permitted to continue, it must result in the erosion of public confidence in law and order and the administration of justice'. It will if we have organisations such as unions acting in that manner. It will happen much more quickly if members of this Assembly are seen to be supporting the lawbreakers and the people who are in contempt of court. It will inevitably mean, according to Justice Lockhart, that people will think there is one law for a trade union and another law for everyone else. People in the community already believe that.

What is important is that people understand that the Leader of the Opposition, office holders and members of this Assembly do not support it because, if people out there believe that the lawmakers make a law for the community in the total knowledge that it applies only to those people who are not in a union, then we might as well give it away. That is really the crux of the matter. If it went unchecked, it would result in anarchy. We have already seen great political and industrial upheaval in other countries where unions have taken over and the law of the land has had to be brought to bear on them.

Mr Speaker, I finish by repeating Justice Lockhart's comments.

Mr B. Collins: Again.

Mr TUXWORTH: It cannot be said too often.

Mr B. Collins: Five times.

Mr TUXWORTH: I am happy to say it 105 times.

He said: 'This case is a plain example of criminal contempt'.

Mr B. Collins: You keep saying you are just about to finish; you have been saying it for 20 minutes.

Mr TUXWORTH: Mr Speaker, I am sorry that I did not finish earlier to suit the Leader of the Opposition. Let me challenge him again to produce the documents that he has been referring to for the past 6 weeks, the documents that he believes will bring the government down...

Mr B. Collins: I never said that.

Mr TUXWORTH: ...documents that he believes, and has told other people, will bring this Assembly into disrepute and reflect badly on my government. I say again that we have worked really hard to protect the Mudginberri meatworks and we will continue to do so. The Leader of the Opposition ought to be damned for his role in supporting illegal operators.

Mr B. COLLINS (Opposition Leader): Mr Speaker, I thank the Leader of Government Business for indicating that the government will extend the same courtesy to me as was extended to the Chief Minister in moving a suspension of standing orders. This is a grave and important debate. I intend to deal with the matters with some care.

Mr Speaker, I move an amendment to the motion to omit all words after 'that' and insert in their stead:

'this Assembly censures the Chief Minister and Treasurer, and the Minister for Primary Production because -

(1) they entered into a secret agreement with the Westpac Bank in respect of transferring the public accounts of the Northern Territory with an annual turnover of \$1300m from the Reserve Bank to that bank in a manner which denied other banks in the commercial sector from the normal commercial tendering for that account;

(2) the opposition has documented evidence that it wishes to place before this Assembly to support this charge which proves that the bank, at the behest of the government, provided a \$2m facility to Mudginberri abattoir, waived a number of the normal banking conditions which had been placed on the original facility for the specific purpose stated by the bank to assist the government to avoid embarrassing disclosures in this Assembly that the government had advanced almost \$1m of public moneys without proper financial and legal controls or security, and that this was done for the purpose of securing the Northern Territory government's accounts from the Reserve Bank; and

(3) calls upon the ministers to resign'.

Mr Speaker, I intend to accommodate the Chief Minister. Let me start by saying that I have known the proprietor of Mudginberri abattoir, Jay Pendarvis, since the first day he arrived in the Northern Territory. I worked in the Mudginberri abattoir as a meat inspector during my 5 years with the Department of Primary Production in the Northern Territory. I go back a long way with the Meneling abattoir, the Mudginberri abattoir, the Wildboar abattoir and a few others.

I have no objection whatever to the Northern Territory government, through the Agricultural Development and Marketing Authority which has been specifically set up for that purpose, financially supporting agricultural and pastoral pursuits such as Mudginberri abattoir in the Northern Territory. I do not have the slightest objection; it is a commendable objective. I would hope that the government would extend the same generous assistance that it has extended to the Mudginberri abattoir to the Katherine abattoir which employs around 120 people and is in sad need of a major uplift and overhaul which I understand will cost about \$2m. I commend that action to the government and support the government when it supports important industries such as Mudginberri by the provision of government assistance.

All I ask - and I do not think it is a very onerous demand - is that, when it does so, it deals in a proper manner with the public money that is entrusted to it. It should deal with it in a way which is acceptable, not only to the public sector but to the private sector as well. The manner in which the government has behaved in this matter - very large sums of public money are involved - would horrify the private sector. Indeed, some of the information which has been made public recently on the Mudginberri dispute would turn your hair, Mr Speaker, in respect of the confidence you would have in some key government departments. It is almost beyond belief.

I intend to canvass some documents. In respect of the distinction between the courts and the parliament, the courts in this country are an absolutely vital institution. Our democratic society depends on rule by law. But there are institutions that are higher than the courts and I refer to the parliaments of this country. Judges are not elected but governments and members of parliaments are. That distinction has been clearly laid down again and again. In case we have any faint hearts who may be concerned about some of the issues that I will canvass, let me say that, in respect of discussing matters that are sub judice, I was not alarmed to hear, in the 40 minute answer given to a question yesterday, the Minister for Primary Production doing precisely that. There is much evidence on this subject but I think it was best encapsulated in the House of Representatives in 1976 by Mr Speaker Snedden. I will read out his ruling on the matter:

'I am concerned to see the parties before the court proceedings are not prejudiced in the hearing before the court. That is the whole essence of the sub judice rule: that we not permit anything to occur in this House that will be to the prejudice of litigants before a court. For that reason, my attitude towards the sub judice rule is not to interpret the sub judice rule in such a way as to stifle discussion in the national parliament on issues of national importance'.

Mr Speaker, in the case of our own Assembly, it should be issues of Territory importance.

'I have so ruled on earlier occasions. That is only the opposite side of the coin to what is involved here. If I believe that, in any way, the discussion on this motion or the passage of the motion will prejudice the parties before the court, then I would rule the matter sub judice and refuse to allow the motion to go on. But there is a long line of authority from the courts which indicates that the courts and judges of the courts do not regard themselves as such delicate flowers that they are likely to be prejudiced in their decisions by a debate that goes on in this House. I am quite sure that this is true, especially in the case of a court of appeal or, if the matter were to go beyond that, the High Court. I do not think that those justices would regard themselves as having been influenced by the debate that may occur here'.

Mr Speaker, that would apply to judges of the Federal Court as well. Having spent some days sitting in Mr Justice Morling's court, not only do I consider Mr Justice Morling not to be a delicate flower, but he strikes me as being a highly intelligent cactus, quite impervious to any hostile environment that might be created around him. In terms of laying any doubts to rest, I hope that that has done so.

The terms of the amendment to this motion are very specific indeed and I repeat them to lay these constant untruths and the nonsense about where we stand on the issue of financial support for Mudginberri to rest. I will say again that we have no objection to financial support being provided through the authority set up for that very purpose, ADMA, for the assistance of primary industry in the Northern Territory, whether it is for Mudginberri or anywhere else. But we demand, as we have a right to demand in this Assembly, that the custodians of the public money use that money in a way which is consistent with normal financial procedures and do not use it as a private bank account. We do not accept that \$1m of that money can be handed out with no paperwork, no files, no agreements, no guarantees and no security.

It has been disclosed, and nailed right down by the Chairman of ADMA, Mr Saville, and the General Manager of ADMA, Mr Cavanagh, that the entire amount of money - I think it was \$20 000 short of \$1m - contained in the trust funds of ADMA was exhausted in advances to Mudginberri abattoir. No one knew about it. There was not the slightest security. The honourable minister knows that it was disclosed that sums of money were handed over regularly on the basis of little chits that came in from Mudginberri station saying that x kg of meat had been produced on a certain day. That meat has never belonged to ADMA. It has been disclosed that \$1m was handed out on no security whatsoever. There was no legal requirement upon Mr J. Pendarvis of Mudginberri abattoir to buy the meat back. No such document even existed until the end of August. I can assure you that that is correct.

Mr Speaker, the minister is looking very puzzled. I know that he is not on top of this. I have those documents in front of me. I have the memorandum of understanding and the government guarantees that were provided. I can assure honourable members that almost \$1m of public money was advanced from June 1985 to Mudginberri Station and no one knew about it. It was handed out on the basis of little pieces of paper. That has been confirmed publicly by the 2 gentlemen I have just mentioned. In fact, Mr Cavanagh admitted that he knew nothing of this, despite the fact that he shelled out his entire budget. He said that he was brought into a room where he found the Minister for Primary Production, Mr Hatton, and Mr and Mrs Pendarvis. From memory, I think he said that Mr Saville was there also. When he walked into that room, he was told that everything had been arranged and all he was required to do was to ensure that the cheques arrived at Mudginberri.

Mr Cavanagh has confirmed, as has Mr Saville, that at no time did the meat belong to ADMA. At all times, it belonged to Mudginberri abattoir. The meat was worthless in terms of security for a loan and no document was raised to secure the \$1m of public money that was handed out until the end of August when that document was drafted by the legal firm representing Mudginberri abattoir. The initials of the person who drafted that document appear clearly at the bottom of it: Mr Phil Teitzel. The government was quite happy to shell out money for 4 or 5 months with no security, no legal agreements and no compulsion for Mr Pendarvis to buy it back. When the agreement was finally dug up, after the event and not before it, it had been drafted by the solicitors for the person to whom the money had passed. The government could not even use the resources that it has at its disposal. We find that to be highly objectionable, improper, in gross contravention of the most basic of Treasury procedures in terms of the handling of public money and absolutely deserving of the condemnation of every member of this Assembly.

Mr Speaker, I will inform the Assembly on some of these matters. On the issue of Mudginberri, I asked the Chief Minister if he could confirm or deny in this Assembly that the Territory government was giving financial assistance to, or defraying the legal costs of, the court action being taken by the proprietor of the Mudginberri meatworks. Recently, the Chairman of ADMA said that he was not aware those questions had been asked in the Assembly. In response, the Chief Minister and Treasurer said, in part: 'Yes, the Northern Territory government is acting as a guarantor in relation to the owner of Mudginberri meatworks'. He said also:

'We were approached by the Mudginberri meatworks' owner who asked whether we would go guarantor for the product in store until the dispute was over and he had an opportunity to sell it. Negotiations are continuing for the sale of the product. We believe that the meat will be cleared at a reasonable price'.

Mr Speaker, I stress that these answers were given in the Assembly, but we did not hear 1 word from the Chief Minister and Treasurer about the government lending any money - not a word about the \$708 344.65 which had been lent at the date on which I asked the question. The word used was 'guarantor', not 'lender' and not 'financier'. It was a deliberate effort on the part of the Treasurer to hide the true facts from the Assembly.

Mr Speaker, perhaps the Chief Minister and Treasurer could be excused for his lack of knowledge because it would seem that, through July and August 1985, no one had a clear idea of the government's financial manoeuvres. Consider the events from June through until the end of August, Mr Speaker. In

June 1985, the Minister for Primary Production met with Mr Pendarvis, at which time they discussed the provision of a \$2m loan facility from Westpac to Mudginberri Station Pty Ltd. That occurred in June 1985. Shortly after, a second meeting occurred which was attended by the minister, Mr Pendarvis and Mr Saville, the Chairman of ADMA. The meeting was on 2 July but Mr Saville was given no indication of any Westpac involvement. However, Mr Saville was given a very unusual instruction, one which he described as being the only instruction like it that he had ever received. He was instructed that he was to advance \$1m to Mr Pendarvis, the entire amount of money that ADMA held in trust accounts. It was an instruction which he himself said had never before been received from any minister.

On the same day, another meeting took place between Mr Pendarvis, Mr Saville and Mr Cavanagh, the General Manager of ADMA. Mr Cavanagh was advised by Mr Saville that the government would support Mr Pendarvis whilst his abattoir was being picketed, and this would be done by advancing money to Mudginberri at a rate of \$2.30 per kilogram for production costs of the meat. It has now been established that that was a loan on which interest was charged and of which \$780 000 had been disbursed when I asked a question in this Assembly of the Treasurer. However, not a word did he say about it, and for good reason.

Let us consider the details of the loan. I will simply quote from the public comments made about the loan:

'Mr Ashley: Mr Cavanagh, does your organisation ordinarily conduct transactions for a \$1m without any paperwork?

Mr Cavanagh: I am not sure what you mean, 'without paperwork?'

Mr Ashley: Well, you told us about an arrangement you say was concluded in early July 1984. You were called into a room where your chairman was with Mr and Mrs Pendarvis. Correct?

Mr Cavanagh: Yes.

Mr Ashley: And do I understand from your evidence that, by the time you arrived in the room, an arrangement had already been struck between Mr and Mrs Pendarvis and Mr Saville?

Mr Cavanagh: That is what I was told, yes.

Mr Ashley: So, as the general manager of this organisation, you were presented with something that apparently as a consequence of political directive, had been arranged by your superior with the Pendarvis'?

Mr Cavanagh: Yes.

Mr Ashley: Did you then bring into existence any file that related to the matter?

Mr Cavanagh: Only in the sense of our payment documents.

Mr Ashley: Was any file brought into existence in July of 1985 which evidenced the nature of the relationship you say was created between ADMA and the Pendarvis'?

Mr Cavanagh: No, there was not.

Mr Ashley: So let me just take it bit by bit. There was nothing brought into existence in July to indicate that ADMA was lending money on security, rather than purchasing a product?

Mr Cavanagh: No.

Mr Ashley: There was nothing brought into existence in July to indicate that any interest was payable, and the rate of such interest?

Mr Cavanagh: No'.

Later the court was told:

'Mr Ashley: I will put it to you again. Do you agree with me that the first document that describes the transactions that had gone on before 29 August 1985 as being advances rather than a sale is paragraph 4 of the agreement of 19 August 1985?

Mr Cavanagh: That is the first document that was laid down.

Mr Ashley: That is the first record of any interest being payable on the money?

Mr Cavanagh: Yes.

Mr Ashley: It is the first description of the moneys being an advance rather than a sale?

Mr Cavanagh: It is the first description of the transaction'.

The events depict 2 parallel sets of actions. The first was a very cynical political exercise in which this government set out to turn Mudginberri into a political and industrial battlefield. It succeeded. The second was the inept and pathetic bungling by ADMA which was used as a private CLP instrument. In respect of statements that have been made both by ADMA's General Manager and its Chairman, I must say again that it is very difficult to have the slightest confidence in that organisation being of any assistance to Northern Territory primary production at all, other than as a conduit to launder money from the Northern Territory's Treasury into the pockets of Mudginberri abattoir.

Last week, we heard in this Assembly an explanation from the Minister for Primary Production to the effect that it was not he who contacted Westpac on 23 August 1985 to arrange a \$2m loan. Indeed, we were presented with a facsimile letter that had been organised during the lunchbreak that day and sent up from Westpac. The minister discussed the loan with Mr Pendarvis. However, before this, the minister decided to use his private bank, ADMA, to carry Mudginberri for a while. ADMA was unable to operate effectively in this highly-charged political atmosphere. The organisation seemed to go into some form of administrative paralysis. The Chairman and the General Manager of ADMA have both confirmed that almost 2 months passed, and almost \$800 000 of public money was advanced, before any normal business procedures were applied to ADMA's activities.

I stress again that this is a statutory organisation handling large sums of public money. The Chairman of ADMA has confirmed this. He acknowledged that, by the end of August, there was still no document which showed the money had been advanced and no record that any interest was being paid. The situation was that the money was being advanced without any clear idea of arrangements for its return. I stress again that the evidence given shows that, at all times during this procedure, the meat was owned by Mudginberri. There was absolutely no security at all for this amount of money. There were no files, no security, no legal documents, no interest payments discussed, not even an arrangement between the government and Pendarvis that he had to buy the meat back after the \$700 000 had been advanced. There can be no argument about ADMA holding a valuable quantity of meat. However, ADMA had no idea what to do with it. ADMA has no expertise in meat marketing. The transcript shows it:

Mr Ashley: Let me ask you this. Before July 1985, did you know anything about buffalo meat?

Mr Cavanagh: Only as someone who has lived in the Territory all his life.

Mr Ashley: Only that you could eat it?

Mr Cavanagh: Basically.

Mr Ashley: Did you know anything about the provisions of the Export Control Act?

Mr Cavanagh: No.

Mr Ashley: Do you know anything about the provisions of the Australian Meat and Livestock Corporation Act?

Mr Cavanagh: No.

Mr Ashley: Do you know anything about the quality assurance programs required under the Australian Meat and Livestock Corporation Act?

Mr Cavanagh: No.

Mr Ashley: Did you in the circumstances consider that you had any substantial basis of knowledge on which to form a belief as to whether or not the meat for which ADMA was advancing \$2.30 a kilo would or would not be capable of being exported?

Mr Cavanagh: No'.

The only thing the ADMA people knew was that a political deal had been struck before they had even walked into the room; they simply had to pay the money out. It is obvious that ADMA was acting as a result of an unusual and unprecedented direction from the minister. We have no better authority for that than the Chairman of ADMA himself. ADMA had no idea that the minister and Mr Pendarvis had discussed the Westpac facility in June. ADMA was used between 2 July 1985 and 29 August 1985 as a means of cheap finance for Mudginberri Station Pty Ltd. It was hoped that they would be able to get away with this short-term, unrecorded deal. But the deal came unstuck. It is obvious from the evidence, and from the statements that have been made, that

ADMA had no idea that the dispute could go on much longer. Mr Saville said that it was considered to be 'purely a short-term arrangement'. Of course, the minister knew - and this is the really crucial part that involves this Assembly - that it was no short-term matter. He knew because he had discussed the Westpac loan facility with Mr Pendarvis in June, before the ADMA advances had been made.

The actions of the minister were motivated solely by the desire to intensify and sustain the Mudginberri dispute. It was not simply a question of trying to help out an industry. I have no doubt that the minister will defend his actions by saying that the Mudginberri abattoir is important to the Territory and it was threatened by an illegal strike. That is true. I have already gone on record as saying that using ADMA in the proper manner for which it was set up would certainly not attract any criticism from me. But, shelling out the entire contents of its trust accounts on no security is the most appalling misuse of public money that I have ever heard of. I would add that that is to date - I will mention something a little worse in a minute.

Mr Speaker, I am not arguing with the minister about the reason he gave publicly for his support for Mudginberri Station. My argument is with the manner in which the minister and this government acted. The minister could have supported Mudginberri even if he had security for the loans. However, the question that arises is why, after it had all been done, the minister put those basic financial requirements in place as much as 2 months after the money had been advanced. The reason was given by Mr A.B. Cowan, Group Accountant Executive of the Westpac Bank, in a document that was tabled in this Assembly last week. In that document, Mr Cowan said:

'To this point, ADMA has advanced approximately \$1m but, with the Legislative Assembly now in session, the government is anxious to have the advances refinanced to avoid any embarrassment at question time'.

Mr Speaker, let us see what more the Westpac Bank had to say on this, which I must say was one of the more grubby deals that has ever been made in Australia involving very large sums of public money. Documents have already come to the attention of members of this Assembly, but I will canvass them again. The Mudginberri abattoir was the subject of a document of 16 August 1985. It was from A.D. Moore, the Regional Manager of the bank:

'Mudginberri is embroiled in a longstanding and bitter clash with the meatworkers' union in respect of pay and working conditions. Although contracts for substantial amounts are held with Taiwanese and German interests, the company has been unable to export any meat due to federal meat inspectors refusing to cross union picket lines. Accordingly, the company has been denied cash flow, and its operation has been propped up by a number of interests, with the National Farmers Federation at the forefront.

Latterly, the Northern Territory government, through the Agricultural Development and Marketing Authority, ADMA, has lent support by advancing moneys against meat stocks as beasts are slaughtered. Stocks are held in various cold stores in Darwin awaiting inspection by federal meat inspectors to enable export to proceed.

To this point, ADMA has advanced approximately \$1m but, with the Legislative Assembly now in session, the government is anxious to

have the advances refinanced to avoid any embarrassment at question time. Following discussions yesterday and today with ADMA, Treasury and Primary Production officials were asked to provide ...'.

The documents have been tabled, Mr Speaker. The document then goes on to say, and I stress this:

'While we are mindful of the inherent political overtones in this proposal, nonetheless we are well secured and we are assisting an established customer at the behest of the NT government whose business we are actively pursuing. Group Account Executive, Bruce Cowan, has indicated verbally that credit risk of the NT government guarantee has been accepted for this proposal'.

Mr Speaker, the business which the bank was actively pursuing becomes clearer and clearer. There are other documents that talk about the amount of money that was required and the kind of conditions that would be placed on the loan. There was a number of normal banking conditions placed on the loan. There are an exchange of documents between various officers of the bank listing the 6 or 7 conditions that applied - normal banking conditions. Then, a letter arrived from Mr David Moore on 28 August 1985. It is to Mr Cowan:

'Dear Bruce,

Mudginberri Station Pty Ltd

Attached is a copy of approval for a \$2m facility. As you will note, there are a number of riders attaching to the approval, none of which in my view is appropriate. I am concerned that, if we pass on the terms and conditions of the approval, we could undo any goodwill generated. As relationship manager, could I have your views and indeed your support to go back to the divisional loans committee to have the terms of the approval amended. Additionally, the government has sought an overdraft facility, but approval is on the basis of a separate fixed account to be drawn down progressively, but presumably there is no scope to redraw.

Regards,
David Moore
Regional Manager'.

There is another Westpac document which is signed by A.B. Cowan, Group Account Executive. It is dated 28 August 1985 and is addressed to Mr David Moore, Regional Manager. It reads as follows:

'Dear David,

Mudginberri Station Pty Ltd

I refer to the facility of \$2m approved for your above client. The conditions placed on the approval by your loans committee are, in my view, inappropriate to the needs of your client and will negate the positive impact we are endeavouring to generate with the government as a result of this transaction. Specifically, I refer to the first 4 conditions as contained in your Senior Manager Retail Lending's letter of the 27th of August:

(1) The political considerations of assisting your client in this particular circumstance have been considered and already accepted by the bank. General management has been advised of the position.

(2) The very reason the government approached us on this matter was to avoid political problems and to place the financing with the correct entity; that is, with the company's bankers. This has been accepted by the bank as a commercial decision and given that, in the normal course of business our role is to assist with our clients' financial needs, we can defend that position in the industrial scene.

(3) For this and other government relationship reasons, I do not wish to see this condition form part of the loan.

The government is well aware of our expectations in this transaction, and have clearly accepted their role of risk underwriters by the form of guarantees they are prepared to execute. To place any specific events, such as cancellation of particular contracts which, in itself, ignores the possibility of replacement contracts being negotiated as triggers for instant payment under the guarantee, is unnecessary. We are not at risk while ever we hold the government's guarantee. Any request for further assistance can be considered in the light of any such proposal at a future time. It is not only limiting, but also to an extent provocative, to set this situation in concrete at the outset and to link it to specific events. The needs of your client are for a flexible short-term facility to allow for the conduct of his business and the orderly marketing of the meat. There could well be a need to redraw on a variable-usage basis, and progressive-draw fixed lending is not what is required or sought. We should be able to accommodate the needs of the client by way of overdraft. In summary, I would stress there are 2 major considerations in this transaction: (1) to meet the needs of your client on a commercial basis; and (2) to further develop our relationship with the government.

The conditions set by your lending administration do not satisfy these considerations in this instance. I suggest the matter be reconsidered.

Your faithfully,

A.B. Cowan
Group Account Executive'.

Then there was a flurry of correspondence backwards and forwards saying: 'We will throw all the conditions out the window. We do not want to upset the NT government for obvious reasons'. Then there was a letter on 29 August 1985 from David Moore to Mr Bruce Cowan. Listen to this:

'Dear Bruce,

Thank you for your letter yesterday. I spoke with Neil Jackson who has agreed to waive the terms and conditions attaching to the approval and, in addition, to restore the facility to an overdraft basis. Your assistance in bringing some sanity to the approval is appreciated.

Attached are some clippings from yesterday's NT News re the government's involvement in the Yulara and Sheraton Alice Springs. Today is the final day of the Assembly sittings and Opposition Leader Collins will be hot on the attack concerning the government's contingent liabilities. If anything comes out of that, I will let you know.

Regards,

David Moore
Regional Manager'.

They are chatty little fellows, the executives of Westpac. Attached to that letter were half a dozen press clippings, including editorials from the NT News and articles such as one headed 'Collins Attacks Ministers'. We have the senior executives of the Westpac Bank acting as political watchdogs concerning the opposition's actions in the Northern Territory's Legislative Assembly!

The President of the Country Liberal Party spoke very publicly when it was announced a month later that the government accounts, with a turnover of \$1300m a year, were being transferred from the Reserve Bank to the Westpac Bank. He said that the reason for the Territory government's apparent favouritism for Westpac was because the bank had developed a special relationship with the government. Mr Lewis' criticism of the Chief Minister and Treasurer, and the subsequent statements by the managers of 2 other major banks in Darwin, could hardly have been more trenchant or more critical of the government's position. I intend to canvass these issues in a wider sense later in this debate.

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

Mr LEO (Nhulunbuy): Mr Speaker, I move that so much of standing orders be suspended as would prevent the Leader of the Opposition from concluding his speech.

Motion agreed to.

Mr B. COLLINS: Mr Lewis was quoted in the Sunday Territorian of 22 December. The article opened by saying:

'CLP President, Mr Graham Lewis, has launched a scathing attack on the Tuxworth government over its handling of the Westpac Bank deal. Mr Lewis said he was staggered by the way the deal had been handled'.

It further quoted Mr Lewis:

'He claims that the government is not telling the full truth of the deal. "I know of at least 1 major bank that was not asked to submit a proposal", he said.

Mr Lewis said that the reason for the Territory government's apparent favouritism for Westpac was because the bank had developed a special relationship with the government. "They bailed out Burgundy Royale over the Beaufort Hotel and Performing Arts Centre complex and they got some very significant superannuation business for the government, maybe that is a case of a quid pro quo", he said'.

The article went on to say:

'Two major banks, late yesterday, confirmed that Mr Lewis' claim was correct. A National Bank spokesman said that, while the bank has submitted an expression of interest, there had been no answer from the government. The ANZ Chief Manager, Mr Bob Ellard, said the bank had received a letter from the Territory government on 6 November 1984, which the bank understood to be a preliminary assessment of private banking practices with the government. The bank answered with 2 letters of interest but was not asked to submit a formal proposal'.

Mr Speaker, as we now know, the expressions of interest that were called for in 1984 became totally irrelevant in 1985 because certain events transpired in 1985 of which, I would imagine, none of the commercial banks was aware. Certainly, until this morning, the members of this Assembly were not aware of them. I would say that many members of the Country Liberal Party were unaware of them. Whilst the President of the Country Liberal Party was close to the mark, he was not on it completely in that he did not list them among his reasons why the account had been transferred.

Mr Speaker, this morning I quoted from a number of documents from the Westpac Bank and now I shall quote from a few more. There are a number of references in the Westpac correspondence to the concern of the government about political embarrassment in the Legislative Assembly. On at least 3 or 4 occasions, there appears in this correspondence the clear statement that the bank was well aware of the inherent political overtones in the proposal but, for a very substantial reward, it was prepared, to quote the bank, 'to take that risk'. That is fine, Mr Speaker. The Westpac Bank was prepared to say in writing that it was aware of the political reasons for which the government wanted the bank to assist Mudginberri, and it was prepared to take the risk. The bank made its bed, and now it can lie on it. A further memorandum from the Westpac Bank dated 27 August 1985, and signed by Mr A.D. Moore, Regional Manager of the Westpac Bank, says, among other things:

'While we are mindful of the inherent political overtones in this proposal, nonetheless we are well secured, and we are assisting an established customer at the behest of the Northern Territory government whose business we are actively pursuing. Group Account Executive, Bruce Cowan, has indicated verbally that the credit risk of the NT government guarantee has been accepted for this proposal'.

A memorandum from the Westpac Bank, dated 27 August 1985, concerning Mudginberri Station, contained the following passage:

'We confirm Chief Minister's telephone advice that Divisional Loans Committee approved request for an advance to the company of \$2m against Northern Territory government guarantees, subject to Department of Primary Production to formalise its request for bank to assist. This is to ensure that we are seen to be responding to a request from the government in the event of any industrial backlash'.

In other words, Mr Speaker, it was a put up job between the bank and the government.

Mr Coulter: The paper ought to be circulated so that we can each read it instead of you selecting quotations.

Mr B. COLLINS: Mr Speaker, for the benefit of the honourable member, I intend to do that at the conclusion of my speech.

Mr Speaker, it is not really relevant, but I may repeat some of the clauses that I have quoted previously. I will table these documents at the end of my speech and members can sort them out for themselves.

I quote from a letter dated 28 August from Mr David Moore, Regional Manager to Mr A.N. Cowan, Group Account Executive, Brisbane:

'Dear Bruce,

Mudginberri Station Pty Ltd

I am concerned that, if we pass on the terms and conditions of the approval, we can undo any goodwill generated'.

That is, with the Northern Territory government.

I will read out in full a letter dated 28 August for the benefit of the Minister for Community Development. I was trying to save the time of the Assembly, Mr Speaker, but he does not want me to quote out of context. The letter was signed by Mr A.B. Cowan, and directed to Mr David Moore, Regional Manager, Darwin:

'Dear David,

Mudginberri Station Pty Ltd

I refer to the facility of \$2m approved for your above client. The conditions placed on the approval by your loans committee are, in my view, inappropriate to the needs of your client and will negate the positive impact we are endeavouring to generate with the government as a result of this transaction. Specifically, I refer to the first 4 conditions as contained in your Senior Manager Retail Lendings' letter of 27 August.

1. The political considerations of assisting your client in this particular circumstance have been considered and already accepted by the bank. General management has been advised of the position. The very reason the government approached us on the matter was to avoid political problems, and to place the financing with the correct entity; that is, with the company's bankers. This has been accepted by the bank as a commercial decision and, given that in the normal course of business our role is to assist with our client's financial needs, we can defend that position in the industrial scene. For this and other government relationship reasons, I do not wish to see this condition form part of the loan'.

The summary of the letter reads as follows...

Mr Dondas: How would you expect the government to know what was going on between 2 bank officers?

Mr B. COLLINS: 'In summary, I would stress that there are 2 major considerations in this...'.
'

Mr Dondas: I thought you had more sense than that.

Mr SPEAKER: Order!

Mr B. COLLINS: Mr Speaker, I am speaking under a suspension of standing orders and I am trying to save the Assembly's time. However, if the Deputy Chief Minister wants to prolong this debate, I will accommodate him.

The letter says that there are 2 major considerations in the transaction: to meet the needs of the client on a commercial basis and to further develop the relationship with the government.

There is a memo from the Westpac bank dated 28 June 1985 which predates all those I have read out. It is from the Jabiru office to the head office of the Westpac Bank. The memo is headed: 'Subject: Agreement to pay wages cheque - \$10 000'. I will quote from it:

'Geoff Chard, NTDC, and Phil Teitzel, Jay Pendarvis' solicitor, called in urgently today to discuss the company's critical cash position. They have reached a crisis point. While the company can slaughter for the domestic market, income will be insufficient to meet operating costs. On Phil Teitzel's very rough estimates, it would seem that the company will have a cash flow deficit of \$200 000 for July. Explained there was no way that the bank could look at funding a commitment to that order as there was already a security shortfall and, while we were sympathetic to Jay Pendarvis' plight, it would be imprudent in the current circumstances to increase our exposure.

Phil Teitzel explained that the NTDC is considering provision of a guarantee to enable us to provide carry-on finance. It was suggested that we freeze existing account and provide assistance in a separate account. Meanwhile, the company has a pressing need to meet wages today of \$10 000 and, as a last measure of assistance I agreed, in the event of a winding-up, wages would be preferential in any case, on the understanding that this amount would be included in the amount covered by the NTDC. Later, Geoff Chard phoned to say that it appeared certain that NTDC assistance would be forthcoming, but to what extent is unclear. A meeting will be held on Monday, including the Chief Minister, the Deputy Chief Minister and others, to determine the government's official stance. Mr Chard will let me know the outcome in due course'.

Obviously, it is perfectly okay for Mr Teitzel of Mildren, Silvester and Partners to ring the Westpac Bank on behalf of the Northern Territory Development Corporation. There are a number of other matters documented. There is a memorandum of understanding, dated 29 August 1985. This memorandum of understanding is between the Minister for Primary Production and Mudginberri Station Pty Ltd. I will quote the first clause:

'The minister has determined that the Northern Territory government will undertake to provide financial assistance to Mudginberri in the event that Mudginberri, after complying with the provisions of clause 8 of the agreement, receives a sum of less than \$1.3m'.

This memorandum is signed by the Minister for Primary Production and Mr Pendarvis. The document was drafted by Mildren, Silvester and Partners,

solicitors for Mudginberri Pty Ltd. The initials of Mr Phil Teitzel are appended on the bottom of this document.

The significance of this memorandum of understanding, which I will also table, is as follows. The government has secretly advanced to Mudginberri, a sum of almost \$1m. This was despite questions asked in this Assembly, to which the government made no response. The government then guaranteed a further loan of \$2m from the Westpac Bank in order that it could have the \$1m repaid to avoid political embarrassment at question time in the Legislative Assembly. Then a memorandum of understanding was signed which guaranteed, by a combination of loans and grants, a sum of \$1.3m to Mudginberri Pty Ltd on behalf of this government. I stress that, Mr Speaker.

Mr Hatton: Up to.

Mr B. COLLINS: The Minister for Primary Production says 'up to'. I would have thought that that was implicit in the clause that I read out. It is contingent on there being a shortfall in the amount of damages that Mudginberri may or may not get on behalf of the taxpayers of the Northern Territory who have not been vested with a pecuniary interest in the damages case before the federal court. In the event of our not getting it, the Northern Territory government has committed itself in this memorandum to a further \$1.3m on top of the \$2m guarantee and the \$1m advance by ADMA to Mudginberri Station Pty Ltd, not the \$270 000 the minister was talking about this morning on the ABC. That is only part of the story. That is what is being advanced at the moment. The grants comprise about \$400 000 in a gift to Mudginberri. If there is a shortfall in the people's case before the Federal Court, then we will have to provide \$1.3m on top of everything else because of this document signed by the Minister for Primary Production. He is shaking his head which indicates he must be as confused as both the General Manager and the Chairman of ADMA are.

Mr Hatton: With your logic.

Mr B. COLLINS: A reading of the transcripts of evidence to the court does not give one much confidence in the operations of that organisation. Poor old Mr Saville was completely unable to answer a whole series of the most basic questions on the functions of the Department of Primary Production, including little things like B-TEC and the size of the ADMA budget to the nearest million dollars. He pleaded - and it was probably true - that he was hard of hearing and could not hear the questions and then said that he also had trouble with recall as well. He had a hearing problem and a memory problem in respect of issues in which his evidence may well have conflicted with that of the general manager. He admitted that the only thing he knew about buffalo meat, of which he had just purchased \$1m worth, was that you could eat it. He knew nothing else about it. Those were his words, not mine.

It does not give one great confidence in how this vital area of the Northern Territory's economic development has been looked after by this government. I will be interested to hear the honourable minister's response. I hope he is careful in his response because there are enough conflicting stories already. I look forward to that with great interest indeed. One does not have to be a legal eagle to work this memorandum out. It is a further commitment to \$1.3m on top of everything else, including grants as well as loans of \$400 000.

There is a further document which is in fact the guarantee itself. One thing about this document amused me. It indicates just how in-house these operations are: This is the guarantee for the \$2m loan at the Westpac Bank, the loan that finally nailed down Westpac's claim on the \$1300m of public accounts that resided, before this happened, in the Reserve Bank. This document is signed by our Treasurer. His signature is on the last page: 'Ian Tuxworth, Treasurer'. It is witnessed by the Minister for Primary Production. It says: 'Stephen Hatton, Witness, Commissioner for Oaths'. Mr Speaker, they certainly did not want this to get too far. It certainly never got in here.

Mr Coulter: Are these the papers that will bring down a government?

Mr B. COLLINS: Of course, they will not bring down the government.

Mr Coulter: That is what you have been telling everybody.

Mr SPEAKER: Order!

Mr B. COLLINS: Mr Speaker, I have never said that this would bring down the government. I know that this government has such complete contempt for the Territory that it governs and for even the most basic financial controls over the use of public money that is entrusted to its care, that I did not think for a minute that the government would do anything else but try to tough it out. I must confess that I did not think that it would go to the extent of gagging a want of confidence motion. Nevertheless, I knew it would go a fair way along that track. I did not think it would bring down the government. With the failure of the government to come clean with the electors of the Northern Territory, I have an obligation as Leader of the Opposition in this Assembly to do what I can to place these facts before the public. The public can do with these facts what they will.

Mr Speaker, there is one other aspect of this Mudginberri dispute that needs to be covered.

Mr Perron: Your role in it. We have not heard anything of that yet.

Mr B. COLLINS: Mr Speaker, in respect of my role in it, maybe I was wrong, but I thought that that was the subject of a 1-hour speech this morning from the Chief Minister. I agree with the Minister for Mines and Energy. Certainly, he did not discuss the terms of the motion but, if the Chief Minister failed to do that, I can hardly wear the blame for it.

I shall read from a publication entitled 'The Mudginberri Dispute', issued by the Australian Small Business Association. We all know that Mudginberri has become the great conservative cause, the light at the end of the tunnel for the conservatives in Australia.

'Let us remember that at the heart of the Mudginberri dispute is the vital principle that employers and employees should have the right to enter into agreements that mutually benefit both parties'.

I want to take a little time to talk about how these agreements worked to the benefit of some parties but not others. There has been a great deal of talk about how it is a wonderful thing to exclude trade unions from negotiations on wages and conditions for workers. To quote the federal Leader of the Opposition, Mr John Howard: 'We need 1000 Mudginberris'. At a

conservative estimate, if the Territory government's attitude were adopted, that would cost Australia about \$4000m, which I do not think our deficit can handle. I do not think the public could afford 1000 Mudginberris.

It is interesting to see what happened in practice with this great Mudginberri dispute; the trade unions were excluded from negotiations with the workers and the marketplace was allowed to take control. Extremely interesting information was delivered last week in respect of the Mudginberri dispute, about how good negotiations are when they are conducted by people other than trade unionists. This information will be of considerable interest to the workers at Mudginberri because they do not know about it. The workers at Mudginberri were represented by some persons other than trade unionists in negotiations with Mr Pendarvis, the owner of Mudginberri Station. Those working representatives negotiated a set of terms and conditions for their fellow workers far less favourable than those that would have been negotiated had the trade union carried out the negotiations. No one denies that.

Mr Palmer: The abattoir would not have opened. It has to open.

Mr SPEAKER: Order!

Mr B. COLLINS: Mr Speaker, a further transaction took place with the workers' representatives that, unfortunately, their fellow workers did not know about. The workers' representatives negotiated and obtained some lesser conditions for their fellow workers. I am afraid that he is wrong but Mr Jack O'Toole the Secretary of the Meat Workers Union in Australia said publicly that the Mudginberri negotiators were very poor negotiators. I am afraid that Mr Jack O'Toole will have to withdraw that imputation in respect of negotiators at Mudginberri because, with the private enterprise spirit so much vaunted by this government, although they negotiated lesser terms and conditions for their fellow workers, they cushioned the effect on their good selves of those cuts in conditions.

Last week, it was revealed that Mr Ralph Tye of Sale Nominees, and Mr Schofield of Alansford Pty Ltd, the workers' representatives who negotiated the wages and conditions for their fellow workers, each collected a lump sum payment of \$11 000 from Mr Pendarvis. I know for a fact that their fellow workers did not know about that little arrangement until now. Those cash payments of \$11 000 were written off as consultancy fees.

Mr Speaker, we have the new look negotiations that are supposed to protect workers in Australia better than does the prices and incomes accord which, of course, relies on cooperation with trade unions. We have the new marketplace private enterprise syndrome where representatives negotiate with the company and end up with a set of wages and conditions less than what would have been negotiated by the union.

Mr Dale: It would never happen in the trade union movement.

Mr B. COLLINS: Mr Speaker, it happened on one notable occasion in the trade union movement, and the bloke responsible ended up in jail.

Mr Speaker, to cushion themselves against the lesser conditions, the workers' representatives each pocketed a gift of \$11 000 from the proprietor of Mudginberri Pty Ltd for their good efforts in negotiating with him on behalf of their fellow workers. If nothing else interests the workers at Mudginberri in respect of this debate, I am sure that that information will interest them greatly.

To return to the Mudginberri dispute as viewed by the Australian Small Business Association:

'Let us remember that at the heart of the Mudginberri dispute is the vital principle that employers and employees should have the right to enter into agreements that mutually benefit both parties'.

Obviously, they are talking only about the people who negotiate the agreements and not those in the work force itself.

Mr Finch: Have you got substantiation for that?

Mr B. COLLINS: Yes, indeed. If the honourable member would like them tabled, I have 4 pages of transcripts from the proceedings of the Federal Court hearing on Mudginberri which contain this grotty piece of information. If the honourable member so desires, I am perfectly prepared to table it, although I doubt his capacity to read and understand it.

Mr Coulter: Who gave them to you, Bob.

Mr Smith: It's a public document.

Mr Coulter: Yes, that part is but what about the other parts?

Mr SPEAKER: Order!

Mr B. COLLINS: Mr Speaker, this government has stifled debate at every available opportunity in respect of its management of the Northern Territory's economy. We have 1 house of parliament in the Northern Territory - this Assembly. I support that position because I am not in favour of upper houses.

Mr Perron: It's Labor policy, isn't it, one house?

Mr SPEAKER: Order! Interruptions will cease.

Mr B. COLLINS: However, that involves the very sparing use of the gag. Indeed, I took part in the prolonged discussions that resulted in this Legislative Assembly receiving a new set of standing orders. There was prolonged discussion about the advisability of removing the gag option from this Assembly because we are a single house of parliament and sit so infrequently. We have so few opportunities to debate motions. Unfortunately that proposition was not pursued but can I say that there is an onus on this Assembly that that gag be used sparingly as a result of our sitting on only 21 days a year. Four months have passed since our last sittings. To use the gag in a want of confidence motion - and I think this morning was the only time I have ever moved that motion in the time...

Mr DALE: A point of order, Mr Speaker! I refer to standing order 67. The Leader of the Opposition has digressed from the subject of the debate.

Mr B. Collins: I have an amendment; I hope that you have noticed.

Mr DALE: I have a copy of the amendment in front of me at the moment and it says nothing about sitting days, gagging debate or any other matter than that moved. The Assembly has shown the Leader of the Opposition the courtesy of allowing him to ramble on for the last hour and he has wandered well away from the point, as he always does.

Mr SPEAKER: The Leader of the Opposition will confine himself to the motion in front of him.

Mr B. COLLINS: Mr Speaker, as you and all honourable members are aware, I may address both the motion and the amendment before the Assembly. The lack of sitting days in this Assembly and the infrequency of our sittings have a direct bearing on the opportunities available for members to make this government accountable for its financial management of the Northern Territory. This opposition has been frustrated in its attempts to have these matters discussed in detail and answered by the government. I have indicated my willingness to table the documents at the conclusion of my speech. I will do so with the leave of the government, which I am sure will be forthcoming on this occasion. The government is not so happy to extend the courtesy of tabling the documents that we want to see. However, I am happy to extend it the courtesy it refuses to extend to us.

We now know why the federal Liberal Party is so concerned about how to sell its new industrial relations policy. After the leaking of the Nixonian document, we now know what that new policy is. Mr Howard enunciated it when he said that what Australia needed was 1000 Mudginberris. As I have said before, the public purse cannot afford 1000 Mudginberris. We certainly cannot afford the current government we have in the Northern Territory.

We know that the Mudginberri dispute, as I have said publicly, was never a genuine industrial dispute. It was a political dispute.

Mr Finch: That is right. There was no argument between the union and the employer.

Mr B. COLLINS: There would certainly never be an argument between the employer and the negotiators on behalf of the workers. That could always be taken care of.

The new Liberal industrial policy is that you exclude trade unions from negotiations on workers' wages and conditions. You then pick a couple of select workers to act as agents on behalf of their fellow workers. They then negotiate a set of wages and conditions much less advantageous to the workers than the unions would have obtained. The workers' agents then cushion themselves by each collecting \$11 000 cash payoff from the employer, without the knowledge of their fellow workers. The whole exercise is underwritten by an obliging and friendly Treasurer and an obliging bank which receives as its payoff, not a measly \$11 000, but public accounts, with an annual turnover of \$1300m. This is the Liberal alternative to the prices and incomes accord. With all of the deficiencies that are inherent in industrial relations in this country, and all of the deficiencies that are inherent in the operations of trade unions, if that is the Liberal alternative, I will stick with the prices and incomes accord.

Mr Dale: You are stuck.

Mr B. COLLINS: I will stick with it. With all of its problems, the accord is certainly a preferable alternative to the kind of grotty and grubby negotiations that this government has been engaged in and the sharp practices that have been used from start to finish. This government has only one choice: it must make a clear public statement that this gross dishonesty is finished. The only way it can do that is by sacking the person who, in the final analysis, is responsible for it.

It has been said repeatedly that the Northern Territory has a great many enemies in the Department of Treasury and the federal government. I have identified a few. Senator Walsh is one. On one public occasion, I said people in the Northern Territory used him to frighten their children. He has a job to do, and even his Cabinet colleagues admit that he does it very well indeed. His job, quite simply, is to chop the legs off every proposal that comes before the Cabinet. He does not like the Northern Territory very much. This government has been culpable in behaving as it has because it puts the Northern Territory government's political representatives, whether in this Assembly or in the federal parliament, in an extremely difficult position in terms of attempting to defend its actions. Some of the events revealed in this Assembly this week would be quite impossible to defend. I would not even attempt to.

Our Treasurer started his career in that position by issuing a public statement saying that no public funds had been used in the transfer of the casinos from Federal Hotels to the new owners. He had to admit in a subsequent sittings of this Assembly that that statement was false because, one week before he issued that statement, he had personally authorised the removal of \$22m of public money for short-term finance for that very purpose. That was how he started his career as Treasurer. As I said in this Assembly at the time, actions like that make it even more difficult to make a case out for the Northern Territory. There is a case to be made; we have a very large area and few people. It is difficult to provide health, welfare, education and other services to isolated Territorians. When the government behaves in such an irresponsible manner, which would disgust not only the public sector but the private sector as well, it makes it very difficult to make that case.

Members opposite should not fool themselves that I am the only person in possession of this information. I can imagine future debates in the federal parliament, particularly in the Senate, when it considers additional appropriations for the Northern Territory. The Finance Minister, Senator Peter Walsh, will be saying: 'How can we send more money to the Northern Territory. We cannot guarantee it will not end up in individual government members' private bank accounts, with the leftovers going into the pockets of their mates'.

Mr Dale: Did you give him the papers when you went down there?

Mr B. COLLINS: That is the sort of nonsensical interjection I would expect from somebody who, although he has been in the Assembly for some time, still does not know the first thing about it. I would point out to him that they are not tyros in Canberra; they have been around for a few years. They do not need any advice from me at all.

I have been engaged in a struggle with the federal government. I have already travelled far more than I care to this year, to try to get some sense on the question of the Darwin Airport terminal. I put that at the top of the list. Because of the constant pressure being applied to obtain that terminal, including the submissions made by the Northern Territory government, we will eventually be successful. However, this kind of unbelievable behaviour makes it extremely difficult to make the case that the Territory has a government which handles public money responsibly.

The worst feature of this Westpac deal is that the government actually went through the mockery of consulting with the other commercial banks. The fact is - and this is something which should have an impact on the few private

enterprise people left on the other side - that the other commercial banks never had a chance of getting a real go at that deal. They might have had a chance in 1984, but the documents that I have quoted from in this Assembly make it very clear that they had no chance in 1985. Westpac talks about cementing its relationship with the Northern Territory government, the same cosy relationship that the President of the CLP spoke about so publicly. The bank talks about assisting the government in its political dilemma. The bank never even pretended it was not acting as political helper to the Northern Territory government. Its expectations were - and everybody knows it - that, within a month, government accounts with an annual turnover of \$1300m would be transferred to it.

This was a plum job indeed because Westpac now has the prestige of being the government's banker or, as these papers demonstrate, the CLP's banker. Eventually, Territorians will be able to pay electricity bills and government charges and accounts through their Westpac bank accounts. That is a pretty valuable plum because people will either transfer their accounts to Westpac or at least will open an account there, to make it convenient to pay all their government taxes and charges. It is not just a question of picking up a \$1300m account. It is not simply a question of having the prestige of being the government's banker. Thousands of private accounts will accrue to Westpac as a result of this deal. These documents from these chatty Westpac executives make it only too clear that they were quite prepared to be a watchdog on the opposition in the Legislative Assembly by sending press clippings to each other, including comments about what Collins is up to in the Assembly.

Only those clowns opposite could continue to laugh in the face of this because they simply do not have the slightest idea of how to act responsibly in terms of the trust that is placed in them in relation to public accounts. What has been demonstrated today is that Westpac has become banker for the CLP. I do not hesitate to criticise that bank because the bank itself acknowledged - not once, but half a dozen times - that it was well aware of the political nature of the loan it was giving to Mudginberri at the request of the government. It was prepared to 'run that risk' because of its expectation of getting the Northern Territory government's accounts.

Mr Pendarvis has indeed become the new folk hero of the conservative parties in Australia - Murdoch's Australian of the Year. I am not surprised that one American would make another American Australian of the Year. Unfortunately, Mr Pendarvis' folk hero status will be more than a little tarnished after today's debate. The place where it will be tarnished most, I would suspect, will be at the work place at Mudginberri abattoir when the workers find out just exactly how Mr Pendarvis negotiated the wages and conditions. Unfortunately, the real picture attached to the folk hero, the President of the Country Liberal Party branch at Jabiru, Mr Jay Pendarvis, is far more tatty.

Mr Speaker, I have condemned the actions of this Treasurer for the way in which he has exposed the Northern Territory to attacks from people who are not friends of the Territory, attacks that I find difficult to defend. I will be interested in the responses to this debate by 2 members in particular: the Minister for Primary Production and the Treasurer of the Northern Territory. We anticipate what will be said by the other side of the Assembly. We had an hour of it this morning from the Chief Minister.

I would like specifically to ask the Minister for Primary Production to address one issue that interests me in particular. It involves the operations of ADMA which is his ministerial responsibility. I hope he takes it a little bit more seriously than some of his colleagues. I would refer the minister to the question of the advances of public money involving almost \$1m that were made to Mudginberri Station from ADMA. I would ask the minister to tell us finally, and I am sure it will be of interest to people outside, whether the advances were a loan or whether they were for purchasing the meat. It is a pretty crucial subject, as I know the honourable minister appreciates.

Mr Perron: You haven't answered anything. Why should he?

Mr. B. COLLINS: In answer to the honourable member for Fannie Bay's interjection, I will tell him why. We are in parliament and he is the minister; that is what it is supposed to be all about.

I would like the minister to state categorically whether it was a purchase or a loan.

Mr Hatton: I did yesterday.

Mr B. COLLINS: The reason I want him to tell us that in the debate today is because there is further confusion that he may not have caught up with yet. Certain senior officers of ADMA clearly do not understand the operations of their own organisation or even the most fundamental statistics about how it works. They described all of these transactions as loans. The honourable minister is shaking his head. Does he want me to table the transcripts of the evidence where they said exactly that? Unfortunately, it has now been indicated in the documents that have been made available from the Department of Law that those advances were purchases of meat. I understand there is a legal position which says that, in fact, they were purchases because the only documentation that exists in respect of them clearly specifies that they were purchases.

ADMA's senior representatives have admitted publicly that they did not have the slightest idea what buffalo meat was. They knew only that you could eat it. They did not have any knowledge of the export protocols or any of the matters that are involved in exporting meat or selling it. They admitted that they had no expertise whatever in relation to meat. That is the reason why they have continually referred to this as loans. There was interest involved. My information is that information has now been received from the Northern Territory Department of Law that in fact they are purchases of meat.

Mr Speaker, what was ADMA doing purchasing, on behalf of the people of the Northern Territory presumably, \$1m worth of meat that it did not have the slightest idea what to do with? The organisation admitted that it had absolutely no knowledge of whether the product it was buying was worth a cent, Mr Speaker. It was paying considerably more for the product than it was worth on the domestic market and it had no idea whether it could even be sold on the export market. I am simply basing these accusations and concerns on the statements that have been made by the most senior representatives of the organisation: the general manager and the chairman. Perhaps the Minister for Primary Production can address himself to that.

Could the minister then explain to me, in terms of the most basic accountability - not just in terms of the public sector but the private sector - how a statutory authority under his ministerial direction - and that

was made very clear by the general manager - can advance sums in excess of \$700 000 without the slightest legal agreement in respect of those moneys? If he answers nothing else in this Assembly today, I would like him to defend that action because a number of people will be most interested to dissect his answer afterwards.

I think this Mudginberri dispute has been a sorrier, a grottier and a tattier affair than most people formerly realised. We have seen what happens when you cut trade unions out of negotiations on behalf of workers. Unfortunately, if honourable members opposite want to see that kind of situation repeated, as the federal Leader of the Opposition does a thousand times over, I certainly do not. We have a situation where an employer has negotiated directly with worker representatives who were then each paid \$11 000 in a lump sum payment for the purpose of those negotiations. That money was paid courtesy of the friendly Treasurer of the Northern Territory, the honourable Ian Tuxworth, assisted by the Minister for Primary Production. When they got into political hot water over it, as has been stated quite clearly, they went along to their friendly bank which was anxious to cement the close relationship it had with the Northern Territory government. They obtained a loan on which most of the normal conditions placed on loans were waived because the bank did not want to upset its relationship with the Northern Territory government because of its expectations. They were great expectations indeed. To conclude this grotty affair, and it is a grotty affair, not only was \$1m advanced with no security or paperwork but, as a pay-off for what the bank recognised only too clearly as a political loan, \$1300m of public money - the public accounts of the Northern Territory - was transferred from the Reserve Bank to the Westpac Bank within a month of these negotiations being completed.

The President of the Country Liberal Party of the Northern Territory was absolutely correct when he said that this deal stinks. He was absolutely correct in saying that the commercial sector had not been given a genuine opportunity to tender because the rest of the commercial banks were not in the happy position of being the bankers to Mudginberri Station who were perfectly happy to assist actively in getting the government out of hot water.

Mr Speaker, I seek the leave of the Assembly to table the papers that I have quoted from during this debate.

Leave granted.

Mr HATTON (Primary Production): Mr Speaker, we have put up with some 2 hours of excellent rhetoric from the Leader of the Opposition today. At least, it seemed like 2 hours. There is no doubt that the Leader of the Opposition is a brilliant speaker in this Assembly. He has the ability to stir emotions, present argument, push his cause and confuse the basic issue that is being debated. He is without peer in this Assembly. I am afraid I do not have the skills of oratory to be able to stir the emotions and confuse the facts. Unfortunately, I have to rely on the pedestrian commodities of facts and logic.

Mr B. Collins: Do not sell yourself short.

Mr HATTON: Mr Speaker, a number of issues have been raised by the member today in his amendment and in trying to avoid the fundamental charges laid against him. His argument can probably be summed up very quickly by saying that it was much ado about nothing.

The Leader of the Opposition has drawn the longest bow I have seen for a long time. In industrial relations circles, drawing a long bow means trying to connect together disconnected facts to reach the conclusion you want to reach. He has done everything possible to try to achieve that today. With his usual rhetorical skills, he could almost make you believe it; that is, if you did not realise that what he was talking was rubbish. The only thing that I heard from the honourable member today - of which I had absolutely no knowledge and which I would love to check out - was an allegation about funds which were improperly paid. I am looking forward to seeing those documents when they eventually arrive on my desk, although I will not have time to read them and comment on them in relation to this particular statement.

Let us deal with the other matters. Yesterday, much to the chagrin of the Leader of the Opposition, I gave a fair amount of detail in answer to his question about the financial support that we gave to Mudginberri Station Pty Ltd in 1985. I would refer the Leader of the Opposition to those details. He will find that I referred to the advances provided. He made much noise about the confusion of the Chairman and the General Manager of ADMA. Let me quote from page 2715 of the transcript of the current case before Mr Justice Morling - the damages case from which the Leader of the Opposition has improperly obtained documents for the purposes of this debate. On that page, there is a question from the counsel for the defence. It reads:

'There was just one matter I wanted to put to you, Mr Saville, and it is this: I suggest to you that the true nature of the relationship entered into in July and continuing to 23 August is as set out in the document headed "Purchase Voucher", or item 21 in any event. That is exhibit 21, and you may refer to it. I am suggesting to you that it was the true nature of the relationship entered into.

Mr Saville: Sir, I would deny that emphatically. There was never any intention that ADMA would become the owner of the meat. Every time it was discussed, it was as an advance to Mudginberri abattoir'.

That was the response to a series of questions. This outlines the danger of quoting little bits of evidence from transcripts. That is why private information is kept within the courts where it can all be dealt with in context. The whole line of questioning was aimed at proving that there was a purchase. I might draw members' attention to the words of the Leader of the Opposition earlier in this debate. He said: 'We never owned the meat'. He said that several times this morning. Then, totally without logic, he turned around and said: 'and Mudginberri Station did not have a right to buy it back'. I do not quite understand why, if you have not sold the meat, you need an agreement to buy it back. I will tell you why he was becoming confused, apart from just trying to stir up emotions in this issue. It is because Mr Pendarvis made a number of statements in the February hearings. I submit he was confused. He said: 'Look, we purchased the meat on the basis that we would buy the meat back'. That was the basis of the agreement. But, he also admitted that he paid the transportation charges, the cold storage charges and interest on the money that was advanced to him for the meat. He also said he had an obligation to buy it back.

The intention of any agreement with Mudginberri was that there would be advances at the rate of \$2.30 a kilo. As I said yesterday, that \$2.30 per kilo was calculated at the estimated cost of production of meat at an export standard of kill.

Mr Smith: By whom?

Mr HATTON: It was calculated by my departmental people on the basis of information provided by Mudginberri Station Pty Ltd.

Mr Ede: And he was going to buy it back?

Mr HATTON: That meat was being held in cold store. It was a part of that agreement that there would be no sales of the meat below \$2.30 a kilo without the approval of ADMA. In fact, none of the meat was sold at the time of the advances. It was certainly believed that the meat could be reinspected in order to meet the export contract commitments which Mudginberri Station Pty Ltd had. In that case, the meat would have been sold at the then current price, which was in the order of \$2.76 per kilo. Not only would the government have been refunded, Mudginberri Station would have had the cash flow it was entitled to from normal production. That evidence is not inconsistent with the evidence that Mr Cavanagh gave on 25 February 1986.

I will return later to the Opposition Leader's remarks about payments. I hope I can obtain some information. We were told the amount was for consultancy fees and it was left at that. As usual, the Leader of the Opposition floats an explanation and leaves us to think the worst. I do not know what the details are and I do not intend comment on the matter until I have them. If the allegations are true, I will say here and now that I would totally abhor that behaviour. I would not support any organisation engaging in that practice.

Mr B. Collins: It is true.

Mr HATTON: The first I heard of it was this afternoon. It has been alleged that it was done with the intention of lessening conditions for employees. I dispute that they were worse off under the agreement than they would have been under the tally system. I know for a fact that, under the tally system, they would not have even been working because the abattoir would not have been operating. How can you be better off on the dole, compared to working under an agreement that gives you over \$1000 a week? If you can convince anyone of that, you are a better man than I am. The workers have received sick leave, annual leave and all the other conditions of awards applicable to every meatworker in this country. Only the payment-by-result system was in dispute. Nothing else.

Mr Ede: Why was Tennant Creek working?

Mr HATTON: That demonstrates his ignorance of the meat industry. The fundamental difference between a small country abattoir and a major export works like Tennant Creek is like the difference between chalk and cheese. They are exactly the issues that the full bench of the Australian Conciliation and Arbitration Commission took into account when deciding that the tally system was inappropriate for the Northern Territory award. It refused to put a tally system into the Northern Territory award. The commission is the body established to determine and settle disputes on wages and conditions of employment.

As the Leader of the Opposition said, this has been a tawdry affair. My interpretation of its tawdriness is entirely different from his. I am proud to say that we entered into agreements to support Mudginberri Station from the illegal assaults of the trade union movement. The courts have said that the

AMIEU set itself on a collision course with the judicial system of this country. I am proud to say that I stood up for the law of this land and supported an organisation which stood up. I helped give it a chance to argue its case in court. In case after case, it has been vindicated by the courts and the unions have been condemned. The unions were convicted of criminal contempt of the court, not just ordinary civil contempt. I have never heard of a union being hit with that charge before. It is very serious. Justice Lockhart brought that charge. He said it was a charge made only in the most extreme circumstance.

This matter has been heard by many judges, each of them supporting Mudginberri. On 12 June, Justice Beaumont handed down an interlocutory injunction decision against the union. On 21 June, Chief Justice Bowen fined the union for contempt of the interlocutory injunction. On 12 July, Justice Morling issued the final injunction against the union. On 18 July, Chief Justice Bowen again sequestered the union's funds. On 11 September 1985, Justice Lockhart issued fines and sequestration orders against the union for criminal contempt. On 17 September, a full appeal bench of the Federal Court consisting of Justices Smithers, Northrop and Toohey heard an appeal by the union and dismissed it out of hand. They upheld every other judgment.

There is no doubt that the courts of this land have said that Mudginberri Station Pty Ltd was exercising its proper rights properly in abiding by an award. The employees did not want to know what the union was on about when they were cross-examined in the witness box. The judges said they could believe the workers and Mr Pendarvis. The union was behaving with total arrogance towards the commission, the courts and the laws of this land, to the extent that the courts had to sequester its funds, not only to recover fines, but as a penalty against it for criminal contempt. That is the most serious charge possible in matters like this. Yet this behaviour by the trade union was publicly, gleefully and unqualifiedly supported by the Leader of the Opposition.

I would like to bring the reactions of judges to the notice of this Assembly. As you read the decisions in judgment after judgment, they become more and more outraged with the union. They began with a soft warning: 'Look fellows, you had better abide by the law. This is a question of what society is about'. Gradually, they lost their tempers completely. It is worth quoting from the decision by Mr Justice Lockhart on 11 September. At the beginning of his judgment, he says:

'Disobedience of orders of courts is a serious matter. It invariably affects the rights of litigants. Moreover, it may challenge the authority of the courts themselves and undermine public confidence in the administration of justice. The present case wears both aspects.

A litigant who succeeds in establishing his rights before the courts of our country is entitled to have them enforced. In most cases, the unsuccessful party, having lost the battle, accepts the decision of the courts so that there is no necessity for the successful party to resort to the processes of the courts to enforce the orders made in his favour indicating his rights. Doubtless, the unsuccessful party does not wish to surrender to his opponent, for it is a victory. But, fortunately, most people realise and accept that, for a civilised society to survive, it is necessary that the umpire's decision be accepted. Also, everybody knows that, in the end, there

may be punishment for disobeying orders of the court and that there is available machinery to ensure compliance with them.

None of us wants to be a litigant, but we all know that the affairs and vicissitudes of life may involve us at one time or another in the processes of the law. We all hope that the judicial system is not only fair but, in the end, has real remedies to ensure compliance with its orders. One day we may all need them'.

Truer words can never be spoken. He goes on, and now we come to the nub of what is really important for this Assembly:

'What is not generally understood is that courts are part of government. There are 3 arms of government: parliament, the executive and the judiciary. Each performs a different role, but the functions of each are related and, to an extent, dependent on each other. The independence of the judiciary from unwarranted interference from the other 2 arms of government is essential to the preservation of the liberty of each person in our community, but the enforcement of the orders of the courts ultimately rests, to a large degree, upon the will of the executive to support the judicial arm of government and to lend its might to the preservation of law and order. Parliament passes statutes, the executive administers them, and courts interpret them and decide the rights of litigants under them.

Our social fabric is strong but, at the same time, delicate: strong, if the arms of government work together yet with each respecting the independence of others; weak, if one arm fails to support another'.

Those are the words of Mr Justice Lockhart, bringing down the hardest decision for many a long year against a trade union, for its criminal contempt of court.

The Leader of the Opposition is a man of some standing in the community because of his position. He projects himself as the future leader of government in the Northern Territory. It would be reasonable to expect that he, above others on the opposition bench, would at least stand up for the fundamental institutions of our community and not stand up in open public support for an organisation on a collision course with those fundamental institutions of our society. That behaviour is reprehensible.

Let us look at what the Leader of the Opposition said. It appears first in a press statement of 3 September in the Northern Territory News headed: 'Labor Backs Outlawed Picketers'. The opening part says:

'Opposition Leader, Bob Collins, gave unqualified support for the outlawed union picket on Mudginberri abattoir today'.

The article also says:

'Mr Collins said his party had already spoken out on the dispute but he was happy to defend the meatworkers union again'.

That was on 3 September by which time there had been sequestrations and the final injunction. I have never accused the Leader of the Opposition of being a fool. He has a brain and I do not deny that. What I accuse him of is

understanding the implications of his actions and yet proceeding to carry them out anyway. I am not saying that he did not understand the implications of what he was saying; I am saying that he knew what he was doing. He was studying law. He quotes Latin phrases from the law dictionary regularly in this Assembly. He suggested that he was a potential officer of the courts. He is an officer of this Assembly which is one of the fundamental institutions in society for the preservation of democracy. Nevertheless, he stood in open support of an organisation that was attacking the judicial system of this country. That is the most reprehensible behaviour that any member of this Assembly has exhibited. I am not talking about ministerial responsibility; I am talking about the responsibility of a person who is elected as a representative of the people. Our fundamental responsibility is to uphold the institutions of our society that maintain and support the rights and freedoms of our citizens and maintain our democracy.

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

Mr D.W. COLLINS (Sadadeen): I move that so much of standing orders be suspended as would prevent the minister from completing his speech.

Motion agreed to.

Mr HATTON: Mr Speaker, I was referring to the quotations in this document and their implications. He did not leave it there. I submit to this Assembly that the Leader of the Opposition not only showed open support but engaged in a deliberate campaign to try to confuse the issues before the community and the courts. There were accusations that it was a political strike and that it had been stirred up by the Chief Minister, the Country Liberal Party, the employers, God and everybody else.

Mr Smith: You don't think God's on your side, do you?

Mr HATTON: He is surely not on your side.

Mr Smith: How pretentious can you be?

Mr HATTON: He tried then to undermine the confidence of the workers in their position. The article of 3 September says:

'Mr Collins said Mudginberri employees defying the union picket should realise that, under the Territory award, they were not registered with the Conciliation and Arbitration Commission and had no avenue to fight wage deals with employers'.

Maybe he is just ignorant of industrial law. That statement is fundamentally and basically wrong. Every employee has standing before the Australian Conciliation and Arbitration Commission. Awards have been made before the commission with no trade union. There have been registered industrial agreements before the arbitration commission with no trade union. Those rights were determined finally in 1974, and have never been challenged since. In 1974, Australian history was made with the deregistration of the Builders Labourers Federation. The Leader of the Opposition's namesake, Mr Norm Gallagher, appeared in the arbitration commission on behalf of his members who were individually named - 50 000 of them. The matter went to appeal in the courts and the courts ruled that he had standing as a representative of those employees even though the Builders Labourer's Federation, as a deregistered organisation, itself could not appear. Almost

every employers' association in this country appears in the arbitration commission. They appear on behalf of their members.

In the 1970s I was engaged in an award determination in which the Miscellaneous Workers Union served a log of claims. The employees were from the St John Ambulance. They objected to being represented by that union and turned up at the commission. As a consequence of the embarrassment that caused to the then secretary, Mr Jon Isaacs, the union withdrew its log of claims and the employees proceeded to negotiate and lodge a registered industrial agreement before the commission. Those are a few examples of just how wrong that statement was. Obviously, because that statement emanated from a man whom the community believed should have some understanding of this matter, it was clearly designed to frighten off the employees and drive them back into the arms of the union and out of work because they would have been forced to abide by a tally system which they themselves knew would not work because it would close the abattoir down.

He did not stop there. Listen to this brilliant piece of logic. On 5 September, in answer to a question from Denis Buckley on ABC radio, he said:

'The Mudginberri dispute started out as an industrial dispute. It no longer is an industrial dispute and, in fact, it has not been for some time. It is now a political dispute and the people who have assisted most to make it a political dispute are Mr Tuxworth who, I think, has said almost nothing about this issue until last week...'

That requires explanation. Firstly, the Chief Minister, who apparently had not said anything until the previous week, had made it a political dispute for months by beating it up as a political issue to the public. I really do not understand that logic. Then he said:

'It rapidly escalated into a political dispute when the national farmers took it up as a means of attacking the tally system nationally'.

It stopped being a dispute caused by the Chief Minister and became a dispute caused by the National Farmers' Federation. It is a political dispute because an employers' organisation is attacking the tally system, a system of payment of wages and conditions. That is as political as a trade union going on strike for a \$5 wage increase. There is nothing more industrial than wages and conditions of employees. He sees that as political. It is clearly industrial. He must really have a funny idea of the logic of the National Farmers' Federation. He said:

'The union is 40 000 members strong, and the beef industry of Australia is an \$800m export industry, a priceless industry for Australia, most of it going to the United States. Now the National Farmers' Federation have used the Mudginberri dispute as an attempt to destroy the tally system nationally, putting at risk an \$800m industry'.

How is that putting an industry at risk? Why would it want to put the industry at risk? The National Farmers' Federation represents the pastoralists who need the meatworks to be able to sell their product. If they do not have any meat processing plants, they do not have the market for their products. What they want are efficient meat processing plants that can compete and can sell their meat internationally. If that is putting the

industry at risk, well so be it. If anyone is putting the industry at risk, I suggest it is the AMIEU which, by forcing this ongoing tally system, has continued to drive the industry further and further down with meatworks after meatworks closing and meatworker after meatworker going on the dole. That is what it is fighting against.

In the same interview, the Leader of the Opposition decided that it was not enough to have the National Farmers' Federation and the Chief Minister involved in this political dispute; he also included what he called the 'chamber of industries'. I know he meant the Confederation of Australian Industries. There has never been a national chamber of industries, but that should not worry the Leader of the Opposition; it is a small matter of detail. Nor does the Northern Territory have a chamber of industries any longer. It is now called the Confederation of Industry and Commerce. I have a transcript of the interview in front of me. He said:

'Now the spokesman for the chamber of industries made it very clear on your program just 2 days ago that they were opposed to the very principle of wage indexation and, of course, as employers, they would be. They would be perfectly happy to see workers continue to bear the brunt of the economic situation in Australia by simply not getting any wage rises and, of course, that would suit employers.'

'Now he made it clear that it is the principle of wage indexation that they are opposed to, and I point out to you that that principle, tied into the prices and incomes accord, has been the key to the turnaround in Australia's prosperity over the last 3 years'.

Somehow, the workers are suffering the brunt of our economic ills whilst getting the benefits of a marvellous growth future. I do not quite understand that logic. Perhaps one of the opposition members can explain how they can be suffering ills from inflation etc and at the same time have a rosy future caused by the accord.

The Leader of the Opposition again used the term 'contract'. There have not been any contractors in the industry since 2 May 1985 when an award came into place. The arbitration commission specifically rejected the continuation of contract work. What it put in the award was a piece work rate, a payment-by-results system.

We heard the Leader of the Opposition talking today about how terrible it is to negotiate without a trade union. The workers did not think that. That was their choice. I am not opposed to trade unions. I have had a few years of dealings with trade unions. In fact, I come from a trade union family. My father was a delegate for the Storemen and Packers Union until the day he retired. I have had uncles who were delegates in the Metal Workers Union and in the Transport Workers Union. I come from a long line of trade union-involved people. The AMIEU today is not a trade union that my father would recognise, nor would his father. I know what it is like for the workers to do it tough. I know they need trade unions and I support the principle of trade unionism.

However, trade unionism was formed to represent the interests of the worker, not to dictate to the worker and not to become a monopoly controller of the worker. Some trade unions, like the AMIEU, have become the robber barons of the 20th century. I stand up for the dignity of the worker and the man who wants a say in who shall employ him. I will stand up for the dignity

of the worker who will say under what conditions he wants to work and who will not be dictated to against his will by somebody outside. The trade union movement is not supposed to override the worker; it is there to represent him. If any of these puffed up, middle class socialists want to start talking to us about trade unions, I shall spit in their faces.

Mr Speaker, these people have been rabbiting on about the worker and supporting a system that has been driving the worker down for years.

Mr Leo: You've done nothing but nail them to the ground ever since you could breathe, Steve.

Mr HATTON: Nonsense. You of all people should know better than that.

Let us turn to the workers and let us consider the circumstances that led to our decision. What was the situation we were faced with in July when support was given to Mudginberri Station? Firstly, the employees were employed there under an agreement in accordance with an award made by the arbitration commission. The union was determined to kick those workers out and put other people in the job. The employees called out for help. They had worked there for years. The employer was abiding by the award and by the law. He was on the verge of going broke, as a result of illegal trade union action. The court system held that the union was in contempt and fined it. The union was about to win because it had broken somebody economically through its illegal actions. It drove him to the point where he could not continue to have his day in court. He could not continue to fight his workers' cause and obtain justice. That was the situation we were faced with and do not underestimate that situation. I have a 3-page telex that was sent by the workers of the Mudginberri abattoir to the Prime Minister on 21 May 1985. I will read it in detail if any member wants me to.

Mr B. Collins: Who wrote it, one of the fellows who negotiated?

Mr HATTON: The Leader of the Opposition referred to 2 employees as negotiators. I believe Mr Tye and Mr Schofield were the names he referred to. They were the 2 who have been accused of manipulating the workers. This telex is signed: 'Stanley Doyle - spokesman for employees of Mudginberri Station, Jabiru'. The telex ends:

'We are thoroughly confused with what unionism is all about after our dealings with some very abrasive officials of the AMIEU who, to our minds, should be assisting us in general and not blatantly pursuing a course that will cause us to lose our jobs and close another Australian meatworks. We plead for your assistance in this unjust matter'.

Mr Speaker, those are the words of the workers in late May last year. Already, they had faced open statements by Mr O'Toole from the AMIEU. Mr O'Toole went on radio and he made no secret about the fact that he would have them kicked out of their jobs. He was going to put some of his union cronies in there. Those people have worked there for years and the transcripts of their evidence show that. I will refer to the dispute and, in doing that, I will deal with 2 matters at once. Firstly, the member for Nhulunbuy called in July-August for the matter to be taken to the arbitration commission for settlement. This was after the dispute and after the fines had already been imposed. The interview on 14 May went as follows:

'Mr O'Toole: Well, we won't be referring the matter to the commission.

Mr Buckley: I understand that will be the normal course of events if a dispute is notified.

Mr O'Toole: Well that may be the case, but I do not think the commission can now resolve the matter. The dispute now must be settled between the 2 principals'.

He was not going to go to the commission; he was going to beat them to death. Later, he referred to the employees:

'We would expect the settlement of the dispute to also include the introduction of fresh labour, and labour that qualifies with the clause in the award that requires employers to employ financial members of the AMIEU'.

He failed to mention to the community that that same clause requires them to accept existing employees as members of the union which they had refused to do. He forgets the agreement he made before the arbitration commission in September 1984 that the union would not discriminate against any employees engaged in the dispute. He intended to kick them onto the street and put some of his cronies into a job. Is it any wonder the workers were a bit concerned about dealing with this trade union. The workers tried to join the union but they were not accepted. They had been expelled for 5 years for standing up for their rights. That is great democracy. That was the workers' position I have mentioned the court position.

On the 27 June, we and others received a telex from Jay and Joy Pendarvis:

'My local bank manager rang me at 5.20 pm this day and advised me that my overdraft had been extended to its absolute limit. Joy and I have no option but to wind up operations at Mudginberri as quickly as possible. We really appreciate the time, effort and consideration that all of you have put into our fight against the AMIEU and others. We felt that the issue was important enough not only to us but to the pastoral and processing industries throughout Australia that it had to be contested vigorously and a favourable result obtained. We had no idea that it could possibly drag on so long as it has. I feel a quitter, as though I have let the side down. There is no way we can continue. Thanks for your aggressive support'.

Mr Speaker, we had the workers crying for help to persons as high as the Prime Minister. There was no response. The federal Minister for Primary Industry refused to put his inspectors into the meatworks. We had to obtain a domestic inspection licence and put our inspectors in there so the meatworkers could work at all. This company stood up for its rights in the court and it won. An injunction was issued. The courts imposed a fine on the union for its contempt of court. The Leader of the Opposition referred to that particular circumstance and the wages bill that had to be paid that week. That is how broke Mr Prndavis was by that stage. He had been driven to the edge in 1984 and he had been driven out of the game in 1985. The union was gloating and laughing at the law and at everybody.

The Leader of the Opposition was not only laughing with it but he was actively supporting it and conspiring with the federal government and his ACTU

mates to drive this bloke out of business and let the unions win again against the interests of the workers. Let the law be damned! That was his attitude. Somebody had to stand up for the rule of law. Somebody had to stand up for this employer and give him a chance to exercise his rights. Somebody had to stand up against the victory of illegality. That somebody was the government and I am proud of the fact that we stood up. I do not regret it. The opposition thinks that we would want to hide under a rock. It must be joking. If we wanted to score political points, I would have stood on a pinnacle and screamed to the world that we were financially supporting Mudginberri.

Mr Smith: Why didn't you?

Mr HATTON: I will tell you why I did not. It was because we were in the middle of a harsh industrial battle and I did not want to telegraph our punches to the opposition. I knew that, if we had announced publicly what we were doing, the Opposition Leader would have done exactly what he is doing now: trying to confuse the issue by making accusations and allegations in an effort to conceal the real issue. That issue is whether the worker has a right to speak for himself or whether he has to be dominated and dictated to by a trade union. The Opposition Leader tried to bring the wage indexation system into the issue. He tried to bring politics into it. He supported the union's illegal actions; we had no intention of giving him ammunition. I was not frightened to stand up. I simply took the tactical decision not to announce my strategy publicly.

Mr Smith: You are taking the tactical decision now not to answer the questions he has asked.

Mr HATTON: I am not ashamed of taking those decisions. It is not abnormal for a government not to make a public announcement every time it enters into a contractual arrangement.

Mr Smith: You mean you have loaned \$1m before without security? Tell us.

Mr HATTON: This government has let contracts for \$1m without security without sending out press releases.

Mr Smith: Without security?

Mr HATTON: I have said what I have said.

Members interjecting.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! The minister will be heard in silence. The cross-table conversation is both unparliamentary and unbecoming.

Mr HATTON: Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker. They really are trying to confuse the issue because they do not like hearing about workers and employers trying to stand up for their rights nor about courts trying to enforce their rights. They do not like hearing that their leader has been openly supporting the attack on the judicial system, the attack on workers and on an employer in his own electorate, a man whom he says he has known ever since he has been here. If he knows him, he would know that Jay Pendarvis is one of the straightest-shooting blokes one can meet. He is sometimes too honest for his own good, particularly when dealing with people like the Leader of the Opposition.

I will not go further into this. I said one thing when I started, and I say it again now. We sit in this Assembly as representatives of our electorates and representatives of the people of the Northern Territory. Each and every one of us has a fundamental responsibility to stand up for the institutions of society. We certainly should not attack them or support people making illegal assaults on them. Any member of this Assembly who is not prepared to support the judicial system of this country and the legislature by opposing anybody who is attacking any of the arms of government is attacking the institutions of a civilised society.

Mr B. Collins: I hope you are not going to accuse anyone else of being pompous.

Mr HATTON: That is what Justice Lockhart was referring to. In supporting the AMIEU, that is exactly what the Leader of the Opposition did. It may sound pompous. The Leader of the Opposition, in his perpetual interjections, regards it as pomposity.

Mr B. Collins: I was listened to in silence, was I?

Mr HATTON: If it is pomposity, let it be so. I stand by those remarks. I say that, if you are not prepared to stand up for the institutions of society or if you support attacks on them, you have no place in this Assembly.

The Leader of the Opposition drew a long bow in linking the Westpac arrangement to an arrangement that was made concerning the Territory government's banking institutions. I simply reject that out of hand; there was no connection whatsoever. He suggested this morning that he was amazed to find that the Westpac Bank was keeping track of what he was saying. If he had spent a bit of time in private enterprise in his life, he would know that virtually every large business keeps track of what every government and every opposition is saying around the country. It is normal practice for business to know what is being said by politicians and aspiring politicians.

I think this might be of interest. I have just been advised concerning Mr Tye and Mr Schofield. Both work for Mudginberri and they spent all year there. In the off season, their respective companies, Sale Nominees and Alansford Pty Ltd undertake various maintenance tasks at the abattoir. Payments for this maintenance and other consulting work were \$11 000 each. We have checked with Mr Pendarvis and he has denied that there were any payoffs involved in those payments. I think that should be put on record.

I had no knowledge of the Opposition Leader's allegations about payoffs. In all fairness, he was taking information from transcripts of evidence and he had a right to present that information. I do not challenge that. However, if my advice is true, there is no substance whatsoever to all these allegations about under-the-table deals and special payoffs to employees to obtain acceptance for an award whose terms are less favourable than usual. Employees certainly did not think that; they thought they were doing pretty well. They knew what they would get under the tally system. They would not have worked as hard because, with the tally system, you receive a fixed amount of money up to so many dollars. Above that, penalty rates apply with a payment-by-results system. It is a very complicated formula, with different rates for a bull or a cow or a heifer and so on. Because of the penalty costs, employers cannot afford to kill too many animals above the tally. A limit is applied and the workers are paid up to that. Workers in abattoirs around the country know that they will be paid maybe \$500 a week for working

in a yard under a tally system. That sort of thing was happening at Tennant Creek. Mr Deputy Speaker, you will remember that they went on strike last year because they were getting too little money under the tally system, compared to that received by their mates who were working under the NT award and other systems of payment.

The employees themselves said to the Prime Minister that they receive between \$450 to \$500 for a maximum tally working a 5-day week. At Mudginberri, working 32 to 42 hours a week, they would earn \$950 and \$1035. That was what they said. If that was being worse off, it has me beat because every other condition was the same for those employees. The difference was that they were killing more animals. That was why the employer could afford to pay them. He achieved productivity and they obtained higher wages. That was what was being referred to as the Mudginberri issue. They were killing more animals ...

Mr B. Collins: I have just been told that you have not talked about ADMA yet.

Mr HATTON: I thought you were a more interesting subject. Mr Speaker, I am not going to continue. I refer the honourable Leader of the Opposition to the statement I made in an answer to questions yesterday and statements I made at the beginning of this speech today. If the Leader of the Opposition had stayed in the Assembly, he would have heard what I said and would not be asking his mates what I said. I will not continue any longer, except to ask the Leader of the Opposition 1 question. At an EPAC meeting, the Secretary of the ACTU told the Chief Minister that, unless some deal is done so that any damages that have to be paid are acceptable to the union, it will bung on a blue again this year. I want to know...

Mr B. Collins: Who said this to you?

Mr HATTON: My advice is that that came from the Secretary of the ACTU to the Chief Minister.

Mr B. Collins: He did not tell you this?

Mr HATTON: No. Clear?

Mr B. Collins: Did the Chief Minister tell you? I would not believe him even if he told me the time of day.

Mr HATTON: Mr Speaker, we will soon know whether that is true or not. About 12 months ago, I warned the community that we might have some trouble in 1985 and I was laughed at by the opposition. We did have trouble. There are indications that it might be starting up again in 1986. What I want to know is what the Leader of the Opposition will do this year. Is he going to support illegal pickets by trade unions this year? Is he going to support the law or the illegal actions of the union?

I have said before that our job is to support the institutions of society, and not support illegal actions attacking those institutions. I think he should tell the Assembly today what he will do this year if the unions decide to bung on secondary pickets. If they do, I would expect the honourable member to say that he would support the courts in the judicial process. If the unions are acting contrary to injunctions or in contempt of court, I expect him to condemn the unions for that action also. I really hope that he

says that, because, if he does not and if he wants to support the illegal actions, I say he has no place in this Assembly and there is the door and he can use it.

Mr SMITH (Millner): Mr Speaker, I undertake not to seek an extension of time.

The thing that puzzles me about this particular motion and the ire that has been expressed at the actions of the honourable Leader of the Opposition is that his actions, and I will come to them in a minute, are alleged to have happened in September last year. This is the eleventh sitting day that we have had since the comments of the Leader of the Opposition were made. On the last day of this shortened sittings, which is our general business day, the government raises this particular matter, and we all know why: it is a specious attempt to deflect this Assembly's concentration and the community's interest from the matter of travelling allowances. In doing so, it has demonstrated the fact that the travelling allowance issue will be a running sore. It was a pretty cheeky effort by the Chief Minister to quote Justice Lockhart who said words to the effect that there was one law for the unions and one law for everybody else, when the Chief Minister himself has demonstrated pretty clearly, with support from his colleagues, that he considers that there is one law for himself and one law for everybody else, particularly his public servants. It is pretty cheeky indeed.

We also heard the Minister for Primary Production say that the unions had acted illegally. I put it to the Assembly that there is also good argument that, in matters that have been raised previously at these sittings, the government has acted illegally. As well as that, the Minister for Primary Production made quite lengthy comments on the finding of Justice Lockhart. Again, it is quite clear that he is expecting standards to be applied to the union that he is not prepared to support for his own government and which involve his own Chief Minister. If there is a fundamental principle of the relationship between this parliament and the other institutions that we all respect and uphold, it is that the members of this parliament should be beyond reproach. Quite clearly, that has not been the case.

Let us look at these alleged dreadful actions of the Leader of the Opposition which took place in August and September of last year. I want to read a couple of things into Hansard. One involves a talk-back program that the Leader of the Opposition took part in on 30 August 1985. A fellow called Arnold rang up:

'Arnold: Look, I have been sitting here listening to you waffle on on all sorts of things and you reckon you are a man. You know, you do the right thing by everybody?

Collins: No, no. I have never claimed that.

Arnold: Well, I would like to ask you one thing. If you reckon your mob is so great, why haven't you got onto Bob Hawke and his crowd to get the Commonwealth coppers to arrest the picketers at Mudginberri for breaking the law. Your silence on that has been absolutely deafening.

Collins: Because I believe that is not an appropriate way to resolve industrial disputes and it never will be. I reject that proposition outright.

Arnold: What you are saying is that, if the unionists break the law, that is perfectly all right.

Collins: What I am saying is that, if anyone was silly enough to take that kind of heavy-handed attitude and send Commonwealth police officers out there to arrest those picketers...'

As members opposite obviously would have liked to have done.

Mr Hatton: On the contrary.

Mr SMITH: The transcript continues:

'...you would have had a nationwide close down of the meat industry around this country, an industry worth \$800m a year in export earnings to this country, and I do not want to do that much damage to this country.

Arnold: So, in other words, you are saying the law can be bought.

Collins: What I am saying is that that is not an appropriate way to solve an industrial dispute.

Arnold: Well, you tell me the appropriate way that people who break the law can be punished.

Collins: Industrial relations, unfortunately, is not as simple as that. If the dispute only involved Mudginberri abattoir then it would be, I think, a fairly easy thing to solve it. The National Farmers' Federation has made it clear that it does not simply involve Mudginberri abattoir and are simply using the Mudginberri case to attack the tally system nationally. And they have taken on a political fight. They have made it quite clear it is a political fight, and I do not think it is proper to use the police on either side of the argument in a political fight'.

Mr Speaker, that brings me to a comment made by the previous speaker that, to say it was a political issue and not an industrial issue is nonsense. Of course it became a political issue very quickly. We all know that the National Farmers' Federation set up a fighting fund for Mudginberri at its annual conference last year.

Mr Hatton: In September.

Mr SMITH: If that attitude did not make the whole thing political, I do not know what did. Other conservative groups joined together in a political fight on this issue and widened the dispute quite significantly from Mudginberri and created potential disputes in the meatworks industry right throughout Australia.

To answer an interjection that the fighting fund was set up in September, that really was a helpful activity. As we all know now, on 6 September the AMIEU lifted its picket and work was able to resume at Mudginberri. Out of the mouths of these political innocents opposite, we have a clear statement that, for their own political purposes, once a picket had been lifted they were intent on exacerbating the situation, becoming involved politically and setting up a fighting fund. So much for their genuine interests in trying to resolve the dispute and getting Mudginberri abattoir working properly again.

Mr Speaker, the Minister for Primary Production was very cute and ignored all the basic issues that were important to this particular matter. As the Leader of the Opposition has pointed out, we have no objection on this side of the Assembly if the government, using the proper and the established procedures, wishes to provide assistance to Mudginberri or similar organisations. We might disagree with it, but we could not raise extremely vigorous objections to it on the grounds that the proper legal processes had not been followed.

I want to state again that the basic objection that we have on this particular matter is that, in advancing a sum of close to \$1m to the Mudginberri abattoir, the proper legal procedures were not followed. It will be very interesting to see the Auditor-General's report for this financial year. I am sure that his report will provide the opposition with another avenue by which to follow up this particular matter. I say that because it is quite clear that the minister did not set in place proper procedures to safeguard the Northern Territory's money.

Mr Speaker, if you needed any confirmation of that, it was given to you by the way the Minister for Primary Production failed to address himself to the genuine concerns raised by the Leader of the Opposition. He failed to answer the question of whether any security was provided by Mudginberri for the \$980 000. He failed to explain why, when deeds were finally drawn up at the end of August last year, they were drawn up by the Pendarvis' solicitor, and not the Crown Solicitor. He failed to explain why \$800 000 of public money had been obtained by the Pendarvis' solicitor and not the Crown Solicitor. He failed to explain why \$800 000 of public money had been obtained by Mudginberri before any normal financial procedures had been put in place. He failed to answer all those questions that competent ministers concerned about responsibility for public money should answer. He stands condemned because of his failure to do that.

He also failed quite clearly to address himself to the question of the favoured treatment that Westpac has received from this government as a result of its coming to the support of the government in its hour of need on this particular matter. The most significant failure of the government, and in particular the Treasurer, lies in the extent to which he has allowed his government's political embarrassment over these ADMA advances to interfere with the significant long-term commercial negotiations of the Territory government. By the admission of both the government and Westpac, the Under-Treasurer rang Group Account Executive A.B. Cowan on 23 August 1985. During the conversation, the Under-Treasurer sought Westpac's assistance for an advance of \$2m to Mudginberri. The Under-Treasurer also explained certain political problems that faced the government, including its anxiety to refinance the deal to avoid embarrassment.

Mr Speaker, this is an extraordinary revelation. If we believe the ADMA officials, it was only in late August that ADMA realised that it was running out of money and would need to refinance the advances. Yet, by 23 August, we had the senior finance officer of the Territory begging for help and placing the Territory government in a position of disadvantage. That disadvantage was quickly recognised by Westpac. We have only to turn to page 3 of Mr Moore's internal memorandum to see that:

'While we are mindful of the inherent political overtones in this proposal, nonetheless we are well secured and we are assisting an established customer at the behest of the Northern Territory government whose business we are actively pursuing'.

Mr Speaker, from 23 August 1985, that pursuit became a rout. From then on, Westpac officials could smell blood. Throughout their documents, there are references to 'our relationship to the government', and their efforts to bend over backwards to ensure that the deal went through. There can be no doubt that the relationship that Westpac so coyly refers to was the transfer of the Northern Territory government's banking business.

If honourable members opposite want to deny that, perhaps the honourable members who are to speak to this motion or the honourable Chief Minister in his reply, might inform us what the bank's expectations were out of these deals. As has been pointed out, the bank obviously saw little problem in relaxing requirements on a \$2m loan which was fully guaranteed by the Northern Territory government so as to secure a bigger and better deal with the government accounts. For evidence of that, one has only to go back to the comments of the President of the Country Liberal Party on 22 December: 'The reason for the Territory government's apparent favouritism for Westpac was because the bank had developed a special relationship with the government'. In other words, it was prepared to help this government out whenever this government called on it because it knew that that would help it get an unfair inside run towards taking over the government accounts.

Further evidence is contained in a newspaper article which says that the ANZ and National Banks both expressed disappointment that they had not been given a fair go in presenting submissions for taking over the government's accounts. Nothing can be clearer. There is a direct link between the actions of Westpac and the actions of the Northern Territory government on the Mudginberri dispute and the final decision to give Westpac those accounts. Hopefully, before this debate ends, somebody on the opposite side will address this matter.

We have proposed an amendment to the motion. That amendment gets to the basis of the opposition's concerns on these 2 matters. I do not want to go through them again. They have been canvassed adequately by both the Leader of the Opposition and myself. Suffice it to say that there has been sufficient evidence presented to this Assembly today to convince an objective bystander that there has been funny work at the crossroads, that the government has been less than honest with this Assembly and the people of the Northern Territory, that the government has not been as responsible as it should have been in providing government money to private groups and that the government has adopted an attitude that is becoming far too common. It has given money to its friends, treated the public purse as its private bank and failed to be sufficiently accountable for the use of taxpayers' money. On these grounds, this government stands condemned.

Mr PALMER (Leanyer): Mr Speaker, I think it is worth looking at some of the background to this dispute, starting on 6 August 1984 when hearings commenced before the full bench of the Conciliation and Arbitration Commission with respect to the Northern Territory Meat Processing Award. On 8 August of that year, an agreement was reached between the Meat and Allied Trades Federation of Australia and the Australasian Meat Industries Employees' Union allowing the full bench to hear an award to finality. An agreement reached between MATFA and the AMIEU, allowing the commission to proceed read in part:

'The union and its members will ensure that no further industrial action in connection with this dispute is taken in the period between now and when any award is made, and commit themselves to accept and work to any such award'.

Quite clearly, the AMIEU had no intention of abiding by that agreement. On 5 September 1984, the full bench handed down a decision refusing to introduce the tally system. Commissioner McKenzie was empowered to hear submissions relating to the details of the award. On 29 April 1985, Commissioner McKenzie handed down the new award. On 2 May 1985, the full bench declared the new award operative from that day. Section 33 of the new award states in part:

'An employer may remunerate any of his weekly employees under a system of payment by results, provided that such systems shall enable a weekly employee to earn no less for the work actually performed than the remuneration that employee is entitled to receive, calculated in accordance with the relevant provisions of this award plus 20%, and an employer may remunerate a casual employee under a system of payment by result on an hourly or daily basis, provided that no casual employee so engaged shall earn less than he or she would be entitled to receive for work actually performed, calculated in accordance with the relevant provisions of this award'.

That award was handed down on 2 May. On 3 May 1985, representatives of the Australasian Meat Industries Employees' Union presented themselves to the owner of the Victoria Valley Meatworks with a handwritten list of demands, mostly illegible. They demanded that the employer accede to their request within 2 hours or they would enforce a picket line. They were told they may as well establish the picket line there and then as that employer had not even seen the award. He had not been given the opportunity to read the provisions of the award. The day after the award had been handed down, the Australasian Meat Industries Employees' Union immediately exercised its industrial muscle to try to force a producer to pay more than he could reasonably be expected to pay. On 10 May 1985, slaughter at Mudginberri ceased because the Department of Primary Industry inspectors employed by the Export Inspection Service refused to cross the union picket line. That is a brief background to the dispute.

We should also look at the motives behind the dispute. The Australasian Meat Industries Employees' Union has lost something in the order of 12 000 members. Employees are deserting it in droves. Most of those members are meat processors. The union's activities also include butchering, smallgoods, the manufacture of butter, cheese and other milk products, cold storage of icecream and manufacture of tennis strings. The union knows a good racket when it sees one. The loss of those 12 000 members caused great heartburn to Jack O'Toole, Pat Rowan and the like. They lost face, they lost power and they lost importance. The megalomaniacs of the AMIEU lost face in front of the ACTU. They had lost part of their power base. Katherine abattoir also came into the picture. At Katherine abattoir in 1984, it cost an average of \$160 a head in direct labour cost to slaughter a beast. No processor could continue under such circumstances. It became patently obvious that Katherine abattoir could not compete. The AMIEU had seen the end of Katherine abattoir and 150 members there. It would not tolerate competitive, well-run abattoirs at Victoria Valley or Mudginberri. It wanted its cosy arrangement at Katherine, bleeding the pastoralists of the Northern Territory dry. The motive of the AMIEU was to protect its membership on the eastern seaboard.

Let us look at the actions of the pickets at Mudginberri and other places. At Mudginberri, the picket was generally well behaved. It was in a national park under the watchful eye of the NPWS, which chose to do nothing. Nevertheless, it was generally well behaved.

At Victoria River, the union was unable to stop production because the abattoir is licensed for local kill. That frustrated the good men from the AMIEU no end. It caused them to threaten tourists pulling up at the caravan park. There were calls of 'scabs' across the road to pensioner ladies who were buying cold drinks on their way through the Territory. Suppliers to that abattoir were threatened with violence. Their children were threatened with violence. Are these normal actions in a normal industrial dispute? Certainly not.

On 31 May 1985, injunctions were issued under section 45D of the Trade Practices Act. These were ignored by the union. It was not until then that the criminal intention of the AMIEU became obvious. On Friday 21 June, Chief Justice Bowen of the Federal Court fined the union \$10 000 and \$2000 per day until the contempt ceased. Jack O'Toole, Federal Secretary of the AMIEU, said on Territory Extra on Monday 24 June: 'Oh, no. The union won't be paying the fine. The pickets will remain on duty'. At that point, the criminal contempt of the union for the second-highest court in the land became patently obvious. From that moment on, anyone publicly or otherwise supporting that union in the continuation of the picket became a party to that contempt. It would have taken an imbecile - and there are apparently plenty of them on the other side - not to understand that.

I will quote Mr Justice Lockhart of the Federal Court when giving reasons for his decision on the charges of contempt. It has been read in part before, but I think it is worth while to hear it again:

'The union has adopted the stance that it is above the law of the land. The system of industrial conciliation and arbitration produced a result that the union did not like. It should have observed the award made by the commission, but it did not. Our society simply cannot function if individuals, corporations or unions take this approach. It shows contempt for the institutions that society has created to resolve its disputes. The union plainly does not like the result of the industrial proceedings before the Conciliation and Arbitration Commission, and it refused to accept the rulings of that body. It had agreed to these rulings, in writing, before the Commission on 8 August 1985. It has gone considerably further and now breached 2 separate orders of this court. The union has thus embarked upon a collision course with the law and institutions of this country.

Disobedience of orders of courts does not generally constitute criminal contempt, but it may be accompanied by such defiance on the part of the party against whom the proceedings for contempt are brought, as manifest a criminal as well as civil contempt. This case is as plain an example of criminal contempt as there can be'.

As of 21 June, it would have taken an imbecile not to realise that the AMIEU was in criminal contempt of the Federal Court of Australia. Apparently, the legal training of the Leader of the Opposition did not help him to work that out.

It is at that point, 21 June, that a clear case for government support for the Mudginberri abattoir can be established. The union was in criminal contempt, clearly aided and abetted by other unions, other governments and opposition members of this Assembly. Only a government devoid of any moral fibre could stand by and watch a business and its employees go down the drain

as a result of criminal contempt on the part of a union and criminal contempt on the part of another government.

On 24 June, Mudginberri opened for local slaughter under the supervision of Northern Territory-employed meat inspectors. That was not to say that Mudginberri did not require further assistance from the Commonwealth. It required export inspections to meet its contract. The complicity in the criminal contempt of federal Minister Kerin, whether it resulted from spinelessness in face of pressure from his union overlords or plain incompetence or neglect of duty, was an act of vindictiveness against the Territory. Whatever the reasons, Kerin's unwillingness or inability to ensure that Export Inspection Service inspectors were provided to Mudginberri verges on criminal neglect. I will read you a telegram from Minister Kerin to Paul Everingham MHR at the end of June 1985. Mr Kerin states:

'Legal advice I have received indicates there is no duty imposed upon me or the secretary of my department to provide export inspection staff to any registered export establishment. Government is taking steps to assist where it can, but it is up to parties to dispute to use every avenue possible to seek a settlement'.

Minister Kerin says he had no duty to provide a service which he was employed to provide. If he did not have that duty, I do not know who did. I think Mr Kerin either received some fairly shoddy legal advice or he did not seek it at all. That statement was only a smokescreen for his own incompetence or complicity in the whole affair. Have a look at what the full bench of the Federal Court said about that duty:

'No doubt it was necessary that some notification be given to the appropriate office so that those responsible could become aware of the inspectorate requirements before the commencement of slaughtering. But the whole mode of expression is inconsistent with the notion that there was intended to be super-added to the detailed requirements an untrammelled discretion to withhold inspection. We are of the opinion that there was no discretion but a duty to provide inspectors and that the applications for inspectors made on behalf of Mudginberri abattoir should have been considered on that basis'.

Mr Deputy Speaker, it was a clear view of the court that Minister Kerin had that duty. In that decision, it was also the view of court that all efforts by the Commonwealth to supply inspectors ceased on or about 24 June. That is the view of the full bench of the Federal Court. Let us read again part of the telegram to Mr Everingham after that date: 'Government is taking steps to assist where it can'. Kerin was obviously lying.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! Would the honourable member withdraw that remark?

Mr PALMER: Mr Speaker, I said he was lying.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: The honourable member for Leanyer shall not reflect on a member in another place nor use unparliamentary words. The honourable member will withdraw that remark.

Mr PALMER: I withdraw that remark, Mr Deputy Speaker.

In his telegram after 24 June to Mr Everingham, Minister Kerin was plainly not telling the truth. The court said that it was quite clear that, on 24 June, despite the fact that the abattoir required them, the efforts by the federal government in trying to provide those meat inspectors had ceased.

Further evidence of Kerin's part in it was the tendering in evidence of a brief from his department to him recommending in part that Cabinet agree that it direct employees of the Export Inspection Service to perform their duties. The full bench of the Federal Court found that no such direction had been given. Cabinet or Mr Kerin had taken the decision not to perform their duty to provide inspectors under the act. Not only was Kerin not prepared to supply inspectors, it seems repeated calls from our Minister for Primary Production to allow suitably qualified Northern Territory meat inspectors to inspect the meat at Mudginberri were denied. That was despite assurances from the European Economic Community and Taiwan that inspection by Northern Territory inspectors would be acceptable to them.

Have a look at what the opposition spokesman on primary production, the member for Nhulunbuy, said in a seemingly innocuous press release on 25 June 1985:

'I am particularly concerned at the action of sending stock inspectors in as meat inspectors in an effort to break the picket line. Unless these stock inspectors are fully qualified as meat inspectors, we face the very real prospect of causing damage to the Northern Territory's reputation as a supplier of meat'.

In itself, that is harmless enough. That statement was deliberately contrived by the member for Nhulunbuy to do as much damage as possible to the Northern Territory meat industry. That statement was made in connivance with Mr Wally Curran of the AMIEU. Mr Wally Curran, in his position on the Board of the Victorian Abattoirs and Meat Inspection Authority had requested that authority to undertake a reinspection of Northern Territory meat entering the Victorian market with the intention of closing down the Victoria Valley abattoir which was still operating. That attempt by the member for Nhulunbuy is as traitorous an act to the Northern Territory as I can recall.

Fortunately, the reinspection of the meat in Victoria failed to halt the supply of Territory meat into Victoria. The report said in part: 'The results of microbiological testing indicate the standards of dressing and packing at the abattoir of origin are nothing but excellent'. The ploy did not work, but it was another example of criminal conspiracy between members of this opposition and a union in criminal contempt of the Federal Court.

Let us turn to the Leader of the Opposition. He tabled in the Assembly documents that he knowingly acquired in contempt of the Federal Court. He was at the Federal Court on 26 February this year. He was there to seek evidence to muck rake and to listen to the evidence given by Bob Cavanagh of ADMA and Jay Pendarvis. Whilst he was there, he obtained from the solicitors for the AMIEU and the ACTU, which pays its bills, documents that were privileged and in the custody and under the protection of that court. They were not public documents.

Mr Ede: You are going to prove this, I hope.

Mr PALMER: Does the Leader of the Opposition deny it? No, he does not. All he does is run for cover and duck under the privilege of this Assembly.

He knowingly obtained those documents in contempt of the Federal Court. The litany of lies went on and on - deliberate corruption and collusion continued. The lies from Minister Kerin in this whole affair continued.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! The honourable member has already been cautioned. He will withdraw the word 'lies'.

Mr PALMER: I cannot resile from it, Mr Deputy Speaker. He lied.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! The honourable member will withdraw those remarks reflecting on a member in another place.

Mr PALMER: I will not resile from it, Mr Deputy Speaker.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: The honourable member leaves me little choice but to name him. I name the honourable member for Leanyer.

Mr DONDAS (Deputy Chief Minister): Mr Deputy Speaker, I move that the honourable member for Leanyer be suspended from the service of this Assembly.

Motion agreed to.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: It is my duty to suspend the honourable member for Leanyer for a period of not more than 24 hours.

Mr EDE (Stuart): Mr Deputy Speaker, the Chief Minister of the Northern Territory, supported by his cohorts on the other side, has run the usual breast-beating claims about defending the rights of Territorians against oppression by unions. None of them has made any attempt to take a long, clear look at the industrial relations problems this dispute has caused and will continue to cause all Australians, particularly the Territory meat industry and its employees.

Let us have a look at the National Farmers' Federation.

Members interjecting.

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

Mr EDE: I refer to the National Farmer magazine edition of 16 May. There is an item headed: 'Federation Shapes Up for Major Battle'. In part, it says:

'However, deregistration of the Queensland AMIEU is only the first step in the NFF's plan. The ultimate plan is to break down the tally system Australia-wide, replacing it with a contract pay scheme negotiated by individual employers'.

Given that that is what the National Farmers' Federation's view of this whole dispute has been about - it is a national campaign - let us have a look at the tally system. For a number of years, owners have contended that the tally system which operated in about half the abattoirs in the Northern Territory has been partly responsible for making their industry non-competitive. This claim is difficult to justify. For instance, like the contract system, the tally system involves incentives and rewards for speedy and efficient work. In the IAC's Abattoirs and Meat Processing Industry Report Number 313 of 28 January 1983, the commission concluded that the tally

system did not impose a specific cost disability either in respect of capacity utilisation or the timely introduction of new technology. The IAC also concluded that, given the nature of the industry with its seasonal work force and the influence of cyclical economic factors, 'it is unrealistic to attribute substantial blame for industrial relations problems to the tally system'.

As we know, in June 1984, the AMIEU commenced an industrial campaign against Mudginberri and those other meatworks in the Northern Territory which had not adopted the tally system as it applied under the Queensland Meat Industry Award and the federal Meat Industry Award 1981. The object of this campaign was to win a similar award for the Northern Territory meatworkers. Part of this campaign included the setting up of a picket line around the abattoir. Because of the picket, members of the Meat Inspectors Association refused to enter the premises to perform their inspection duties and, as a result, production at Mudginberri ceased. Some AMIEU members at Mudginberri refused to take part in this action and the union, following its rules, expelled them. In July 1984, Mr Pendarvis gained orders from the Federal Court under section 45D of the Trade Practices Act. Some time after the making of the orders, the picket line was disbanded. Operations resumed but the claim itself remained unresolved.

In September 1984, a full bench of the Conciliation and Arbitration Commission heard an application by the AMIEU for an award to cover employees in the Northern Territory. In a submission to the commission, the AMIEU opposed the system adopted at Mudginberri and at some other abattoirs in the Territory whereby employees were remunerated according to productivity under a piece-rate system. On 5 September 1984, the full bench of the commission, having said that it was not satisfied with the contract system, gave employees proper award wages. Therefore, a contract system would be permitted, but only in so far as payment for actual work done was concerned.

Mr COULTER: A point of order, Mr Deputy Speaker! The member is halfway through his speech. I draw his attention to the motion. We are talking about the activities of the Leader of the Opposition and he has not mentioned the Leader of the Opposition's name once.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: The member for Stuart does not have to refer to the Leader of the Opposition. There is no point of order.

Mr EDE: As I said, the contract system would be permitted, but only in so far as payment for actual work done was concerned. Commissioner McKenzie indicated that he would be available to discuss with the parties details of the award provisions which should be made and that, in the event of disagreement, he was authorised to determine the appropriate award provisions. In the light of their inability to reach agreement, Commissioner McKenzie met with the parties on 19 April 1985. He made an award based primarily on the provision of part I of the federal Meat Industry Award 1981. This award, in line with the full bench decision, made provision for a system of payment by results, subject to the proviso that no employee should receive less for work actually performed than the remuneration that an employee is entitled to receive under the federal award, plus 20%.

The award also provided that terms for the piece-rate system should be established by negotiation and agreement between the employer and the majority of employees concerned or their nominated representatives. The award was to operate from 2 May 1985. On 6 May 1985, an agreement was reached between

Mr Pendarvis and a group representing the Mudginberri employees for the payment-by-result system. This group is the people who have been referred to here today. This is the infamous gang of 3, these Judas goats who sold out their mates and who will find it very difficult to come back and face their fellow workers to explain why they got that money.

On 9 May 1985, Mudginberri began its operations for the 1985 season. On 10 May, a picket was established by the AMIEU. With one possible exception, none of Mr Pendarvis' employees was a member of the union, nor did any of them participate in industrial action organised by the AMIEU. Accordingly, as in 1984, Mudginberri commenced an action under section 45D alleging a secondary boycott likely to cause substantial loss or damage to its business.

The union's main grievance was that arrangements made at Mudginberri prejudiced the operation of the federal award governing the terms and conditions of employment of its members throughout Australia. In the light of the supposed NFF directive to its members, work was to be diverted from other tally-system abattoirs in the Northern Territory to Mudginberri. This campaign would have cost union members their jobs and undermined necessary job security arrangements in a seasonal and highly cyclical industry. The union's other problem was that the award negotiation had been started by the union. It was perverse for the commission to make an award which, in effect, cut the union out of the negotiating process. The employers countered by stating that the umpire had made his decision, that the union's behaviour interfered with the individual's right to contract freely, that under the new arrangement Mudginberri workers would benefit and that, if the union did not like the decision, it should go back to the commission and have the award altered. With the pickets in place, members of the Meat Inspectors Association again refused to inspect meat at the abattoirs. So it went on.

The Mudginberri dispute has served in part to re-focus attention on a number of fundamental industrial relations issues. This, in itself, does not mean that the dispute is likely to have any lasting effect on the industrial relations system. After all, calls for greater flexibility in the procedures for setting terms and conditions of employment, as well as for more resolute use of existing legal sanctions, emerge more or less as a matter of course during most major disputes. What has allowed the present dispute to gain and subsequently retain notoriety at a national level is the ongoing debate regarding the appropriateness of the use of sections 45D and 45E of the Trade Practices Act in the industrial relations context, and the support by the federal coalition parties for the greater use of collective bargaining.

In respect of 45D and 45E, it will be remembered that the present federal government unsuccessfully attempted to repeal those sections of the Trade Practices Act in the budget session of 1984. The government's actions square with the ACTU's long standing opposition to the outlawing of this type of strike activity, to the use of penal sanctions, and the resort to civil remedies, including the remedy of damages. At the centre of the ACTU and government case is the claim that industrial relations questions should be dealt with, as far as possible, by the recognised industrial tribunals. We believe that the use of sections 45D and 45E only serves to inflame industrial disputes. The contrary position, put by the federal opposition, is that secondary boycotts should be treated as a special case because they sometimes can be directed at innocent third parties. This is not the case with this dispute. The federal opposition argues that it is not inappropriate to use the civil law to recover damages from groups or individuals. There is no reason to treat union members differently from other people in the community,

and the same deterrents should apply. It is impossible to assess accurately whether the Mudginberri dispute has added weight to either case. What is clear is that the National Farmers' Federation and its lackeys on the dry side of the Liberal Party have, with the complete compliance and support of this government...

Mr COULTER: A point of order, Mr Deputy Speaker! The member is not speaking on the motion or the amendment. The contents of his speech have nothing to do with the motion, which is that this Assembly endorse the Northern Territory government's support for Mudginberri and deplore the activities of the Leader of the Opposition in his attempts to destroy vital Northern Territory industry, and for his support of the illegal activities by meat industry union picketers.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! There is also an amendment before this Assembly. It is within the constraints of standing orders for the member to speak both to the motion and the amendment. The member for Stuart shall confine his remarks within those constraints.

Mr EDE: As I stated, what is clear is the National Farmers' Federation and their lackeys on the dry side of the Liberal Party, with the complete compliance and support of this government, have turned the Northern Territory into a social laboratory for their particular brand of politics of the new right. In the short term, 45D and 45E did little to end the picket. However, over the longer run, the use of contempt proceedings and the possibility of a successful claim for damages against the AMIEU may cause other unions to modify their conduct. On the other hand, it may not. The fact that the picket was lifted only in order to bring the substantive issues back before the commission probably implies that, had this course been encouraged by all parties at an earlier date, things would not have got to the stage where a union has been heavily fined and had its assets sequestered, an employer has lost income and some export contracts, meat inspection services have been disrupted, a large part of Australia's meat trade has been put at risk and a round of secondary industrial action has flowed through into other areas of industry.

All this disruption has come from a dispute involving only a handful of southern itinerant workers who have been conned by their rip-off mates. In this regard, it is relevant to recall the IAC's comments about the economics of the tally system as against those of the contracts system. The dispute is difficult to rationalise because, for all practical purposes, the issues involved do not, on the basis of the IAC's finding, go to the basic economics of the industry. This argument has been given further weight by the fact that the Tennant Creek meatworks, owned by F.J. Walker Ltd, which in turn is owned by Elders IXL, recently reached agreement with the AMIEU to continue under the tally system. Let us have a look at Elders IXL. As I said, the new right was quite happy to see Katherine and Alice Springs go down the drain; it was quite happy to encourage the Mudginberri dispute. But, it made sure that it excluded its own abattoir because as well as Mr John Elliott, who is well known as the federal treasurer of the Liberal Party, we also have on the board of Elders IXL none other than the one Mr Ian McLaughlin, the President of the National Farmers' Federation.

Mr D.W. Collins: Why shouldn't he be?

Mr EDE: Why shouldn't he be? I will quote from today's The Australian in which a wheat farmer states he has problems with Mr McLaughlin's membership on

that board. He states that he was one of Mr Laughlin's most loyal supporters and sent the NFF money that he probably could not afford but he is now perplexed and would like an answer. He also refused to answer the questions that were asked of him about the NFF fighting fund. He refused to explain what money had been provided to Mudginberri by the National Farmers' Federation and when and if there would be any return from that money to the National Farmers' Federation itself.

As I stated, the people on the other side of the Assembly are quite happy to support the continuation of these disputes. They get a big buzz out of lining up with their new right mates. They say they are sticking up for the Northern Territory. Where is all the meat going? It is going 1000 miles away to be slaughtered in abattoirs that operate under the tally system. The abattoirs owned by Elders can operate. As I stated, they are their friends. They have allowed the one at Tennant Creek to continue operating. They are not about to see Mudginberri go down the drain, but they are quite happy to see the Katherine and Alice Springs meatworks go down the drain. I have not seen people becoming involved in the negotiations there to assist in having the Alice Springs meatworks operational. Achilles Meat, which uses the tally system, can export horse meat but Mudginberri has to pay the lowest per carcass rate in Australia if it is to make a profit. This fits in with the view of the world adopted by members opposite: reduce real income in the hands of the workers. They not only espouse that view but they are prepared to spend taxpayers' money, the money that they get off the workers through tax, to destroy the rights of workers.

Mr Deputy Speaker, we have seen this consistently in the public service negotiations. We know now the lengths that this government will go to to get stuck into the workers of the Northern Territory who are employed in private enterprise.

Mr COULTER (Community Development): Mr Deputy Speaker, I hope that I can restrain the level of my voice during the rest of this debate. It is not easy to remain calm under these circumstances because we were told for 6 weeks by the Leader of the Opposition, at every function, how he had documents which would be a severe embarrassment to the CLP, how he would tear down the government and how we were all in trouble.

Mr B. Collins: I did not! You'd better check....

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: The honourable Minister for Community Development will resume his seat. The honourable Leader of the Opposition will restrain himself from such outrageous bellowing across the Chamber.

Mr B. COLLINS: Mr Deputy Speaker, of course I will but, as you know, Sir, behaviour in this Assembly is a two-way affair.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! The honourable Leader of the Opposition will resume his seat.

Mr B. COLLINS: The honourable minister was being provocative, Mr Deputy Speaker.

Mr COULTER: Mr Deputy Speaker, we were told for 6 weeks that these documents existed and that we would be thrown out of government and that there would be severe embarrassment. We were told also by way of interjection. 'You are not giving me any choice', he said to the honourable Minister for

Primary Production. 'I will bring on Mudginberri'. Threats were made to us. We now find out that his documents are insignificant Westpac internal memos relating to the bank's normal business. These are the documents that will tear down the government. These documents are nothing but internal Westpac correspondence.

I do not intend to address the question of how these documents got into the hands of the Leader of the Opposition. It is nothing new in this whole sorry saga for such documents to be leaked. I will read from The Australian of 17 or 18 August:

'A serious rift developed last night between the Prime Minister, Mr Hawke, and the National Farmers' Federation after a confidential NFF telex to the Prime Minister was released to the media by the Australian Meat Industry Employees' Union'.

He is the top man in the land. He is the person on whom we can all rely. He is the man who said: 'Trust me. I have a record of conciliation and bringing people together'. People went to him with a document. They trusted him to try to resolve a dispute. What happened? The next minute the National Farmers' Federation read about it on the front page of the newspaper, leaked by none other than the Prime Minister of Australia through the Australian Meat Industry Employees' Union. We wonder how the Leader of the Opposition obtained those documents. It is not hard to work out. These documents are correspondence between Westpac executives about a commercial transaction that they were becoming involved in. There is nothing at all wrong with that.

I think the Chief Minister is to be applauded and congratulated for bringing this issue out so that the people of the Northern Territory do not have to suffer any more threats by the Leader of the Opposition. He warned that we should not push him too far. It is ridiculous. I wonder how the Leader of the Opposition could believe that these particular documents were of such significance. Of course, he is under extreme pressure. He has to show himself as a leader, not only to his own party but to the 16% of the people of the Northern Territory who believe that he is not a bad fellow, to Mr Reeves, to Senator Ted Robertson and to anybody else. He has to demonstrate that he has this vital information so that his party will not get rid of him in 2 weeks time at its the annual general meeting.

Mr B. Collins: What are you raving about?

Mr COULTER: Mr Deputy Speaker, this debate has raised some profoundly interesting matters of political philosophy. Just who is the honourable Leader of the Opposition representing in this particular issue? He is not representing the meatworkers in his own electorate. For a start, he cannot be representing meatworkers because he gave his unqualified support to a handful of illegal picketers flown in from Brisbane to stop meatworkers earning an honest living. By his actions, he connived with those illegal picketers to throw workers out of work. He certainly cannot be representing the miners and workers at Jabiru. After all, his party policy is that uranium mines be shut down, that export contracts be dishonoured and that thousands of workers be sent to the scrap heap.

Mr B. Collins: You're wrong. In fact, you can't count.

Mr COULTER: Of course, he is not alone in that. He has the honourable member for Stuart to back him up. He will support him. Of course, he also

has the union mouth piece, the ex-Transport Workers Union representative, the member for Nhulunbuy, Mr Danny Leo, the shadow minister for primary production in this affair. He is against Americans. 'Mr Pendarvis is an American', he said, not an Australian of the Year. It might be of some use for the member for Nhulunbuy to realise that 75% of this \$800m meat export industry goes to America. I wonder how the Americans will feel about him. I wonder how Roy Townsend down at Stapleton Station now feels about the shadow minister for primary production's view about Americans. It seems we cannot have Americans who are a credit to the Northern Territory. They left Florida in 1964 to come to the Northern Territory because they were fed up with bureaucracy and with the paper warfare that they were involved in there. They came here as pioneers to build a new industry and a new era for people in the Northern Territory. But the shadow minister for primary production condemns them because they are American.

I wonder where the member for Nhulunbuy was yesterday when he left this Assembly when the Transport Workers Union strike was on. I would like to hear that he was not giving them some encouragement to ruin a project that the Minister for Tourism spent 13 months putting together. I would be interested to hear about any union conspiracy in that regard.

The Leader of the Opposition has given the word 'trilogy' a new meaning: the Leader of the Opposition, Mr Kerin, the federal minister, and perhaps even the Prime Minister himself. That is what 'trilogy' means: conspiring together to destroy an industry in the Northern Territory. He sits here today a proud man. It cannot be the miners; it cannot be the meatworkers. Whom does he represent? What enabled the Leader of the Opposition to take the position that he did? It is not his constituents. It is not the meatworkers. Why did he do it? It seems that he is not representing Aboriginal people either.

Mr B. Collins: Truth, justice and the Australian way.

Mr COULTER: Last Friday, the Chairman of the Northern Land Council held a press conference to announce that Aboriginal people could no longer support the ALP because of its broken promises. He does not represent the Aboriginal people either. It is highly dubious that he is representing the Labor Party.

Mr B. Collins: We will find that out.

Mr COULTER: Yes, we will in a couple of weeks. It is common knowledge around town that John Reeves wants his job, and he will almost certainly get it.

Mr BELL: A point of order, Mr Deputy Speaker! It is quite clear to me that the comments by the honourable minister in relation to whom the Leader of the Opposition may or may not represent scarcely come within the ambit of this particular motion.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: The Minister for Community Development will confine his remarks to the motion and the amendment.

Mr COULTER: Mr Deputy Speaker, I am trying to point out to honourable members, and obviously it is a little difficult for the member for MacDonnell to get it into his head, that we have a motion before us which says that this Assembly endorses the Northern Territory government in its support of Mudginberri, and deplores the activities of the Leader of the Opposition in his attempts to destroy a vital Northern Territory industry through his

support of the illegal activities of meat industry union picketers. I would like to know how the Leader of the Opposition, and I am trying to defend him as best I can in this particular instance...

Mr B. Collins: Oh, please do not bother.

Mr COULTER: ...reached a position where he could make such public and contemptible charges against the judiciary in Australia. He sits here amongst us today, a man who, as the Chief Minister said, has turned part-time employment into an art form. He spoke today about how he has been in here. Tell me one day that I have not been in here. We are talking about a contractual arrangement in relation to Mudginberri. I think we should ask the Remuneration Tribunal to look at the possibility of paying the Leader of the Opposition on an hourly rate because ...

Mr B. COLLINS: A point of order, Mr Deputy Speaker. I have been extremely patient during this 20 minutes of personal abuse but it has gone far enough.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! The Minister for Community Development is straying outside the guidelines laid down in standing orders. He shall contain his remarks within those guidelines.

Mr COULTER: I want to get back to the scenario which the Leader of the Opposition painted for us today - that is, that 2 workers at Mudginberri conspired with management to defraud workers of their rightful entitlements. The Minister for Primary Production has certainly put that to rest today. The 2 men were full-time employees who spent the year at Mudginberri and were paid moneys for maintenance contracts which they carried out during that particular year.

The Leader of the Opposition claimed that legal documents would be made available concerning the role of ADMA in this sorry saga. He painted various pictures, most of them baseless. I draw members' attention to section 13 of the act. It says:

'The functions of the authority are to investigate, organise and assist in the development and continued operation of projects in the Territory, including the processing and marketing of agricultural products, and such other functions as are imposed upon it by or under the law of the Territory'.

Do we need a clearer direction on the role of ADMA? The implication is that ADMA has the power to make loans for the purpose of assisting in the development and continued operation of projects in the Territory. This view is reinforced by section 22 of the act which provides that 'moneys of the authority consist, inter alia, of interest earned on money lent by the authority'. The act is quite clear: ADMA's role is to assist the development of industries. What we are saying is that the Assembly endorses the Northern Territory's government's support for Mudginberri. It acted under the provisions of the act to ensure that a vital industry, the buffalo industry, was supported. The minister tried to provide the backup and the support for that industry. At the same time, he had the Leader of the the Opposition trying to tear it down.

The Leader of the Opposition says the Northern Territory's public purse has been used to fund the prosecution of the Mudginberri case. Senator Baume

has made some interesting revelations in that regard. He claims to have documented evidence that the federal government has spent \$0.5m defending its role in relation to Mudginberri. Talk about the indefensible defending the indefensible! That includes defending the federal Minister for Primary Production, Mr Kerin. Fancy throwing public money after him. I would like to hear from the Leader of the Opposition whether he knew that the federal government had spent up to \$0.5m in that defence. If what Senator Baume is saying is true, I guess we will hear more about the matter. If the federal government has committed \$0.5m to defend the federal Minister for Primary Industry - unsuccessfully, as it has turned out - it is hypocritical for the Leader of the Opposition to criticise the Northern Territory government and its role in this affair. All that we have done is to try to keep alive an industry which is vital to the Northern Territory. The Minister for Primary Production has nothing to be ashamed of. The documents that were to tear down the government are a farce. There is absolutely nothing in them to suggest there has been anything more than a commercial transaction by a banking group to support an industry. It is nice to have people with that kind of confidence and faith in the development of the Northern Territory. They are not like the Leader of the Opposition who is trying to tear it down.

The Leader of the Opposition's policies and his public statements of the past year or so do not relate to his constituents. Mudginberri is in the heart of his constituency. People there believe he has deserted them for a larger stage and that he has become obsessed with issues which are of no concern to them. He attempts to make issues out of so-called divisions within the CLP. Judgment time is at hand. The Opposition Leader will shortly meet his Waterloo at his party's annual conference. We will see how he faces them and whom he represents.

Mr BELL: A point of order, Mr Deputy Speaker! The minister is quite clearly outside the terms of this motion, and quite contrary to standing orders.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: I remind the minister for a final time to contain his remarks within the terms of the motion.

Mr COULTER: I conclude by saying that the community will judge the Leader of the Opposition and his colleagues. It will judge them for their actions and their associations with the trade union movement throughout Australia. It will judge them very severely. The member for Stuart can speak about the uranium province and the closing-down of an industry. He can take over from the Leader of the Opposition when he leaves this Assembly. The member for Nhulunbuy can talk about Mr Pendarvis being an American, and condemn a nation which has contributed greatly to the development of this Northern Territory. They can continue on those lines because, as the Chief Minister said, it suits us fine. They are a political liability to the Australian Labor Party and that is just how we like it.

Mr LEO (Nhulunbuy): Mr Speaker, if anything has occurred today, we have at least proved that the old adage still rings true: the emptiest kettles make the most noise. Despite all the ranting and raving of members opposite, including the Minister for Community Development who seems to enjoy the sound of his own voice but unfortunately cannot use any logic, all we have heard proved is the truth of that old adage.

I wish to comment on a number of points raised by the Chief Minister. Firstly, in his personal attack on the Leader of the Opposition, he set

himself lower standards than those he imputes to the Leader of the Opposition. The Chief Minister stated that the Leader of the Opposition was thrown out of this Assembly for calling people liars and bastards. What in fact occurred had no relationship...

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! I have ruled earlier that debates shall be contained within the terms of the motion and the amendment before the Assembly. The member shall confine his remarks to those matters.

Mr LEO: Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker.

In fact, what the Chief Minister said was simply not true. The member was removed from this Assembly in the last sittings for using the word 'drongo'. What the Chief Minister said was untrue. I am debating what the Chief Minister had to say to this Assembly this morning.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! The member for Nhulunbuy is bringing into this debate matters which are irrelevant and outside the motion and amendment. I remind him again to confine his remarks to the motion and the amendment only.

Mr LEO: I will confine my remarks to the motion and amendments which are presently before us. However, Mr Deputy Speaker, I am sure you will allow me to reflect that, while that word may have been unparliamentary, at least it was accurate. Why did the Chief Minister change the facts?

Another matter concerns me. The Chief Minister claims that we set out to trap the Minister for Primary Production by seeking to link him to a telephone conversation to the Westpac Banking Corporation.

Mr Tuxworth: I said you fell flat on your back.

Mr LEO: We set out to do no such thing. For the information of the Chief Minister, we simply set out to confirm documentation that we had obtained. We had no expectation that the minister would deny the correctness of that documentation. Naturally, when the minister made his denial, we moved that the matter be raised as a matter of privilege. After that point, the whole matter of that particular Westpac document became somewhat cloudy and murky. Conveniently, Westpac fired back a facsimile which said that the minister's name on that document was in error. Mr Speaker accepted that apology. It was not an apology; in fact, it was a statement that the matter raised in the letter was an error.

This process still has some loose ends. The Leader of the Opposition raised the issue of the letter tabled. All that was tabled was page 2 of a facsimile message. We sought to have tabled all of the material contained in that facsimile that Mr Cowan presented to this Assembly as an amended version of his letter to his own branch officer. Mr Deputy Speaker, this Assembly was given 2 assurances on this. Firstly, the Minister for Primary Production claimed that what he had tabled was exactly the documentation that he had received personally. That was a neat personal excuse. Secondly, we had an unsolicited comment from the Chief Minister, and I will quote the Chief Minister's own words from Hansard.

Mr HATTON: A point of order, Mr Deputy Speaker. I regard the allegation of a 'neat personal excuse' as an imputation on myself, and I ask that it be withdrawn.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: The remarks made by the honourable member could be interpreted as a personal imputation. The honourable member will withdraw that remark.

Mr LEO: Certainly, Mr Deputy Speaker, I withdraw.

Secondly, we had the unsolicited comment from the Chief Minister: 'My understanding is that every transaction has 2 cover pages'. I have serious doubts about that. In fact, I have a document, which I am perfectly prepared to table should the minister so wish, and I have other documents from precisely the same branch office and signed by the same gentleman: Mr A.B. Cowan. His name is on both of them. They came at a different time, but you will note that these 2 documents are marked '002', not '003' as this document reads. I am left in a quandary. Inevitably, I and other people wonder what was on 002 of the convenient and timely facsimile. Certainly, the minister could table 002 and satisfy everybody, but I am left to wonder whether 002 carried a message such as: 'Will this do you, Steve? Will this get us out of this fix?' Until the minister tables 002, we are left to speculate. Speculation in these matters is certainly very dangerous but, without that page, we can only speculate as to what actually transpired. I would appreciate from either the minister involved or 1 of his cohorts an explanation of what was contained on page 002, either by the time this debate is finished or certainly by the time this Assembly rises. It should not be too difficult to obtain. Indeed, the speed with which 003 was obtained would certainly lead us to believe that it could be in this Assembly within 5 minutes.

I turn to some claims that were made by the Chief Minister that somehow the employer and the employees at Mudginberri are all great Territorians. I would like to read a transcript of evidence from a long-time Mudginberri employee. This is the transcript from the case that is being conducted in Sydney before Mr Justice Morling. He was asked: 'Can you give me some idea of where they live?' That refers to the meatworkers currently employed at Mudginberri. 'Do many of them live in the Northern Territory?' Those were straightforward questions and nobody could have any doubt about what the questions implied. The answer was: 'The majority of people do not live in the Northern Territory; they come up from places like Casino, Brisbane, some from Melbourne and they just go up for the seasonal work'.

That came directly from the transcript. This is the way the meat industry operates. They are seasonal workers. The Chief Minister is seeking to contrive some imaginary world in which these itinerant workers are all Territorians. It simply does not happen like that. The jingoistic argument is dragged in here year after year; it is felt that somehow stupidity can be excused by jingoism. They are not all Territorians. They are like meat workers anywhere else in Australia and, I would suggest, like itinerant workers anywhere else in the world: they move from place to place and accept work wherever they can obtain it. They invest or spend what they have earned wherever they wish within Australia. They are not alone in doing that. Indeed, have a look at the present proprietor of Mudginberri Pty Ltd, Mr Jay Pendarvis, for instance. He has a \$32 000 unit on the West Coast Highway of Scarborough Beach, Western Australia; a \$29 000 unit...

Mr HATTON: A point of order, Mr Deputy Speaker! The honourable member is straying well away from either the motion or the amendment to the motion in discussing the personal financial affairs of Mr Pendarvis. That has no relevance to this debate.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: The honourable member for Nhulunbuy will not reflect on the personal affairs of Mr Pendarvis. As I pointed out earlier, he shall contain his remarks to the specific motion and amendments.

Mr LEO: Mr Deputy Speaker, without disputing your decision, I would contend that what...

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! Is the honourable member for Nhulunbuy contesting my ruling?

Mr LEO: I said that I am not disputing your decision, Mr Deputy Speaker.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Then I suggest that the honourable member for Nhulunbuy should not reflect on that in his debate.

Mr LEO: Mr Deputy Speaker, the Chief Minister's performance in this debate has been little more than a reaction against the terrible mauling that he received yesterday and which looked like continuing today. He used the numbers. I would not agree with the Leader of the Opposition that the Chief Minister has been caught with his hands in the till; I think that he has been caught with his trotters and his snout firmly wedged in the trough. He has ripped off the Northern Territory people to the tune of \$9000, which he snuck back conveniently by the back door.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! The honourable member for Nhulunbuy will resume his seat. I remind the honourable member for Nhulunbuy for the final time that he shall confine his remarks to the specific motion and the amendment. The motion refers to Mudginberri. The amendment refers to Westpac relating thereto and Mudginberri. He shall contain his remarks within those specific guidelines.

Mr LEO: Thank you very much, Mr Deputy Speaker.

Those are the sad and sorry facts about the origin of this so-called motion and they explain the need for the Leader of the Opposition's amendment. A couple of points need to be put to this Assembly. If there was no collusion of a political nature and if, indeed, the entire financial transactions between the Northern Territory government and Westpac, to the tune of \$1.3m, were purely of a financial nature, then this government has an obligation to place before this Assembly all of the tender documents associated with the Westpac account. Until it meets that obligation, this Assembly will have hanging over it the cloud that the fix was on and that the Chief Minister organised the fix with Westpac, ADMA and the Minister for Primary Production, not to achieve the best financial results for the Northern Territory but to get himself out of deep water.

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH (Koolpinyah): Mr Deputy Speaker, I rise to support the Chief Minister's motion and to oppose the 2-part amendment from the Leader of the Opposition. I speak for the ordinary people of the Northern Territory, mainly those in my electorate. After what occurred at Mudginberri, many ordinary people in the community started to talk about it. What these people had to say did not hit the headlines, but their reactions will probably be made clear through the ballot boxes at the next election. What these people thought about the issue did not make the headlines, unlike the comments of the Leader of the Opposition over the months that this issue has been on the front pages of the newspaper. I am trying to present the point of view of ordinary men and women who perhaps are not aware of the finer points of the debate in

the Assembly. Luckily for them they do not hear all the inaccurate points with which the Leader of the Opposition tries to cloud the issue.

These people are overwhelmed by a sense of frustration and impotence. The people whom I am talking about have a job to do and they do that job. They keep within the law. They just go on living with their families and friends. They saw these southern people and unionists come up from the south to work actively against people who were trying to make an honest living in the abattoir at Mudginberri. They saw the Leader of the Opposition actively supporting those southern unionists who initiated an illegal picket line. The ordinary people see the Leader of the Opposition in his support of these southern unionists, the AMIEU unionists who were in the picket line, as working actively against the interests of the people in the Northern Territory. They see the Leader of the Opposition controlled by southern interests. We all know the ALP is controlled by union interests. We all know that the ALP is controlled by interests other than those that have the interests of the Territory at heart.

We are not talking here about a small issue; we are talking about the continued viability of the whole pastoral industry of Australia. We are talking primarily of the pastoral industry and its future viability in the Northern Territory. This illegal picket line by the AMIEU unionists was an attempt to destroy this previously viable industry. It appears to me that these AMIEU picketers were in very close cahoots with the ANPWS. I gave my personal views on the ANPWS and its workings yesterday. However, I will reiterate them today.

There was a notice in the NT News yesterday mentioning the closure of 3 parts of Kakadu at the direction of the Director of ANPWS. It seems to me that the ANPWS is in cahoots with the unions not only to kill off those areas that were outlined in the paper yesterday but another area in the confines of Kakadu - the Mudginberri area. I believe that the ANPWS stands condemned. I accuse it of criminal dereliction of duty in that it did not detain members of that picket line for subsequent police action. It did not contain them. They spread everywhere with their filthy litter. It did not remove them. That is probably because these people are all of the same political ilk. None of those ANPWS staff has the interests of the Northern Territory at heart. They are all southerners; they do not belong up here at all. They do not have our interests at heart at all. The people on the picket line were camping there. Can I go and camp there? I cannot because I would be moved on pretty smartly by the ANPWS. Can any other member of the Northern Territory public camp there? No, he cannot because he would be moved on pretty smartly.

Mr Deputy Speaker, the ordinary people in the Northern Territory have had a gutful of union actions in attempting to kill off jobs for ordinary people. I am talking primarily of the abattoir jobs which have been available in all the abattoirs in the Northern Territory but which have been restricted, if they have not completely vanished from the abattoirs. We are talking about the trouble at Mudginberri. There was a picket line at Victoria River. There is doubt about whether Katherine will open again. There has been trouble at Tennant Creek. There has been trouble at Alice Springs.

The fight by Mr Pendarvis and his staff has been an example to other abattoirs in Australia. I read in a prominent publication that the abattoir at Wagga, I think it was, had been closed for 4 years. The whole town was in the doldrums. The workers wanted to work at the abattoir to keep themselves alive. They took the dole. When that abattoir opened after the Mudginberri

example, the whole spirit of the town changed. There are another 2 abattoirs in New South Wales that have adopted the same form of agreement as Mudginberri and they are working to the betterment of their small communities too.

Mr Deputy Speaker, the killing season will be starting very shortly in the Northern Territory. I would like to know the intentions of the AMIEU for this killing season. Does it intend to put up more picket lines? Does it intend to ferry these fat, bloated people up here to picket outside the abattoirs? If the answer is that it will start these picket lines in the Northern Territory, what will the public do? Are we going to see the picketers operating again like the great, big slobs that they are? Will the public do something? I have a pretty fair idea from listening to a few people that we just might see the public objecting. I would deprecate violent action because that is what these picketers are doing. I do not think we should copy them. I think the time has come for the members of the public to show their dissatisfaction at what these people are doing to the meat industry and, in fact, to all jobs in the Northern Territory.

Mr Deputy Speaker, it takes a long time to stir up the farmers and the people on the land because they are used to thinking for themselves and they believe in settling their own problems. But there comes a time when the farmers have had a gutful, like the ordinary people have had, in regard to union actions. They are taking action. I think we just might see that sort of thing happening in the Northern Territory. If it is a case of putting your money where your mouth is, I will not be very far from them. Many other people will be in there giving them all the help we can. I would not have lowered myself by going out to see those people but it was apparent from the television pictures that I saw of those people that they certainly did not present a good picture of themselves. I have never seen uglier, fatter slobs sculling booze. It appeared to me that the only thing they had to look forward to was a fatter beer gut.

The Leader of the Opposition was decrying the fact that Mr Pendarvis was considered a folk hero. I think he is a pretty good folk hero. He has been a rallying point for many people in Australia to fight against the overpowering, manacling effect of unionism.

I take strong exception to remarks passed by the Leader of the Opposition against 2 public servants. I thought it was completely demeaning of his position in the Assembly and extremely small of him to make those remarks. It is about the only small thing about him. If we are going to get personal, we can get personal about him too. I take exception to his remarks about Mr Saville, the Secretary of the Department of Primary Production, and Mr Cavenagh, the General Manager of the Agricultural Development and Marketing Authority. The Leader of the Opposition made snide, derogatory remarks about Mr Saville because of his apparent physical disability. It seems that the Leader of the Opposition could not think of anything else to deride Mr Saville about or to belittle him with except to poke the finger of derision at certain physical disabilities that he was said to have had. It appears to me that the Leader of the Opposition is the sort of person who would laugh at people in wheelchairs.

Mr B. Collins: I am used to personal abuse after 4½ hours.

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH: I found the remarks directed at Mr Cavenagh as General Manager of ADMA to be very derogatory. In effect, he said that his professed limited knowledge of buffalo meat limited him in his managerial

position. Mr Cavenagh may not be a jack of all trades, but he certainly does have managerial capabilities. He is pretty good at that. I would like to draw to the Leader of the Opposition's attention a very old saying: 'I may not be able to lay an egg but I certainly can tell the difference between a good egg and a bad egg'. Mr Cavenagh may not know a lot about the management of the meat industry but he certainly knows a good bit of buffalo meat from a bad bit of buffalo meat. He certainly knows good management from bad management as evidenced by his managerial capabilities in his position. The Leader of the Opposition probably employs shorthand typists, computer operators and similar people. In his grand repertoire of skills, does he also have secretarial skills? I doubt it but does that detract from his skills as Leader of the Opposition. I think he can see the parallel that I am trying to draw. If all public servants had the high ideals, application to work and managerial skills of Mr Cavenagh, I do not think the public service would be the vitiated service that it is now.

Despite the reams of paper that the members opposite have presented in support of the story that they have put forward today, the facts of the matter are that they are not seen by the wider community as supporters of industry in the Northern Territory. They are not seen as supporters of workers in the Northern Territory. They certainly are not seen as supporters of the pastoral industry in the Northern Territory.

Mr BELL (MacDonnell): Mr Deputy Speaker, the honourable member for Koolpinyah is blinding in her illogicality when she chooses to chip the Leader of the Opposition for personal references, particularly when those criticisms came hard on the heels of her own extraordinary personal references to meatworkers involved in industrial disputes. Having been camping out there, I am quite sure that they did not meet the customary requirements of sartorial elegance that the member for Koolpinyah so clearly cherishes.

From the government's side, there has been rather more heat than light in this debate. Reading through the motion of the Chief Minister, it is quite easy to see that it was hastily drafted and ill-considered. By comparison, the amendment from the Leader of the Opposition was well drafted and carefully considered. When one sorts out the jangled syntax, the Chief Minister's motion is seen to contain 3 propositions: it seeks to endorse the Northern Territory government's support for Mudginberri; it deplores the activities of the Leader of the Opposition in his attempts to destroy a vital Northern Territory industry; and it deplores the Leader of the Opposition's support of the illegal activities by meat industry union picketers.

Let me discuss the Northern Territory government's support for Mudginberri. It is quite clear to me, having read newspaper reports and other documentation on this extraordinarily complex matter, that for a government to take a particular side in what the Minister for Primary Production called 'only an industrial dispute' is quite a breathtaking abuse of the usual role of government in such matters.

The allegation that the Leader of the Opposition acted in such a way as to destroy a vital Northern Territory industry is absurd. I remind members of the efforts and the contributions of the Leader of the Opposition as shadow minister for primary production on the various issues that have been of importance to the beef industry in the Northern Territory. Government members who were in this Assembly when he made those contributions, particularly in relation to B-TEC, will be well aware of his constructive efforts on behalf of the beef industry in the Territory.

Mr Dale: There was no pressure on him from Canberra though. There is now.

Mr BELL: I will pick up that interjection. I hope the member for Wanguri intends to contribute to this debate. Perhaps I should not provoke him, but I really find it quite breathtaking and a further example of the failure of government members to understand the complexity of the issues involved in this particular dispute.

The third proposition advanced by the Chief Minister in his motion was that somehow the Leader of the Opposition had supported illegal activities by meat industry union picketers. To construe the activities of a member of this Assembly in that way passes my understanding.

The speech made by the Chief Minister in relation to this motion was really quite an outstanding display from a man quite clearly fighting for his political life. If we need any further evidence to convince us that this is the case, I refer the Chief Minister and his colleagues to the editorial in today's Northern Territory News. I will quote from the editorial:

'The Northern Territory government has made a mockery of parliament and a travesty of democratic convention.

It will be a sad and sorry day when the government is allowed to govern without parliament. That may be convenient and comfortable but it is not democracy.

Just for Mr Tuxworth's information, parliament is and must remain supreme. It is bad enough that it sits for only 22 days a year. It is infinitely...'

Mr DALE: A point of order, Mr Deputy Speaker! Under standing order number 67, Digression from the Subject, the matter that the member for MacDonnell is discussing has absolutely nothing to do with the motion or the amendment before the Assembly, nor is it a rebuttal of any debate that has taken place here on this matter today.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: I rule that there is a point of order.

Mr BELL: May I speak on the point of order, Mr Deputy Speaker? I put a particular construction on the Chief Minister's reason for moving this motion. In support of those arguments, I am quoting from today's editorial in the NT News. I believe that is quite pertinent to the motion before the Chair.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: The member will resume his seat. I have heard the member's remarks. The background to the motion is irrelevant to the debate. The member will confine his remarks to the content of the motion and the amendment thereof.

Mr BELL: I will concentrate on the particular issues pertaining to my role as a local member. As member for MacDonnell and shadow minister for central Australian affairs, I have an involvement with 2 groups who have taken an interest in this debate. I refer particularly to meatworkers in Alice Springs and pastoralists in my electorate.

In regard to the interests of pastoralists, I can imagine that they might believe that a favourable outcome for Mudginberri will lead to a reduction in

labour costs. My experience with abattoir operators in Alice Springs is that no pastoralists could have any faith, given the nature of the abattoir operations, that any such saving in labour costs would be passed on to the producers. There would be no guarantee for pastoralists that they would obtain a higher price for their product at market. That is the chief point that should be of interest to them.

There are a number of other points to be made here. I refer to the actions, for example, of the National Farmers' Federation. I am quite bemused that the National Farmers' Federation should become involved in this dispute. There is no guarantee that growers are likely to benefit. A further contradiction arises when the spokesman for the National Farmers' Federation, Mr Ian McLaughlin, is revealed to be a director of a company that runs an abattoir and is using the tally system which is supposed to be the issue at the centre of this dispute.

Mr Dondas: What is your point?

Mr BELL: We have heard a great deal about the differences between the tally system and the piece-rate system of payment for meatworkers. I find it fairly difficult for members to suggest that the issue is not relevant, so I trust that they will bear with me.

To make my point, it strikes me as hypocritical when the spokesman for the National Farmers' Federation says that the tally system is to be fought against at Mudginberri whilst he remains very quiet about the fact that, in the Chief Minister's electorate, his company is successfully supporting a tally system of payment for meatworkers.

Mr Dale: That is freedom of choice.

Mr BELL: Quite clearly, the freedom of choice that the member for Wanguri is referring to is the freedom of choice of the National Farmers' Federation to be self-contradictory. That is a fairly strange freedom of choice as far as I am concerned. I will look forward to his contribution later in this debate.

The second group involved in my electorate is the meatworkers. Mr Deputy Speaker, as a representative of people in central Australia, you yourself have been involved in negotiations with meatworkers. You will be intimately aware of the panoply of operators that passes through the Alice Springs abattoir, and the absolutely extraordinary chicanery that they adopt. The terms of the Chief Minister's motion refer to the cattle industry and abattoir operations as if they were all equally deserving of support. But I know of one abattoir operator in Alice Springs who is still being pursued by the Minister for Mines and Energy for unpaid electricity bills of \$200 000. I would be very surprised if he gets it.

Mr Perron: I am working on it.

Mr BELL: You are working on it? It is a bill that has been outstanding for a couple of years and I certainly hope you do.

To return to the position of the meatworkers and the Australian Meat Industry Employees' Union, there has been some fairly hysterical criticism of unionism from the government benches. We have had the full panoply of Country Liberal Party demonology in the last couple of days. We had blacks and the

Commonwealth government yesterday, we had a bash for law and order from the Minister for Primary Production a little earlier, and we have had a good sprinkling of trade union bashing today. I think it is about time somebody took a national perspective on this debate, unlike a few of the people who are clearly incapable of taking a broad view about anything apart from what goes into their hip pockets. Let me point out that the central issue for both the meatworkers and the abattoir operators is that of labour costs. Abattoir operators want to reduce their labour costs and increase their profits. It is simple economics. But day after day, we have ministers and backbenchers opposite saying that conditions in the Territory must be the same as elsewhere in Australia. Territorians must have the same rights as people elsewhere in Australia. What is different about meatworkers? That is the second key question that I would like somebody, perhaps the Chief Minister, to answer. Why should meatworkers in the Northern Territory be paid less than meatworkers elsewhere in Australia? That is the clear implication of this motion and of the government's support for Jay Pendarvis and the Mudginberri abattoir...

Mr Coulter: Where are they paid less?

Mr BELL: ...and its support for the National Farmers' Federation and the Meat and Allied Trades Federation.

Let me pick up the comment from the Minister for Community Development. Where are they paid less? I have never heard a clearer example of somebody who clearly does not understand what this debate is about. Judging from his contribution to the debate, which was 99% diatribe, I am hardly surprised.

Mr Coulter: Having said that, answer the question.

Mr BELL: I will answer your question. If you had been listening to my remarks a little earlier, you would know that the essential characteristic of this dispute is labour costs in the abattoir industry in the Territory.

Mr B. Collins: He is deaf from listening to his own voice.

Mr BELL: He must be.

What is at stake here in an attempt to reduce pay and conditions for meatworkers? The reason a national union, the AMIEU, is interested and the reason the national employer's organisation, MATFA, is interested is because they think it will reduce labour costs for them. The battle is on. They hope that this will set a precedent that will roll around the rest of the country. I want an answer to that question. Why should meatworkers in the Northern Territory be paid less than meatworkers elsewhere in this country?

Mr MCCARTHY (Victoria River): Mr Deputy Speaker, I am amazed that the members of the opposition can support their leader in his actions in supporting the Australian Meat Industry Employees' Union pickets at Mudginberri. That union was in absolute contempt of court in doing so. His involvement in the support of the AMIEU pickets at Mudginberri and at Victoria Valley is likely to live as one of the Leader of the Opposition's most infamous actions against the welfare of Northern Territory industry. Yesterday, in this Assembly, I raised the question of the government's support for Mudginberri because I believe that the very real and necessary support provided by the government to Mudginberri should be aired so that the people of the Northern Territory can make up their own minds where honour lies in this issue.

Mudginberri abattoir opened for business on 9 May 1985. On 10 May, a picket of members of the Australian Meat Industry Employees' Union was set up at Mudginberri. The picket has since been judged by the courts to have been illegal. What did the Leader of the Opposition do about that? He thumbed his nose at the courts and supported the illegal picket in total contempt of the law which he professes to love. We hear him time and time again telling us how much he loves the law of this country. I doubt that the Leader of the Opposition had the support of anyone in the Northern Territory except the left wing unions of which the AMIEU is a leading light.

Mr B. Collins: The left wing unions love me, yes.

Mr McCARTHY: He was looking for their support because he could not get it in other areas, so he went all out to get their support on this one.

The Leader of the Opposition did not consider the needs or the wishes of Northern Territory people. He preferred to support the wishes of the southern unions and the big southern meatworkers. Mudginberri is in his electorate. The workers of Mudginberri who wanted to work are constituents of the Leader of the Opposition. But, what did he do? He sold them out to the southern unions who were afraid that, if the Territory meat industry award took hold, it would mean that the meatworkers would have to do a fair day's work for a fair day's pay. The workers at Mudginberri want to work. I sat in on a number of meetings early last year with workers at that meatworks who clearly indicated to me that they wanted to work and they were happy with what they were getting. They were happy to do a fair day's work for a very good day's pay. Their rights were not considered by their local member, the Leader of the Opposition.

At the time of the Mudginberri dispute, there was also a picket at Victoria Valley, in my own electorate - a longer running picket too, I might add. The Victoria Valley picket did not have the same disruptive effect as the one at Mudginberri because Victoria Valley kills for the local market and the meat kill could be inspected by Territory meat inspectors. The Northern Territory government ensured the continuance of meat inspections at Victoria Valley which allowed it to continue killing. It is a pity that the Leader of the Opposition and his federal cohorts did not have the same strength of character and courage to do their job. While Victoria Valley was able to continue killing...

Mr B. Collins: You have got a hide to talk about character.

Mr McCARTHY: ...there was disruption to the lawful activities of the meatworks operators in other areas. The AMIEU picketers were paid. They were paid and they were paid well. They were paid by a number of different groups. They were camped beside the highway opposite Victoria Valley abattoir and roadside inn drinking great volumes of grog. They put considerable pressure on tourists not to use the facilities at Victoria Valley. They kept tourists and the operators under close scrutiny.

Members interjecting.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! Would the honourable member for Victoria River resume his seat? A number of members have continued to interject. I will not name any member at this stage but, if they continue, I will have no hesitation in naming a number of members. The honourable member for Victoria River will be heard in silence.

Mr McCARTHY: As I was saying before I was rudely interrupted...

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: The honourable member for Victoria River will not be provocative.

Mr McCARTHY: I did not realise I was being provocative, Mr Deputy Speaker. I thought I was stating a fact.

They were asked not to use the hotel and other facilities at Victoria Valley. Pressure was put on them. I was at Victoria Valley on a number of occasions during that time and I had the binoculars on me wherever I went. They wanted to know what I was up to and I did not appreciate that at all. They put pressure on Territorians and visitors alike. People coming in from across the border were met by these fat-bellied picketers at Victoria Valley. That was their first view almost of the Territory and what the Territory had to offer. The Eureka flag was flying. There was a stone wall. They were pulling people up and saying: 'Don't go there. That man is a crook'. The meatworkers and the operators were going about their legal business.

These same union picketers and their organisers put pressure on suppliers of goods and services to the abattoir at Victoria Valley not to supply goods and services, which was in direct contravention of the Trade Practices Act. These highly-paid picketers had no interest in seeing the dispute settled in the best interests of Territorians. Few of them thought beyond their own beer guts and the unreasonable monetary value that they placed on their work in order to fill them.

There was a direct assault on the industry by the AMIEU and its supporters, the most recognisable of which is the Leader of the Opposition. These people have no interest in the continuance of a vital export and local meat industry in the Northern Territory. They set out quite blatantly to break our local abattoirs because they were seen to be affecting jobs in the big meatworks on the eastern seaboard. No doubt, there was great pressure on the Leader of the Opposition from his big union mates to wipe out the meat industry in favour of southern jobs. That is not why his constituents elected him. They elected him to support development and jobs in the Northern Territory, and particularly within his own electorate of Arafura in which Mudginberri has the misfortune to be situated. It received no help at all from the Leader of the Opposition.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I was one of a very few members of this Assembly who brought pressure to bear verbally on the government to provide support for Mudginberri while it was being illegally picketed with the support of the Leader of the Opposition. My reasons for seeking support to keep Mudginberri alive were the same as what they would have been if illegal picketers were picketing any other businesses that are developing the Northern Territory and employing Territorians. The average Territory cattleman relies on the operation of the small Territory abattoir. In the days of 1 or 2 large operators, small cattlemen - who should be of interest to at least 2 opposition members - were held to ransom on prices for cattle while they gave in to every unreasonable union demand in order to stay open.

In my electorate, there are 2 small abattoir operations, both run by Territorians, both employing Territorians and both putting money back into the local economy while building up the Territory's cattle industry. The same cannot be said of the AMIEU and its great supporter of illegal pickets, the Leader of the Opposition. Meneling at Batchelor in my electorate was not

picketed last year. This year, however, it will open as an export abattoir. Major upgrading has taken place at considerable cost. There is no doubt in my mind that it will be picketed this year, as Mudginberri will be yet again, with the absolute support of the Leader of the Opposition in order to bring them to their knees. The Leader of the Opposition interjected yesterday while the Minister for Primary Production was answering my question - a question asked in good faith in order to get this out in the open - that Katherine employed 120 meatworkers to Mudginberri's 30. That does not enlighten anyone on the real facts. Katherine did not open last year. The Katherine meatworkers were too busy picketing Mudginberri and Victoria Valley. What if they did open? At Mudginberri, Victoria Valley and Meneling, 20 to 30 workers can kill around 100 beasts per day. At Katherine, 120 workers can kill only 200 beasts per day - 1 beast per worker as compared with 2 beasts per worker that can be slaughtered in the smaller abattoirs. This reflects the extremely over-generous conditions that Katherine meatworkers had gained at the expense of the cattle producer, conditions that they were not prepared to give up for love or money.

The small abattoir operator has been able to pay more money for cattle and also pay his meatworkers a minimum of 20% more for their work under the Territory Meat Industry Award. In fact, most meatworkers in small works are receiving up to double what is paid in big southern meatworks. Why? Because they reach their own agreements with the operator and strikes are rare under those conditions. Cattle are therefore killed and money is made. Cattlemen are paid and meatworkers are satisfied with their lot. But the Leader of the Opposition is not satisfied because his masters elsewhere are not satisfied. They would kill the NT industry to keep southerners employed at the Territory workers' expense.

The important thing for Territory people is that Mudginberri is still in operation thanks to the Territory government's timely and entirely honest action in opposition to an illegal picket, judged to be so by the duly constituted courts of Australia. The AMIEU picket was wholeheartedly supported in its criminal and scurrilous contempt of court by the Leader of the Opposition. The people of Australia have come out strongly in support of the court's findings. They are fed up with the unions and Labor members of parliament, both federal and Territory, making their own rules at the cost of jobs and serious damage to industry. The federal government ministers, and particularly the Primary Industry Minister, should hang their heads in shame at their lack of action in the Mudginberri dispute. If he had ordered his meat inspectors to do their job and cross the picket line, no assistance from the Northern Territory government would have been necessary.

When Territory industry has people like the Leader of the Opposition blatantly working against its operations, there is a clear need for positive action in support of that industry by this government. The Leader of the Opposition claims that negotiators for Mudginberri meatworkers were paid a fee for doing their job. I wonder what sort of fee negotiators for unions are paid. It was proven to be false anyway. He inferred that Mudginberri workers get less than their counterparts interstate as a result. That is totally and absolutely false, and he knows it.

Mr B. Collins: Want to talk about the Westpac Bank?

Mr McCARTHY: I strongly endorse the NT government's support for Mudginberri. I fought for it and I support it. A few things happened at the

very beginning of this dispute. One of the representatives of the AMIEU, the one from Katherine I understand, is currently working in the Leader of the Opposition's office.

Mr B. Collins: He must be hiding in the toilet.

Mr McCARTHY: One was from Sydney. They fronted up at Victoria Valley, and perhaps also at Mudginberri, with a handwritten agreement, which was referred to earlier by the member for Leanyer, and demanded that it be signed without having seen the award that was handed down the day previously. They demanded a signed agreement from the operator at Victoria Valley at least so that they could continue to rule the roost within the meatworks within the Northern Territory.

The operator of the Victoria Valley abattoir quite rightly knocked them back and said: 'Bring on your pickets'. I support what the operator at Mudginberri has done. I support what the NT government has done in keeping the meatworks in the Northern Territory on the rails. I totally condemn what the Leader of the Opposition has done in his support for AMIEU pickets and an attempt to destroy a vital Northern Territory meat industry.

Mr SETTER (Jingili): Mr Deputy Speaker, today we are debating issues which involve the Mudginberri meatworks, a small abattoir in the Alligator Rivers region run by Jay Pendarvis and his wife, Joy, and the disgraceful part played in this saga by the Leader of the Opposition.

The Pendarvis family carry on the business of the slaughter of buffalo. Most of the employees have worked at Mudginberri Station for some years. They all used to be members of the Australian Meat Industry Employees' Union, but the union terminated their membership. Why? Because they were working under an award sanctioned by the arbitration commission. I refer to the Northern Territory Meat Industry Award. The Pendarvis family are battlers and pioneers of that region. They are working within the law with their employees, but there was a move to crush them. We have heard a lot about that over the past 6 or 8 hours. Jay and Joy Pendarvis introduced the Northern Territory award at Mudginberri, with the full agreement of their employees, on 9 May 1985. On 10 May, the AMIEU established a picket outside Mudginberri. Since that time, no Commonwealth meat inspectors have entered the abattoir to inspect meat for export.

It is interesting to note that, until that time, Commonwealth meat inspectors lived on site at Mudginberri. But they conveniently moved to reside in Jabiru. This meant they had to cross the picket line which, of course, they refused to do. One could be forgiven for thinking that the move of those Commonwealth meat inspectors to Jabiru was engineered for one purpose and one purpose only. Of course, that move was very successful for those people who tried to bring down Mudginberri abattoir.

Mr Deputy Speaker, the Northern Territory government, the majority of people in the Northern Territory and, indeed, the majority of Australians support the fight of Mudginberri abattoir against the AMIEU. While this was going on, did the Leader of the Opposition and his Labor Party colleagues move to support Mudginberri and the workers? In fact, they were constituents of the Leader of the Opposition, would you believe? No, he did not move to support them, and neither did the Labor Party. He sidestepped and he ducked for cover. In fact, he supported the AMIEU and its picketers. We have heard today what occurred in that area. Meanwhile, the Pendarvis family fought on.

It was supported by local businesses which offered extended credit until other arrangements could be made. I am very much aware of the number of Darwin businesses in particular which extended considerable credit, well over their normal trading terms, to the Mudginberri abattoir in order to back it up and to ensure it survived. It still has an enormous amount of support here in this community.

Mr Deputy Speaker, supporters came out of the woodwork and assisted Mudginberri to take its case to the courts. Litigation is still going on. The Pendarvis family, rightly believing the picket was illegal, applied for an injunction against the pickets. An injunction was granted by the court but the picketers continually refused to comply with the court's instruction. They were deliberately disregarding the laws of this country and, subsequently, were fined in the Federal Court of Australia for disobeying the previous court orders. That also is a matter of record. The unions continued to ignore the court order and maintained the picket. They continued to hold the law of this land in contempt. That is just not acceptable.

Mr Deputy Speaker, the federal Minister for Primary Industry, Mr Kerin, has played a critical and indeed a despicable role in all of this. He had the power to direct his Commonwealth meat inspectors to cross the picket line but he refused to do so. Since that time, the Federal Court found that Mr Kerin had erred. I quote from an editorial, headed 'Welcome Decision', in the Northern Territory News in December 1985:

'Yesterday's decision by the Federal Court full bench that the federal government should have ordered its meat inspectors across a union picket line outside the Mudginberri Abattoir was a triumph of the rule of law'.

It was a triumph all right except that, since then, Mr Kerin, although obliged by this decision to supply meat inspectors to Mudginberri regardless of the activities of unions such as the AMIEU - and it is to Mr Kerin's shame - has since publicly stated that he intends to change the regulations to avoid the consequences of such court decisions in future. In other words, he is saying that, if the court rules that he was in error and that he had to supply those meat inspectors under the existing law, then he will bring in new regulations to get around such court decisions.

The owners of Mudginberri abattoir faced the loss of export markets valued at approximately \$5.5m. Not only the operators of Mudginberri abattoir but the Northern Territory's economy faced that loss and, in fact, suffered that loss. Subsequently, those contracts were lost because, even though Mudginberri continued to slaughter, the meat was not inspected for export and, therefore, was not acceptable to overseas customers. Those contracts were subsequently cancelled. After holding that product in cold storage for many months in Darwin and in other places, it was disposed of on the southern Australian market at a considerable loss. One would imagine that the majority of it has since gone into pet food.

It is this government's intention to ensure that Mudginberri abattoir survives. In fact, it is critical to the future of the Northern Territory's meat industry that it does survive. The thought of its not surviving and the AMIEU having its vile way is totally abhorrent to myself and, I am sure, to all of my colleagues and the majority of people in the Northern Territory.

The Hawke federal government applies double standards. In the current industrial relations circus, its approach illustrates its complete failure to take any action to control a union acting completely outside the law. If unions are permitted by the government to act outside the law and, in the process, destroy the businesses which employ their members, then where are our rights of natural justice in this country? Our hopes of becoming competitive in world markets and of reducing unemployment are dashed before we even start.

The Mudginberri abattoir has a market for buffalo meat and, as I mentioned earlier, held export contracts. Its employees wish to work under an award which was established by the arbitration commission - fully approved and totally legal - and yet the contracts were eventually lost because of the refusal of Minister Kerin to instruct his Commonwealth meat inspectors to cross that AMIEU picket line and inspect the meat. He could have done that with a stroke of the pen; it was that simple. He was not prepared to support the legal operators of Mudginberri. Instead, he ignored their plight and disregarded the action of the union in breaking Australian law. This sad story is still continuing and the operators are still in court fighting a damages claim against the AMIEU. However, let them be assured that they have the support of the Northern Territory government and a large majority of Territory people. The Leader of the Opposition, his colleagues and the federal Minister for Primary Industry stand condemned for their position in this matter.

Mr PERRON (Attorney-General): Mr Deputy Speaker, I am a little disappointed. I thought the Leader of the Opposition might have taken the trouble to be in the Assembly to listen to this debate, which affects him. However, as usual at this time of the day, he is missing.

The Leader of the Opposition is recorded in the Hansard of Thursday 6 June 1985 as saying that he is not a supporter of industrial action. The debate at the time concerned the Public Service Act. He said: 'I get into trouble with my own party because of my well-known conservative stance on all kinds of issues'. That was very interesting. He was not a supporter of industrial action and he was a conservative. Yet, on 4 December that very same year, he issued a press release which said: 'Labor leader Bob Collins has given his full support to members of the Northern Territory Teachers Federation in their strike over the delivery of Aboriginal education services'. He did not mind breaking his own rule there. On 30 April, which was earlier in the year, he issued another press release: 'Labor leader Bob Collins has come out in strong support of the principles which motivated the Territory unions to carry out a 24-hour strike in support of the ETU workers in Queensland'. He was happy to support action which submitted Territorians to gross inconvenience because of legislation in another state. This is supposed to be a man who does not support industrial action. What a load of nonsense!

By his statements in support of the AMIEU, he is supporting a group which has sought to tear down part of the capitalist, private enterprise system in Australia because it might make a profit from the labour of workers. That is the sort of mentality which prompted this union to act as it did. In supporting the AMIEU in this matter, the Leader of the Opposition was not supporting a union picket line which was demonstrating, as occurs in some cases where unionists gather with placards in the streets or in front of a factory, in support of a cause. This picket line was designed to stop any person going into or out of the abattoir; it was designed to shut it down completely. That is what the Leader of the Opposition was supporting. He supported people whom a newspaper described as 'outlawed picketers'. He was

reported in that article, which has been quoted in this debate today, as saying that the federal government was the only government which had tried to solve the dispute.

Mr Coulter: By spending \$500 000.

Mr PERRON: Yes. \$500 000 of federal funds had been set aside for the legal defence of one minister for his efforts to try to solve this dispute. It was only with the total cooperation of the federal government that this dispute was able to be carried on at all by the AMIEU. The federal government could have moved against the picketers under a series of laws. It could have done more to have its own meat inspectors go into Mudginberri and approve the meat that was being processed to export standards. If it did not want to do any of those things, it had the power to endorse Northern Territory meat inspectors to inspect for export. But the federal minister did none of those things. He is now involved in court action, which is testing his actions against the law, and \$500 000 of taxpayers' money is being used to prop him up.

The Leader of the Opposition spent virtually 2 hours of this debate trying to demonstrate that this government's financial assistance to Mudginberri was somehow improper. That is virtually all he tried to do in 2 hours. Not once did he try to justify his public support for the industrial thugs in the AMIEU. I am also advised that he went further than simply voicing public support and that his electorate office was used by members of that union during the course of the dispute.

Certainly, this government provided financial assistance to Mudginberri. We have never denied that. In fact, we have said that we did the right thing. I do not believe that it is unusual for governments to use taxpayers' funds to assist a valuable industry under threat, to protect jobs and export markets and to uphold the laws of Australia. The Labor government of New South Wales, according to an article in The Australian, also supports abattoirs with taxpayers' funds. Part of it reads:

'The Auditor-General, Mr O'Donnell, told the New South Wales parliament abattoir assistance was a considerable drain on state finances. Assistance of \$10.2m was advanced to 7 local government abattoirs in 1984-85'.

That assistance was provided to government-owned abattoirs to help them compete with private abattoirs. The assistance provided from the taxpayer enabled those government abattoirs to provide slaughter discounts as high as 22% so that they could continue to remain in business. It is nothing new. Even a Labor government will support an abattoir in difficulty. We would not support abattoirs simply to help them maintain a competitive edge over private enterprise.

The Leader of the Opposition opposes our action in spending money to hold off the bankruptcy of a Territory industry, to protect jobs and export markets and to try to retain international credibility. All of those things were under direct threat. The musclemen had moved in. Mudginberri was a pain in the neck, a thorn in their side. Of course, the courts found that their actions were illegal. To the extent that members of AMIEU continued with their actions, they were in contempt of court. The Leader of the Opposition openly and actively supported those law breakers. He has been unable to justify that action, nor has he denied it. I believe that is to his shame. He said at one stage: 'Society depends on the rule of law'.

Mr B. Collins: Give me the right of reply.

Mr PERRON: He was very right about that. We will move very rapidly towards anarchy if any sections of our society are able simply to ignore the nation's laws. He then babbled on about sub judice matters. The charge against the Leader of the Opposition does not concern matters which are sub judice. It concerns the line he took with his unqualified support for the action taken to bankrupt a Northern Territory employer. That is the charge against him, and nothing he said in his 2 hours of debate helped his case at all. Indeed, whilst he made an interjection to the effect that he had won the support of his constituents at Jabiru, official figures indicate that he lost 2 to 1. He shakes his head.

Mr B. Collins: Sorry. You are wrong.

Mr PERRON: He claims that the Electoral Office was wrong.

Mr DALE (Wanguri): Mr Deputy Speaker, I have very little to say on this subject. Many government members have a great deal more expertise than I in this field and the matter does not affect my electorate particularly. However, since this debate started at about 10.30 this morning, the Leader of the Opposition and his 5 cardboard cutouts over there have had every opportunity to put a case to this Assembly and to the people of the Northern Territory on something that the Leader of the Opposition has been running around this city blackguarding about for months. I mentioned once before that he fell flat on his face on another issue on which he had adopted a similar attitude.

Mr Deputy Speaker, a great deal of good has come out of this debate today, and it came from the mouth of the member for MacDonnell. He stated a fact that all people of the Northern Territory must take notice of. He spoke about the attitudes of the Leader of the Opposition when he was the opposition spokesman for primary production. He was not frightened of unions in those days. He used to go down and, as I would put it, kick a few heads. That is how he built up credibility within his own party as a fairly brave crusader on behalf of Northern Territorians, and that is how he became the leader of Her Majesty's opposition in this place.

But, Mr Deputy Speaker, that was when there was a conservative government in Canberra. The Leader of the Opposition, in his then role as a member of the opposition, did not have to fear what was happening in Canberra. A few weeks ago, he had to go to Canberra to help throw out one of the mad lefties from the Labor Party. On that occasion, it was Healey. He was away for a couple of weeks at the beck and call of his champions in Canberra. That is what is wrong with the man now.

Mr B. Collins: I have never ejected anyone called Healey from the Labor Party. I reject that suggestion.

Mr DALE: What is his name, Hurley? You know the bloke.

Mr B. Collins: Nor anyone named Hurley.

Mr DALE: Mr Deputy Speaker, the fact is that he was out of the Northern Territory at the beck and call of his masters in Canberra. That is what is wrong with the opposition members here today: they do not act on behalf of Territorians, but on behalf of their Canberra mates such as the machine-gun

kid. He puts on a brave face up here and tries to put it across on television that he is looking after Territorians. He even has the gall to say that he looks after Aboriginal Territorians. He always does what his masters in Canberra tell him to do. There has been absolute proof of that here today and all Territorians, including Aboriginals, must note that fact.

Mr FINCH (Wagaman): Mr Deputy Speaker, honourable members have spoken fairly comprehensively about the technical aspects of the motion before us. However, one aspect has not been mentioned to any great extent and it is one that I think is extremely serious. The Leader of the Opposition chipped in earlier when I mentioned the relevance of national economics to this debate. I would like to inform him that the Mudginberri debate has everything to do with national economics; it has to do with export trade. Mr Deputy Speaker, this country is going down the chute because it has failed to take advantage of our natural resources. I have found it incredible that a country that produces more food than it can eat and which has mineral resources almost second to none fails dismally in its balance of trade. One of the principal reasons for that has been the interference of unions in the export markets of the country.

The aspect that I would like to draw to the attention of the Assembly is not the specifics of the Mudginberri situation but, more importantly, what it does to our international market credibility. It is a decline in that market credibility that is losing us exports. We have had the examples of coal, wheat, sugar and, in Darwin in the last few days, uranium. The most important factor is that we are losing credibility in the international marketplace as reliable producers and suppliers of goods. Apart from the direct results that it has had locally in nearly crippling a rural producer, it is possible that the Mudginberri dispute has had a long-lasting and damaging effect on our international reputation. The rural industry is a most difficult industry at the best of times. It is subject to seasonal variations throughout Australia. It is held to ransom regularly by transport unions and others. Policies are imposed on it by federal government, such as double inspections in the meat industry. All of these things lead to a difficult market in the first place. Internationally, the market cannot withstand repeated blows which damage our credibility as suppliers.

Earlier in the debate today, the Chief Minister mentioned unionists being thugs and I was pleased to hear the Leader of the Opposition add to that 'and thieves'.

Mr B. Collins: I said that about your Chief Minister.

Mr FINCH: I hope that was recorded accurately in Hansard because certainly that contribution by the Leader of the Opposition will be most enlightening to his constituents. Unionists are thieves: they rob not only the landowners and the producers, but also this country. They pillage and rape the natural resources that belong to all people in this country and, until we get some sense in union activity, this country will continue to decline.

Amendment negatived.

Mr TUXWORTH (Chief Minister): Mr Deputy Speaker, I moved this motion this morning because of my concern that an office holder of this Assembly has maintained support for people who are in contempt of the court. Mr Deputy Speaker during the 2 hours of dribble and diatribe that the Leader of the Opposition indulged in this morning, he did not address the issues.

Mr B. Collins: Let's hear about Westpac and ADMA.

Mr TUXWORTH: I say to the honourable Leader of the Opposition that he will need to make up his mind pretty shortly about what he will do this season because it will be on again for young and old. Mr Deputy Speaker, you can always tell when you get to him because his little mouth wobbles.

Mr B. Collins: Talk about Westpac; it is the last chance you have.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! The Leader of the Opposition will cease his continual interjecting. I am quite prepared to tolerate the odd remark from any member, but continual interjection I will rule out of order.

Mr B. Collins: All the odd remarks come from the government.

Mr TUXWORTH: I can smell the scent on the wind, Mr Deputy Speaker.

Mr B. Collins: I can smell the scent of corruption.

Mr TUXWORTH: Mr Deputy Speaker, I say to the Leader of the Opposition that he has held a position of contempt during the last 12 months of the operation of the Assembly. He will have to make up his mind what he will do because there will be another Mudginberri this year. It is not acceptable that an office holder of this Assembly condones the activities of illegal pickets and people held in contempt of the court in the Northern Territory.

Mr Deputy Speaker, the people of the Northern Territory will have their say on this matter at a later time.

Motion agreed.

NOTICE OF MOTION

Mr B. COLLINS (Opposition Leader): Mr Deputy Speaker, I give notice that on the next sitting day I shall move:

that the Assembly censure the Chief Minister and Treasurer because:

(1) the Chief Minister admitted in this Assembly last week that he had been directed to pay back \$9443 in travelling allowance to which he was not entitled, and gave an undertaking to this Assembly that he would provide full details of payment and subsequent reimbursements for the financial years 1982-83, 1983-84 and 1984-85;

(2) the Chief Minister and Treasurer has demonstrated his contempt for this parliament by failing to do so, despite being given 6 days in which to prepare the documentation;

(3) the result is that the Chief Minister has deliberately misled this Assembly and, in so doing, has brought himself, his government and this parliament into great public disrepute; and

(4) in the circumstances, the Chief Minister has no option but to tender the documents promised to this Assembly and already provided in part to the media, and then to tender his resignation.

Mr ROBERTSON (Leader of Government Business): Mr Deputy Speaker, pursuant to standing order 95 the government accepts the motion.

MOTION OF CENSURE
Failure of Chief Minister to Provide Information

Mr B. COLLINS (Opposition Leader): Mr Speaker, I move:

that the Assembly censure the Chief Minister and Treasurer because:

(1) the Chief Minister admitted in this Assembly last week that he had been directed to pay back \$9443 in travelling allowances to which he was not entitled and gave an undertaking to this Assembly on 20 March 1986 that he would provide full details of payments and subsequent reimbursements for financial years 1982-83, 1983-84 and 1984-85;

(2) the Chief Minister and Treasurer has demonstrated his contempt for this parliament by failing to do so despite being given 6 days in which to prepare the documentation;

(3) the result is that the Chief Minister has deliberately misled this Assembly and, in so doing, has brought himself, his government and this parliament into great public disrepute; and

(4) in the circumstances, the Chief Minister has no option but to tender the documents promised by him to this Assembly and already provided in part to the media outside this House and then to tender his resignation.

Mr ROBERTSON (Leader of Government Business): Mr Deputy Speaker, I move that the question be put.

The Assembly divided:

Ayes 17

Mr D.W. Collins
Mr Coulter
Mr Dale
Mr Dondas
Mr Finch
Mr Firmin
Mr Hanrahan
Mr Harris
Mr Hatton
Mr McCarthy
Mr Manzie
Mrs Padgham-PUrich
Mr Perron
Mr Robertson
Mr Setter
Mr Tuxworth
Mr Vale

Noes 6

Mr Bell
Mr B. Collins
Mr Ede
Mr Lanhupuy
Mr Leo
Mr Smith

Motion agreed to.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: The question is that the motion be agreed to.

The Assembly divided:

Ayes 6

Mr Bell
Mr B. Collins
Mr Ede
Mr Lanhupuy
Mr Leo
Mr Smith

Noes 17

Mr D.W. Collins
Mr Coulter
Mr Dale
Mr Dondas
Mr Finch
Mr Firmin
Mr Hanrahan
Mr Harris
Mr Hatton
Mr McCarthy
Mr Manzie
Mrs Padgham-Purich
Mr Perron
Mr Robertson
Mr Setter
Mr Tuxworth
Mr Vale

Motion negatived.

RETURN TO ORDER OF PAPERS

Mr B. COLLINS (Opposition Leader): Mr Deputy Speaker, I seek leave of the Assembly to move a motion for return to order of certain papers relating to the Chief Minister's travelling allowance pursuant to standing order 251.

Leave denied.

SUSPENSION OF STANDING ORDERS

Mr B. COLLINS (Opposition Leader): Mr Deputy Speaker, I move that so much of standing orders be suspended as would prevent me from moving a motion for a return to order of certain papers relating to the Chief Minister's travelling allowance pursuant to standing order 251 for the period 1 January 1982 to today, and that the Chief Minister lay on the table the following papers: copies of all travel allowance forms tended by the member for Barkly; copies of any debt notices raised against the member for Barkly; copies of receipts for any repayments of travel allowance advanced to the member for Barkly; copies of any correspondence between the former Chief Minister, Mr P.A.E. Everingham, and the member for Barkly in relation to travel allowance; and copies of any correspondence between the former Treasurer, Mr M. Perron, and the member for Barkly in relation to travel allowance.

The Assembly divided:

Ayes 6

Mr Bell
Mr B. Collins
Mr Ede
Mr Lanhupuy

Noes 17

Mr D.W. Collins
Mr Coulter
Mr Dale
Mr Dondas

Mr Leo
Mr Smith

Mr Finch
Mr Firmin
Mr Hanrahan
Mr Harris
Mr Hatton
Mr McCarthy
Mr Manzie
Mrs Padgham-Purich
Mr Perron
Mr Robertson
Mr Setter
Mr Tuxworth
Mr Vale

Motion negatived.

MOTION
Order of Business

Mr ROBERTSON (Leader of Government Business): Mr Deputy Speaker, I move that Notice - General Business No 1 be now taken.

The Assembly divided:

Ayes 17

Mr D.W. Collins
Mr Coulter
Mr Dale
Mr Dondas
Mr Finch
Mr Firmin
Mr Hanrahan
Mr Harris
Mr Hatton
Mr McCarthy
Mr Manzie
Mrs Padgham-Purich
Mr Perron
Mr Robertson
Mr Setter
Mr Tuxworth
Mr Vale

Noes 6

Mr Bell
Mr B. Collins
Mr Ede
Mr Lanhupuy
Mr Leo
Mr Smith

Motion agreed to.

MOTION
Ghan Preservation Society

Mr VALE (Braitling): Mr Deputy Speaker, I move that this Assembly:

noting the historical significance of the old Ghan railway to the Northern Territory;

noting the tourist potential which the work of the Ghan Preservation Society is enhancing; and

noting the wide support that has been expressed by the Alice Springs' community for the work of the society;

(1) expresses its support for the activities of the Ghan Preservation Society; and

(2) recommends that the government continues to assist the society in every possible way.

Mr Deputy Speaker, in speaking in support of the motion, I should explain briefly that I put it on the notice paper last sittings for 2 reasons: first, to record the assistance that the Ghan Preservation Society has received to date; and, secondly, to outline briefly for honourable members what the project entails in central Australia.

I will go very briefly into the history. In 1980, a group of men and women of central Australia formed a steering committee to investigate the possibility of retaining a small section of the old narrow-gauge train line. Following the formation of that steering committee, the committee made application to the then Minister for Community Development, the honourable member for Casuarina, received a small government grant and obtained the services of a retired engineer from the federal Department of Transport. He then investigated the proposal and reported back. Copies of that engineering study were circulated within government departments and other interested bodies. As a result of the affirmative recommendations contained in that report, a public meeting was called in central Australia on 21 January 1981 and the Ghan Preservation Society was formed.

From that date forward, the society entered into negotiations with Australian National Railways. I might say here that the General Manager of Australian National Railways, Dr Don Williams, and the chairman, Mr Lou Marks, have been extremely helpful. In fact, in relation to all operations of the Ghan Preservation Society, these 2 men, in particular Dr Williams, have been of great assistance. Indeed, the society would not have reached its present status had it not been for his assistance and advice.

Following that meeting, we approached ANR with a request that it consider a peppercorn rent to the society over that section of narrow-gauge line from MacDonnell, immediately south of Alice Springs, to the Deep Well siding, approximately 70 km to the south. Dr Williams reported back that the value of that line was so great that he thought that it would be better for the society to peppercorn rent the MacDonnell to Ewaninga section, a distance of 30 km. I might add now that I am grateful that he recommended that we take that section of line rather than the entire 70 km because of the maintenance costs the society would have had to face in coming years.

Following that agreement, we then entered into discussions with Dr Williams and others to see what rolling stock could be obtained. Dr Williams agreed that the society could tender on certain items of old Ghan narrow-gauge rolling stock and, if successful, we could repay it interest-free over a 10-year period. This period does not commence until the service starts to operate in 1988.

To date, we have purchased 2 of the old narrow-gauge dining cars, 2 of the old narrow-gauge economy sleeping cars, 2 first-class sleeping cars, and a number of brake or employee vans which are fitted out like caravans and attached to the rear of trains or utilised for work trains. They contain

accommodation, cooking facilities, toilet and shower. One of those will be utilised as part of the work train. In addition, with a grant from the Northern Territory government, we have purchased 2 of the old narrow-gauge NSU diesel locomotives plus 2 NSU shells without motors. We have obtained, by way of a donation from the Caloundra Rotary Club, an old C17 narrow-gauge steam locomotive which was freighted back with the assistance of a grant from the Northern Territory government and donations from local businessmen in Alice Springs. It was hauled freight-free from Broken Hill to Alice Springs, thanks to the generosity of Australian National Railways.

I should point out that, in 1981, ANR sold the train line from Maree to Alice Springs. It was going to be torn up prior to our intervention. Part of the agreement was that we would not enter the MacDonnell siding or the train line south of the MacDonnell to Ewaninga section until such time as Associated Sugar Mills from Queensland and Roberts Construction moved all of the train line which was being stockpiled at MacDonnell. We were not to go onto the siding until that task was completed. Early in 1981, Associated Sugar Mills advised us that the operation would take approximately 12 months, and be completed in early 1982. Unfortunately, the world price of sugar dropped dramatically. As a result, the rail movement to Queensland was not completed until mid-1985. Hence the society was delayed for a number of years in gaining access to the line between MacDonnell and Ewaninga. That put us under some considerable pressure in our efforts to have it ready for the anticipated opening date of 1988. That had always been the scheduled date, to fit in with the bicentennial celebrations. We have always aimed for 6 August 1988. That is the date which commemorates 59 years since the arrival of the first train in Alice Springs, then called Stuart, in 1929.

Proposals for the MacDonnell siding site, which is approximately 20 acres, include a large area of lawn, picnic and barbecue areas, a railway museum, a restaurant, a railway station, incorporating an old post office, a coffee and souvenir shop, a booking office, locomotive and carriage sheds, and a general workshop. The society has entered into a peppercorn rental with Telecom to lease that section of old overland telegraph line between the MacDonnell siding and Ewaninga. That is also part of the Northern Territory's history, given that it was completed in 1872 and played a vital role in opening up Australia via communications systems with London. Telecom has advised that it is more than ready to assist, and we are hopeful that, in 1988, one of the old telephone services and morse code sets will be in place and operating. Whilst the old telegraph poles are a fairly unattractive items, the next generation of Australians will not know what a telegraph pole is. For that reason, we thought this section of the line should be preserved.

The society is indeed grateful to the federal Department of Administrative Services which has allowed the society to go into the old Water Resources depot to salvage some building materials. They will be utilised to build the locomotive and carriage sheds. We costed that part of the operation, and the figure was around \$200 000. The acquisition of the old sheds saved us a large portion of that cost, and we believe that the new sheds will be constructed for \$20 000 to \$30 000.

The society has fenced the MacDonnell siding. That was achieved with donations from various stock firms in Alice Springs. The society has worked all through the summer months to make up for much of the time lost because of the delay in moving the sugar line through to Queensland. We have held working bees to clear and fence, and to tear down various buildings around town. The latest operation was performed last Saturday in the member for

Flynn's electorate: we moved into the Camel Farm at the request of the Department of Transport and Works and tore out about 350 or 400 sleepers, which are valued at \$7 each.

Whenever the society is given the green light to move onto building lots, it moves quickly. The Water Resources sheds are still not finished. At east side self-service, we tore down some of the buildings. We will move in again next month to complete this task. All of this building material is being stockpiled at MacDonnell siding and will be utilised for construction of the railway, carriage sheds, the general workshop or, later on, the refurbishing of the vandal-stripped buildings at Ewaninga. We have been indeed fortunate that members of the Alice Springs community, from industry through to individuals and government departments, have been extremely helpful. One classic example has been that, in recent weeks, we have moved in excess of 4000 m³ of fill - loam, sand and riverbed pebbles - into the siding for levelling, terracing and landscaping. This has been done at absolutely no cost to the society - individual transport operators and trucking companies have donated either their own time or their machinery. Almost without exception, every time the society has made a request to government departments, industry or individuals, it has received magnificent support. During the hotter part of the summer months, we have had up to 70 people turning up for working bees. I am sure that members would agree that is a magnificent level of support. I hope we can continue because the pressure really is on to have that siding and a major section of the line open for traffic by 1988, with all the rolling stock restored.

The other day I referred to the kids under community service orders. These young people have shown a great deal of interest in what the society is doing. We have shown them over the operation. They have worked extremely hard, and 2 of them have returned in their own time after finishing their community service orders. It is quite amusing to see, because now they are in charge of their former workmates who are still on CSOs. They have done a tremendous amount of work.

I said before that 6 August is the target for the official opening day. We are hopeful that a member of the Royal Family will be available in 1988. The exact date has still to be set. As I said before, we want it to be 6 August, to commemorate the 59 years since the first narrow-gauge train arrived in Alice Springs. The proposal is to run what was formerly referred to as a mixed train; that is, part freight, part passenger and part cattle. To achieve that, we have been scouting the country from one end to the other identifying items of rolling stock, whether they be in Adelaide or the Top End, and then moving them to the MacDonnell siding. There they will undergo a vast amount of restoration work. The member for Flynn would appreciate this because his grandfather was one of the pioneer railway men in central Australia.

I am not a fanatic but I think that, from a historical viewpoint, this whole operation is a must for central Australia. The society contains a number of railway fanatics - people who know the serial numbers of locomotives, how many hours of work they carried out, where they were derailed, and so on. The member for Flynn's grandfather worked on the line with many other men throughout the Northern Territory whose sons and grandsons are still with us today. The families of the former head of the Chief Minister's Department, Mr Creed Lovegrove, and his wife have a long history of association with central Australia. It is interesting to note, and I believe this is the reason for the strong level of support for this project, that many

residents still have a strong association with its pioneering aspects. Newer residents also appreciate the services that will be provided when this project commences to operate in 1988.

Mr BELL (MacDonnell): Mr Deputy Speaker, it gives me great pleasure to rise to speak on a somewhat less contentious offering from the honourable member for Braitling than was my unfortunate duty earlier in these sittings. Allow me to place on record that I heartily endorse his efforts with respect to the Ghan Preservation Society and I have therefore some pleasure in rising to support this particular motion. I take considerable delight that not only within this Assembly, but also in the working party and the society itself, there is a bipartisan approach. Like most central Australians, I have a bit of a soft spot for the old Ghan. I have very fond memories of my trips on it. It was not a fast train by any standards; it averaged about 16 miles per hour. But I spent several pleasant evenings with an ale or 2 and a song or 2 around the piano in the lounge car. It was most enjoyable indeed.

People right through my electorate have memories of the Ghan. I have collected stories in Pitjantjatjara from some of the old blokes who used to work as stockmen droving cattle and sheep and taking bales of wool from stations such as Angus Downs, Tempe Downs, Henbury and Palmer Valley across to stations like Deep Well. I had to grin wryly when the member for Braitling, with a burst of apostasy, suggested that a Commonwealth statutory authority had got something right for a change. Certainly, I am well aware of the efforts made by ANR to support the Ghan Preservation Society. Even Telecom, that big bogey which comes in for a bit of stick from government members, came to the party. This is a rare example of bipartisanship in all sorts of directions. I am sure that will be a source of as much pleasure to you as it is to me.

In closing, I reiterate my endorsement for the efforts of the member for Braitling and I take great pleasure in supporting his motion.

Mr DONDAS (Deputy Chief Minister): Mr Deputy Speaker, I want to draw attention to the tourist potential of this project. I think the work of the Ghan Preservation Society over the last few years is something it can be very proud of. At the same time, I am very happy that I was at least partly responsible for the society's present condition. I can remember when the member requested some financial assistance from me when I was the Minister for Youth, Sport, Recreation and Ethnic Affairs and Minister for Community Development. I thought it was a good idea and I supported it wholeheartedly.

More importantly, the town of Alice Springs has some very notable tourist attractions and this will certainly complement them. Tourism is the number 2 industry of the Northern Territory. I will not go into the matter of how many visitors we had last year. I think members are aware of the Northern Territory Tourist Commission program. In fact, the commission is one of those many organisations that have assisted in making the Ghan Preservation Society what it is today. As the member for Braitling said, many community organisations are behind the society. Many business houses of Alice Springs have supported it, as have many government instrumentalities. It is in its infancy now, but one can really imagine that, when the project is completed, local people and tourists will be able to take a really historic trip for 25 km or 30 km on one of the old Ghans.

In rising to support the motion, I would take the opportunity to congratulate the member for Braitling who has been a driving force behind the

Ghan Preservation Society since 1981. Of course, he has a very good working committee. As the member for MacDonnell said, it really has taken a bipartisan approach. It has involved all kinds of people from all walks of life in the Alice Springs district. Once again, I congratulate the member and his committee for the fine job they are doing.

Mr HANRAHAN (Youth, Sport, Recreation and Ethnic Affairs): Mr Deputy Speaker, I will not keep the Assembly long. I certainly join with members who have already spoken in commending the actions, past and future, of the member for Braitling who certainly has been a driving force behind this very worthwhile project. It will stand in the future as a legacy of our past. Too often, such legacies have been demolished. This one certainly plays an integral part in the Territory's past. As the member for Braitling has said, my grandfather came to Alice Springs in about 1929 as one of the last works foremen on the construction crews building the final stage of the original line from Oodnadatta. He used to say to me that, on a good day, you could get off the old Ghan at Oodnadatta, walk at a leisurely pace, and beat the train in by half a day. I travelled on the Ghan only twice, but on both occasions the rain had affected the track. One trip took 4 days and the other took 5 days to travel from Port Augusta to Alice Springs. As far as effective transport was concerned, it was great news when we received the new line.

Some of the issues that the member for Braitling addressed interest me. He said that he has received great support from the people of Alice Springs, particularly private enterprise. The association has made approaches to the Australian Bicentennial Authority because its target completion date is 1988. Certainly, that is a worthwhile date to aim for. As the member for Braitling explained, some of the fanatics would look at private enterprise as an alternative.

I have received many expressions of interest on the basis that the cost and ongoing maintenance could be incredible, depending on the standard that the line is upgraded to. That is the original line from MacDonnell siding down to Ewaninga. Hopefully, the Bicentennial Authority will come to the party and solve the problems of the society. Certainly, it will have a big effect on tourism in the town. There are not too many places in Australia that have an opportunity to reopen a line that many people had written off a few years ago. I travelled on one that occasionally runs up through the Adelaide Hills. You need to book some 12 months in advance to have a ride on it. Another one is the train that is presently running from Melbourne out to Swan Hill. It is a very expensive train. It is designed around the Orient Express theme. To get on that train, you need to book some 9 or 12 months in advance.

The potential is definitely there. It is a great opportunity for the people of Alice Springs, the Northern Territory government, the Australian Bicentennial Authority and all honourable members to get behind this project because I am sure that it will stand as a great legacy to the past in central Australia. The honourable member for Braitling is to be commended by every honourable member present for his continuing efforts.

Mr D.W. COLLINS (Sadadeen): Mr Deputy Speaker, it gives me a great deal of pleasure to rise tonight also to support the motion and to commend the work that the honourable member for Braitling has put into the restoration of a small section of the old Ghan railway which will have great historical significance and tourist potential. It will be something that the people of Alice Springs can take their friends and relations on for a very pleasant

day's outing. It is very obvious that a great deal has still to be done. The target date of 6 August 1988 will come around very quickly. I think it behoves everyone to support the activities of the Ghan Preservation Society so that the project can meet that deadline.

I was also pleased to hear about Telecom's cooperation in preserving the 30-odd km of the telegraph line. Honourable members may not be aware but, in the last 2 or 3 weeks, the telegraph line from Alice Springs towards Tennant Creek has been taken down. The poles are being removed and sold off, mainly to station people. Those poles are by no means ugly to me; they are a real part of our history. I spoke only the other day with the manager of Telecom in the Territory, Mr Ken Coxell, and asked him to preserve half a dozen poles through Ryans Well, an historic reserve on the way to Tennant Creek. That is a very important link with the early days of Australia's development. I am pleased that 30 km of it will be preserved alongside the Ghan line. I commend that cooperation.

Mr Deputy Speaker, this is an important project. Considerable effort is being put into it by all sectors of the community. It is a great effort and something of which we can be very proud. I support the motion.

Mr MANZIE (Transport and Works): Mr Deputy Speaker, I rise to say a few words in support of the motion. On a recent visit to Alice Springs, the President of the Ghan Preservation Society managed to rope me in and take me to see the work that is being done. I was most impressed that, in this age of the handout mentality, a group of enthusiasts in Alice Springs have managed to do almost the impossible. They utilised their resources and the support of the people of Alice Springs, both businesses and individuals, in building up a collection of carriages, tracks and, to my surprise, a steam locomotive. As the member for Flynn mentioned, there are very few of these types of trains running. In years to come, it will certainly be a tremendous asset for the tourist industry in Alice Springs. The member for Flynn mentioned the Orient Express. I think he was talking about the Rutherglen Red which gets its name from the colour of the wine that is sold on the train. Another one that springs to mind is the narrow-gauge Puffing Billy, which is a very successful tourist operation just out of the city of Melbourne in the Dandenong Ranges.

As the honourable member for Braitling pointed out, considerable assistance has been provided by numerous people in the town of Alice Springs. I am quite pleased to say that I have asked my Department of Transport and Works to provide any assistance it can in the way of advice or whatever to the society. The task it has set itself will provide something of benefit to all Territorians and to all Australians in the near future. I would like to support the motion and to congratulate the honourable member for Braitling for the work that he has done.

Mr VALE (Braitling): Mr Speaker, I thank honourable members for their support. I should point out that, far from being a one-man band in central Australia, it is a very active committee. As I said before, industry, individuals and government departments have assisted. I have worked with many committees over the years in central Australia. If I was giving Brownie points, apart from the Pioneer Football Club, the most active, efficient and hard-working committee that I have ever served on would have to be the management committee of the Ghan Preservation Society.

What worries me is that all committees can suffer from being burnt out. I intend to take the pressure off it after 5 April when the shrubs, trees and

lawns are planted. I mentioned that briefly before. On the advice of the Northern Territory Conservation Commission, we will not plant until the end of April when the temperature starts to drop. We will plant the shrubs and trees which it has prepared and also large areas of lawn before the end of April. We have appealed to the townspeople in Alice Springs to save their lawn runners. Some members may be aware that one of the largest and nicest sporting complexes in central Australia is the old Anzac Hill. In the early 1950s, that entire oval was planted by the townspeople at a working bee. We are hoping that they will do that on 5 April.

I would like to place on record our grateful appreciation to the Department of Transport and Works, the minister and his staff, particularly in central Australia, for the extremely valuable help they have given to us. There has been physical help and technical advice. That will be needed even more as we move down the line and start to reballast the large sections that are washed out.

I thank also the Conservation Commission for its technical advice and for its assistance in preparing the shrubs for the big plantathon on 5 April. I invite Alice Springs members to come out. I think it is in the honourable member for MacDonnell's electorate. I was going to advise the member that we had shifted 4000 m³ of fill from his electorate to put into the honourable member for Flynn's electorate. In fact, it has come from one part of the honourable member's electorate but it is still in his electorate.

Another person who has been extremely valuable in the whole operation since day 1 would have to be Don Williams. I should advise honourable members that the line is about 30 km long. Dr Williams knocked us back on the MacDonnell to Deep Well route because he said it was too long. The value of the line in place is \$180 000. We are paying a peppercorn rent for that plus what we paid for the rolling stock. It would have an overall market value today of somewhere around \$250 000. We bought it for about \$30 000. There are some real collector's items amongst that stock. But having entered into the peppercorn rental agreement with Dr Williams over the train line, I then phoned him one night and said: 'Look, we haven't got any trains'. He said: 'You can buy some from us'. I said that that was only one problem because we did not have any money either. I asked for a 20-year, interest-free repayment period. I always take the attitude that, if you ask for the sky, then you will get a few clouds. Don Williams said: 'We will give you a 10-year interest-free repayment period? I said: 'We do not have any money'. He said: 'You can start paying when the train starts running'. So I am going to wait until the last day before I move that train across the Stuart Highway south of the MacDonnell sidings. Don Williams really is a hard-nosed businessman. He is fair but hard-nosed. As sure as hell, as I move that train out of the siding, Dr Williams will find out about it.

It has reached the stage that, if I phone Don Williams, the first thing he says is: 'What do you want?' If I go to Adelaide and have dinner with him, he will not have a drink until we have entered into discussions and completed agreements. It was on that basis that I flew to Adelaide last year to make the arrangements to bring that steam locomotive back from Caloundra. It weighs about 80 t unladen. Don Williams refused to have anything to drink until he found out what I was in Adelaide for. I tried to make out that it was a pleasant, social visit to Adelaide. I said that I just wanted to have dinner with him because I thought he was a great friend to central Australians. When he found out what I was there for, he made a most generous offer. If we had paid full tote odds to move that train from Caloundra by

road-rail, it would have cost the society in excess of \$30 000. As I said before, it was done with the assistance of local businessmen, a grant from the Northern Territory government, the Queensland and New South Wales railway departments and, last but certainly not least, freight free assistance for the run from Broken Hill to Alice Springs.

The honourable member for MacDonnell mentioned sheep. Of course, in central Australia in the 1920s and 1930s, there were many pastoral properties with sheep. Some of the rolling stock identified include some of the original sheep wagons which are down at Port Augusta and which we are hopeful of moving back to central Australia for restoration work in the not-too-distant future.

One other large project is the removal of many historic items to Alice Springs from MacDonnell siding and Finke. In recent weeks, management committee members drove along the old railway line to Finke to identify items that we needed: old sleepers, point systems, overhead tanks and so on. Amongst other things, we identified some old single-axle flat tops built in 1880. They were buried in the sand there after a derailment about 40-odd years ago. Quite obviously, they have to come out. I mentioned to the Minister for Mines and Energy that we also discovered an old veteran car. I am not going to identify the exact location at this stage but it certainly must come out of the desert. I think we will probably raffle it off. If an extremely generous minister in the Northern Territory assists the society in the next couple of months, we might make some type of arrangement there. Again, that will be used for fund raising.

Let me identify briefly some of the items that we have for the museum. We started to stockpile an incredible list of old photographs taken from 1927 onwards when the line was constructed. Certainly, any organisation has a number of pessimists on it. There is the odd pessimist in central Australia who thinks this project is too large. We have at MacDonnell siding 3 original horse scoops that the pioneers used to construct that line between Oodnadatta and Alice Springs in 1927 and 1929. When anyone says that our project cannot be done, we point to the horse scoops and say: 'They did that in the 1920s without bulldozers, graders, air-conditioners, iceboxes and eskies'. Men and indeed women played a vital role in the construction. The women played a physical role in the construction of the railway line. They were not just camp cooks.

We have applied for funding under the bicentennial program but we are not optimistic of success. But we are looking at private sponsorship for this project. The project was planned originally as a tribute to the early pioneers but it certainly has major tourist potential.

I am sorry that this motion was brought on so late tonight. I was tempted at one stage to ask the Leader of Government Business to defer it. I thank honourable members for their support for the project. I will keep the pressure on various departments for continued assistance and I will keep the Assembly informed.

Motion agreed to.

TABLED PAPERS Letters from Catholic Church

Mr SPEAKER: Honourable members, I lay on the table letters which have been received from the Archbishop of Adelaide, the Archbishop of Hobart, the

Bishop of Armidale and Father Healy, Diocesan Administrator of the Northern Territory, thanking the Assembly for forwarding to them bound copies of extracts from the minutes and from the debate on the motion relating to the passing away of Bishop O'Loughlin.

SUSPENSION OF STANDING ORDERS

Mr B. COLLINS (Opposition Leader): Mr Speaker, under standing order 306, I move that so much of standing orders be suspended as would prevent me from moving, pursuant to standing order 251, that the Chief Minister lay on the table the following papers: (1) copies of all letters, internal memorandums or minutes relating to negotiations between the Department of the Treasury and Westpac Banking Corporation in relation to loan or overdraft facilities for Mudginberri Station Pty Ltd between 1 April 1985 and today; (2) copies of all letters, internal memorandums or minutes between 1 June 1984 and today relating to negotiations between the Department of the Treasury and Westpac Banking Corporation in relation to the transfer of government accounts; (3) copies of all letters, internal memorandums or minutes relating to negotiations between ADMA, Mudginberri Station Pty Ltd or its agents between June 1985 and today; (4) copies of all letters, internal memorandums or minutes relating to negotiations between NTDC and Mudginberri Station Pty Ltd or its agents from 1 April 1985 to today; (5) copies of all letters, internal memorandums or minutes relating to advice provided on negotiations between the NTDC, ADMA and Treasury and Mudginberri Station Pty Ltd or its agents between 1 April 1985 and today; and (6) copies of all letters, internal memorandums or minutes relating to advice provided on negotiations between Treasury and Westpac Banking Corporation between 1 June 1984 and today.

The Assembly divided:

Ayes 6

Mr Bell
Mr B. Collins
Mr Ede
Mr Lanhupuy
Mr Leo
Mr Smith

Noes 18

Mr D.W. Collins
Mr Coulter
Mr Dale
Mr Dondas
Mr Finch
Mr Firmin
Mr Hanrahan
Mr Harris
Mr Hatton
Mr McCarthy
Mr Manzie
Mrs Padgham-Purich
Mr Perron
Mr Robertson
Mr Setter
Mr Steele
Mr Tuxworth
Mr Vale

Motion negatived.

ABORIGINAL SACRED SITES AMENDMENT BILL (Serial 156)

Bill presented and read a first time.

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

The bill is not very extensive but its import is very great. In short, the bill basically binds the Crown in right of the Territory to obey its own legislation. A visitor to the Territory would probably be forgiven for wondering why it is necessary to have a provision in an act to force the government to follow the provisions of that act. They might assume that no government would ignore the provisions of its own act. Unfortunately, as we all know, these standards of decency and morality do not apply to this government.

I will place on record a couple of incidents relating to sacred sites which prove this point. The first concerns a sacred site, Atjalka Nijeneme, on Barrett Drive in Alice Springs. On Christmas Eve 1982, which is hardly a time when new projects are generally started, G. and J. Favaro blasted rocks to make way for roadworks. The same day, Dussin Constructions moved in and bulldozed the trees and rubble to clear up for the roadworks. The site was a registered sacred site and that was a matter of wide local knowledge through the press and the courts. There was little doubt in anyone's mind that it was a clear conspiracy to disregard the provisions of the act. The Department of Lands had overall control and direction of the project and the Department of Transport and Works had let the contract. Negotiations had been conducted with the Sacred Sites Authority in respect of the Barrett Drive site in conjunction with discussions relating to a proposed Sadadeen connector road. At the specific direction of government officers, the authority concentrated on negotiations for the Sadadeen Road after being informed that that project had priority. This was not true. The Barrett Drive road went ahead before the Sadadeen road, but it enabled the government to complain of a delay in negotiations relating to the Barrett Drive site.

It is interesting to note that, apart from the unusual timing of the commencement of the work, Favaro, the company which did the blasting, was already in receivership. It was thus hardly accessible to prosecution. A charge was laid against the responsible minister, but it had to be withdrawn when it was realised that the government was not bound by its own legislation. The destruction of the site was completely unnecessary. Another 6 weeks of negotiation would have led to an agreement. The government's attitude can only be described as cavalier. It is amply demonstrated by the then minister's press release of November 1984 in which he admitted that he went ahead because he was unhappy with any delay. He acknowledged the anguish that this decision caused to some, but simply stated that that was regrettable. He said that, in his view, there was no practical alternative route. He went on to say: 'If in the future I decide that works must be carried out which could cause damage to a registered sacred site, I will give the Aboriginal Sacred Sites Authority reasonable prior notice of the proposal to commence such works'. That was very big of him.

Mr Speaker, I refer now to Billygoat Hill and Dunlops Corner in Alice Springs in July 1984. Billygoat Hill was a registered sacred site, part of the very important dog dreaming site, including a corkwood tree which had special significance. The Department of Transport and Works was informed specifically of the significance of the sites, particularly of the boulders and the tree on the latter site. Although the Central Land Council had given preliminary consent to work on the Billygoat Hill site, its consent had been made subject to further consultations when details of the proposed work were more specific. The desecration involved was substantial and caused considerable distress.

There is documented evidence of dozens of approaches made by the Sacred Sites Authority to the Department of Transport and Works over many months regarding the work on those sites. Despite all appeals, at all times the department failed to demonstrate any sensitivity or interest. Incidents which started with the displacement of sacred boulders on the Dunlops Corner site ended 12 months later with the death of the corkwood tree as a result of actions taken subsequently despite continued warnings of the consequences of continuing the work. The nature and extent of the plans for the site became obvious only as the work progressed. The custodians of the site and the Sacred Sites Authority were never fully informed in advance.

Mr Deputy Speaker, reading departmental correspondence leaves one in no doubt that the department took full advantage of the fact that it would remain free from prosecution and so felt no obligation to have any regard for the provisions in the Sacred Sites Act. In a letter written a month after the disturbance of the boulders, the Department of Transport and Works' Director Southern Region could assert that 'no sites had been desecrated intentionally or otherwise'. This was in response to a complaint by the authority regarding desecration. Apparently, the director felt he knew better than the government's own established authority on the matter of sacred sites. Those 2 examples best illustrate the cavalier attitude taken by a government which is not bound by its own legislation, and does not want to be. There are other examples.

Let me emphasise that there are also many examples where questions of encroachment on sacred sites have been resolved to the satisfaction of all parties. It is not difficult; it requires only some regard for the obligations under the legislation. It is not the case, as the previous Minister for Lands, the member for Fannie Bay would have it, that the act has been used as a vehicle for de facto land claims. He made such a statement in a press release on 8 August 1984 and he went on to say: 'History is showing that often, when a major planning initiative is proposed, a sacred site is identified which affects the project'. That was a cynical statement which he was unable to back up. It showed a gross misunderstanding of the whole process and that he is unfit to have anything to do with something as sensitive as this legislation. As I have said, an examination of the facts will not bear out that assertion.

Mr Deputy Speaker, when preparing this bill, I went through the original speeches to try to discover whether there was any indication of an intention by the people who framed the legislation that the government would not be bound by it. Honourable members who have been here for some time will recall that it was passed with a series of cognate bills, including the Special Purposes Leases Bill, Cemeteries Bill, Social Welfare Bill, Territory Parks and Wildlife Conservation Bill, Petroleum Prospecting and Mining Bill, Coal Bill and the Aboriginal Sacred Sites Bill.

The only indication of what the government really felt which was at all relevant to this particular matter came at the commencement of the debate when the then Majority Leader, Mr Everingham, stated that a conference of the Liberal and National Country Parties on 25 November 1985 had stated, inter alia, that sites significant according to Aboriginal tradition be preserved and protected. He saw that as fundamental to the government's attitude in framing the legislation. Certainly, that is not commensurate with its actions. Mr Everingham concluded along these lines: 'The Legislative Assembly has a very responsible task of passing legislation which responds to the intentions of the Aboriginal Land Rights (Northern Territory) Act of 1976.'

It must do so with a genuine commitment towards the original Australians who make up about a quarter of our population and whose rights in their land have been recognised by the nation'.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I put it to you that this amendment bill is necessary so that the sentiments expressed by the then Majority Leader will become fact. I appeal to the government members to support this amendment. If they do so, they will be saying to Aboriginal people: 'We, as a government, were serious when we put the sacred sites legislation into place. It was not a con job; we passed the legislation and we meant it. We will protect your sacred sites'. If they do not pass this legislation, they will be saying, in effect: 'We passed legislation which was a facade and a fake. We have no intention of upholding the fundamental basis of your culture or your religion'. In effect, the government would be saying: 'You can register your sites but, if we want to bulldoze them, we will'. I appeal to this Assembly to uphold the very essence of Aboriginal culture - sacred sites. I commend the bill to honourable members.

Debate adjourned.

ELECTORAL AMENDMENT BILL
(Serial 178)

Bill presented and read a first time.

Mr B. COLLINS (Opposition Leader): Mr Speaker, I move that the bill be now read a second time.

Mr Speaker, this bill imposes a requirement for the disclosure of (a) donations to political parties and candidates; and (b) campaign expenditure. It is an important amendment to the Northern Territory's Electoral Act. The bill provides for this by inserting a new part XIA in the Electoral Act comprising sections 102A to 102U.

Proposed division 1 of the bill is self-explanatory and deals with definitions. Proposed division 2 deals with agents. Proposed section 102B provides for the appointment of agents and proposed section 102C provides that, where default occurs, the secretary of the party or the candidate himself or herself will be taken to be the relevant agents. Proposed section 102D provides that an agent must be over 18 years of age and the notice of appointment must show name, address and age and be accompanied by the consent of the appointee. Members should note that a conviction under this part disqualifies a person from appointment as an agent for any subsequent elections. Proposed section 102E provides for revocation of an agent's appointment, and proposed section 102F provides that the Chief Electoral Officer must be notified forthwith of an agent's death or resignation.

Mr Speaker, proposed division 3 of the bill deals with disclosure of donations. Proposed section 102G provides that, within 20 weeks of polling day, the agent of a party or candidate must submit a return setting out: the total amount value of all gifts; the number of the gifts; and details of each gift - that is, the amount, the value, the date and the name and address of the donor - where the gift or the total of a number of gifts is \$200 or more. The return covers the period from the day after the last election to the polling date - that is, the whole period between elections. Proposed section 102H provides that, within 15 weeks of polling day, a person who is

not a candidate or a party which has incurred expenditure of \$200 or more for a political purpose in relation to the election must submit a return setting out details of gifts of \$200 or more. Members should note that the incurring of expenditure for a political purpose is a reference to expenditure by way of: campaigning for or against a party or a candidate; publicly expressing views on an election issue; a gift to a party or candidate; or a gift to another for one of the above.

Proposed section 102J makes it unlawful for a political party or candidate, or someone acting on his behalf, to receive a gift of \$50 or more without the donor's name and address being known. Where a gift is so received, the value is recoverable by the government as a debt due and payable. Proposed section 102K provides that candidates must lodge nil returns where they have no gifts to disclose, but parties have an option on whether they make a nil return.

Mr Speaker, I have anticipated the cries opposite. The Country Liberal Party in the Northern Territory would be one political party, I would say, in Australia, including the Queensland National Party, that would not want to see this introduced into the Northern Territory.

Mr Speaker, proposed division 4 provides for the disclosure of electoral expenditure. Proposed section 102M provides that electoral expenditure means expenditure incurred on: (a) election advertisements on television and radio during the period between the issuing of writs and the poll - that is, the election period; (b) election advertisements in newspapers, magazines and journals during the election period; (c) display of election advertisements at places of entertainment during the election period; (d) production of advertisements relating to the election for the purposes of (a), (b) or (c); (e) production of materials such as electoral advertisements, handbills pamphlets, letters to electors etc which require the identification of the author, printer or the authoriser under other provisions of the Electoral Act; (f) the consultants' or advertising agents' fees for services provided or material used during the election period; and (g) the opinion poll during the election period and related to the election. Proposed section 102N provides that, within 20 weeks of polling day, a party candidate or agent must submit a return setting out the details of electoral expenditure. Similarly, a person who incurs expenditure without the written consent of the party or candidate must submit a return within 15 weeks of polling day if the total expenditure is more than \$200.

Mr Speaker, proposed section 102P provides that, within 15 weeks of the polling date, each radio or television broadcaster who broadcasts advertisements relating to the election during the election period must furnish a return setting out the following particulars: (a) station identity; (b) the authoriser of the advertisements; (c) the dates and times of the advertisements; and (d) the charge for each advertisement, and whether it is less than normal commercial rates. Proposed section 102Q provides that publishers must submit returns with similar details in respect of advertisements in papers, magazines and journals. Proposed section 102R provides that printers must also furnish similar returns. Proposed section 102S provides that a candidate is required to submit a nil return when no electoral expenditure is incurred by or with the authority of the candidate.

Proposed division 5, miscellaneous provisions, sets out offences in proposed section 102T: failure to submit a return attracts a \$5000 fine for

political parties and \$1000 for others; incomplete returns attract a fine of \$1000; for knowingly making false returns or, misleading in a material particular, the agent or political party will be fined \$10 000 and others \$5 000; and knowingly giving false or misleading information to a person required to submit a return attracts a fine of \$1000. Honourable members should note that, even if convicted of failure to submit a return, the offence continues until the return is submitted with a continuing fine of \$100 per day.

Proposed section 102U provides that the Chief Electoral Officer shall keep copies of returns in Darwin and Alice Springs and the public is entitled to inspect them and copy them for a fee. Proposed section 102V provides that records of matters required to be entered and returned under these provisions must be retained for 1 year after the election. I commend the bill to honourable members.

Debate adjourned.

MOTION Multicultural Special Broadcasting Service

Mr B. COLLINS (Opposition Leader): Mr Speaker, following from public statements that have been issued by members of the government and the opposition in this Assembly, I anticipate that this motion will be supported without undue contention by all honourable members, as was the motion that related to the Ghan.

Mr Speaker, I move that this Assembly call on the federal government to introduce immediately a third television network for the Northern Territory; namely, the Multicultural Special Broadcasting Service.

I launched a public campaign aimed at securing this network in September 1985. This award-winning television service was introduced in Sydney and Melbourne in October 1980 and has been extended since to Canberra, Brisbane, Adelaide, Goulburn and Cooma. It began broadcasting in Perth and Hobart earlier this month. The federal government originally scheduled its introduction to Darwin at the same time as it was introduced in both those cities, but this was deferred because of across-the-board funding cuts in last year's budget. In discussions with a number of people in the south, I was told time and time again that public awareness would need to be raised to bring pressure on the government to have the planned service reinstated.

I believed that a solid public lobby campaign would address that need. I held preliminary discussions with the federal Minister for Communications and the management of the Multicultural Special Broadcasting Service in Sydney. For the benefit of members, and particularly the member for Wanguri, that was the time I attended a meeting of the national executive in Melbourne. Both people supported this initiative. I decided to write to all of the ethnic organisations in Darwin seeking their support. I stressed that I believed that Darwin was well served by the 2 existing television stations, NTDS and ABC6. However, I pointed out that, given the multicultural makeup of Darwin's population, SBS would be an obvious addition to the entertainment and educational facilities in the homes of all Darwin television viewers, particularly as it does not represent any direct competitive threat to existing services. I arranged to have a promotional video for SBS sent to Darwin, to make people aware of the scope and range of programs offered by the SBS network. It is a unique service which offers some of the best children's

programs, news, current affairs, documentaries, sport and light entertainment being produced in Australia and around the world.

The letter sent to ethnic organisations and the promotional video have paid dividends. I am happy to report to this Assembly that ethnic organisations have got behind this campaign in a way which far exceeded my original expectations. I have received a series of letters supporting our campaign. There are many of them. I will read one to indicate the level of support. The first letter in the file is from the Greek Orthodox community of the Northern Territory. It says:

'Dear Mr Collins,

I am writing to you, in reference to your letter dated 16 January 1986, on behalf of the Greek Orthodox community of northern Australia. The governing council fully approves and supports your endeavours to introduce the multicultural SBS network in the Territory. Generally, this network will indeed provide an enormous service to the Greek community as well as for all other ethnic communities. Once again, on behalf of the Greek community, I would like to congratulate you on your efforts to have Channel 0-28 introduced to our television network.

Yours sincerely,
John Nikolakos President'.

There are many other letters, including those from the Ethnic Communities' Council of the Northern Territory, the United Nations Association of Australia, the Chung Wah Society, the Migrant Resource and Settlement Centre, and so on. The level of support has been great.

Like everything else, this project costs money. Getting support from the Minister for Communications is not sufficient. One must gain the support of the people who comprise the federal government's Economics Committee. That is the most difficult part of this campaign. My next move will be to write directly to the Prime Minister, now that sufficient time has elapsed for letters of support and petitions to be received by the federal government. I intend to attach copies of all the supporting letters that have been sent to me. For obvious reasons, I would also like to attach to that letter an indication that this Assembly supports in a bipartisan way the introduction of the SBS service to Darwin.

I have just sighted an amendment to the motion that I have moved. I have absolutely no problems with that amendment at all but I cannot quite see what it adds to my motion. I deliberately did not specify that we wanted the SBS service for Darwin. I quite deliberately chose the words 'Northern Territory', considering that they would be all-embracing. I must say to the circulator of the amendment that, in terms of saying 'Darwin and other remote communities', I deliberately did not want to put the word 'Darwin' in the motion because all too often this type of effort concentrates on Darwin to the exclusion of the rest of the Territory. That is why I thought 'Northern Territory' would be a more all-embracing phrase. I say to the circulator of the amendment that I still think 'Northern Territory' is a more all-embracing phrase. Given that explanation, if the member wants to consider withdrawing his amendment, I would personally prefer him to do so. But if getting the motion through the Assembly is contingent on accepting this amendment, I indicate that I have no problems with it at all.

On 16 March, Darwin became the only capital city in Australia which did not have this service. This is where living in the Northern Territory is particularly annoying. Let us not debate the quality of SBS programming, who watches it, how small the audience is or anything else. The fact is that SBS is promoting itself aggressively as a national broadcaster. We have had nothing but support from SBS itself. It promotes itself as a national broadcaster, but it is not, because the Northern Territory is the only place in Australia which does not receive its transmissions. The original budget allocation for the introduction of SBS to the Territory was \$500 000. Even the framers of that budget would now concede that the amount was grossly inadequate. The latest estimates on the costs of installing this service are between \$1m and \$2m. A one-off cost of \$2m to provide a third television network, initially to Darwin and immediately afterward to other places in the Territory via satellite linkup, would be a very cheap investment in terms of the benefits which would flow from it.

SBS has come under considerable criticism, much of which is justified. I believe that it has the most superb news service offered by any television channel in Australia, particularly if you are interested in overseas news. I believe that its cartoons for children are of superb quality, particularly when you compare them with the computer-produced rubbish which emanates from Japan and the United States. The SBS cartoons are absolutely superb, both in terms of their content and the quality of the graphics.

For the sports enthusiast, SBS offers a superb service with a distinct bias towards soccer. There have been a number of critics of SBS. One was Max Gillies. He said that he could not understand why the United States of America would want to ask Australia to reposition the satellite which spies on the world so that it could spy on Greece. He thought that was what 0-28 was for. A number of criticisms are probably valid in respect of the small viewing audience that SBS attracts. However, as I said before, the purpose of a debate in this Assembly is not to canvass the defects of SBS but to address the very crucial issue that, as of March 16, Darwin is the only capital city in Australia which does not receive transmissions from this channel. In respect of asking the federal government to fulfil its responsibility to all Australians and not just some Australians, and in respect of providing a truly national network for SBS, I commend this motion to the Assembly.

Mr FIRMIN (Ludmilla): Mr Speaker, I am probably in the rather unique situation this evening of being the only person on the government side in the Assembly today who will agree entirely with the opposition, and support what the Leader of the Opposition has said.

I want to clarify my thoughts on the amendment which I circulated prior to this evening's debate. It is not my intention to move that amendment now. I will explain why I first circulated it, and have rethought the matter in the intervening period. Whilst the motion before the Assembly refers to 'the Northern Territory' and in that sense is all-embracing, there have been problems in some states where the service is being microwave-linked rather than satellite-delivered. What has happened in most instances is that only the capital city has received the service. To my mind, that was less than all-embracing. That is why I particularly nominated Darwin in respect of a microwave-link service, and the remote areas of the Northern Territory in respect of a satellite-delivered service. However, I take the Leader of the Opposition's point and I support the all-embracing term 'the Northern Territory' so long as it is understood that I am supporting a satellite-linked service which everybody in the Northern Territory can see.

I believe also that there is solid public support for an SBS service. I do not necessarily believe that it is a very small audience. Ethnic communities comprise 28% of the Northern Territory population and 45% of the Darwin population. When we talk about ethnic groups, we do not mean only Caucasian or South-east Asian groups; we also mean Aboriginal ethnic groups. SBS is applicable to Aboriginal groups. It is a multicultural service, not an ethnic multicultural broadcasting service.

The service at the moment is available in all capital cities in Australia and the Gold Coast. It has been operating in those areas with a great deal of success for some time. I was also concerned when I found that, after all the efforts of this government to have the SBS service provided to the Northern Territory, it was wiped off the federal government program last year. I would like to make a point about that now. I would hate people to think that the Northern Territory government was not interested in ethnic organisations. We have been engaged in trying to have the SBS service brought to the Northern Territory. We gave evidence to the committee of review on the SBS services in May 1984. Officers of the Department of the Chief Minister made submissions to that review, and outlined the reasons for extending the Multicultural Special Broadcasting Service to the Northern Territory. I also mentioned the SBS service in discussions with the Minister for Communications and officers of the Department of Communications at a review committee meeting in Canberra in October 1984. Unfortunately, we were not successful then.

I believe that the service could be provided fairly simply. It could be provided on the transponders available for spot-beam configuration to both the south-east of Australia and also the Adelaide and Darwin areas. With regard to that, I would suggest also that a SBS service in the Northern Territory should be delivered from a compatible satellite. We do not want the situation where we have the K1 or the K2 satellite separately delivering individual services. As I pointed out in this Assembly recently, the original satellite was K1. The ABC service delivered by the satellite to Territorians was on that particular transponder. As I said in last week's debate, it has been announced that the service will be moved to the second satellite some 8° away. This will create problems for people in remote areas, as they will be forced to realign with that new satellite. If the SBS service is delivered to us by the original satellite, it will be extremely difficult for people to make a choice between an existing service on the ABC and a SBS service being delivered via another satellite. It must have a compatible satellite with compatible polarisation, in a format which can be accessed by MAC-B which is the technology being used by the satellite service at the moment.

I have one other fear about the introduction of SBS. At the moment, it is delivered by satellite to some parts of the country on a UHF frequency. I suggest that the UHF frequency would probably be used to beam the signal into the Northern Territory as well. Unfortunately, not all television sets have capacity for UHF reception. This means that, unless some of the remote users have a VCR with a UHF download capacity which they can use to convert the MAC-B signal to their television set, they will not be able to receive the service unless they sell their existing set and buy one with a UHF band receiver.

The Leader of the Opposition suggested that his representations might lead to good news. I might add that we sent letters to the Minister for Communications urging him to reconsider the multicultural service to the Northern Territory in December 1985. Also, there have been letters to the Prime Minister from several ethnic organisations. Mr Duffy, I understand,

made a statement today on the ABC, a copy of which I have been unable to obtain as yet. He announced that a special broadcasting corporation will be set up on 1 July 1987. If that corporation is set up, and I believe it should be, then possibly we will see, with the injection of sufficient funds, the delivery of a special broadcasting service nationally and, hopefully, on the national transponder.

There are other forces at work trying to assist the delivery of a service to the Northern Territory. Channel 8 has written to the minister as well. I have a copy of the letter that it wrote recently to the minister offering the use of a tower which it will be erecting in Palmerston for its transmission facilities. It has offered to make the tower available entirely free of charge for at least 3 hours a week of transmission time for the telecast of SBS material until such time as a service is established in Darwin. I think that is an incredibly generous offer. I hope it is one that the minister looks at closely and takes up. With those few remarks, I support the motion.

Mr SMITH (Millner): Mr Speaker, the initiative taken by the Leader of the Opposition in publicly calling for the federal government to establish an SBS service in the Northern Territory has met with a very enthusiastic response indeed. In fact, I have been amazed at the number of people who, quite unprompted, have come into my office and asked to sign the petition that has been circulated. I can recall only one person refusing to sign the petition when asked. He was a very ethnocentric person indeed whose basic view was that migrants were in Australia and they should speak English and watch Australian television programs.

Mrs Padgham-Purich: Hear, hear!

Mr SMITH: Thankfully, that unenlightened attitude is not shared by too many people, apart from the honourable member for Koolpinyah.

I think the enthusiastic embracing of the Leader of the Opposition's proposal is a reflection of the cosmopolitan nature of Darwin's population. We too often forget that we do have a very cosmopolitan population and one that gets on together very well indeed. Darwin is often quoted in the south as a good example of a multi-racial community working together reasonably well. I think that again is reflected in the interest that is shown in the SBS network.

I think it goes without saying that ethnic groups in the Northern Territory are badly served at present by local TV programs. Of course, if you are an American, you are very well served by the material on Channel 8. If you are English, you are probably reasonably well served by the material on the ABC. But they are fairly small ethnic communities, particularly the American community. The larger ethnic communities - the Greeks, Italians and Timorese - receive nothing except for an Italian variety show which is telecast for 1 hour a week on Channel 8. Until very recently, there was a one hour Greek variety show on Channel 8. Unfortunately, for some reason that I have not yet been able to discover, the Greek variety show has recently been stopped. Hopefully, we can do something about that. I am endeavouring to persuade Channel 8 to put the Greek variety show back on the air.

The question of SBS was first brought to my attention by one of my constituents very shortly after I was elected. He is an elderly man, a refugee from East Timor. He has rather a poor command of English. One of his burning ambitions back in 1981-82 was to have an SBS television network in the

Northern Territory. He was extremely pleased when I was able to report to him in 1982-83 that the date - I think it was 1986 - had been set for the establishment of SBS in Darwin. Obviously, he was very disappointed, as were many people in the ethnic community, when SBS was not able to meet that deadline.

As the Leader of the Opposition said, it requires a very determined effort to impress upon the so-called economic rationalists in Canberra that we in the Northern Territory have as much right to SBS as other people in Australia. Even though that right cannot be justified entirely on population grounds, it certainly can be justified in terms of the ethnic composition of our community. As I said before, we are one of the most cosmopolitan communities in Australia. I can remember some years ago somebody telling me that there were something like 85 different ethnic groups represented in the town of Nhulunbuy. I have no idea whether that is still true but I suspect that it would not be too far wrong. If that many ethnic groups are represented in Nhulunbuy, certainly an equal number, if not more, are represented in Darwin and the other major towns in the Northern Territory.

Of course, we cannot guarantee that SBS will provide all of them with weekly programs from their countries but certainly they will get a much wider range of views, news and programs than the present channels are able to provide. An important part of our development towards statehood is the provision of SBS television. I would hope that this motion will be an important step towards persuading the federal government of the justice of our intentions.

Mr TUXWORTH (Chief Minister): Mr Deputy Speaker, I rise to support the motion. I have made many speeches in this Assembly and have contributed to many debates about communications. It is the greatest disadvantage that we suffer in the Northern Territory. The day we overcome that problem, the Northern Territory will be the great state of Australia. I commend the motion proposed by the Leader of the Opposition. Anything that I can do or the government can do to work with anybody to improve communications, and particularly the establishment of an SBS transmission in the Northern Territory, we will do wholeheartedly.

Mr VALE (Braitling): Mr Deputy Speaker, I would like to speak in support of this motion. I think all members are probably aware of the problems of our ethnic communities in the Northern Territory, in other parts of Australia and indeed in other parts of the world. I have felt them myself. Some years ago, I went to the Bahamas to attend a CPA conference. They speak English of sorts there but you tend to feel out of it. I know that I did; I went stir crazy in the Bahamas. I was looking forward to getting off the island and going back through America where I could get a big steak and everything else. One fellow from Western Australia sat down with me in a restaurant. I ordered a steak and they brought a salad. I sat there and waited. Ten minutes later, the salad disappeared and the steak arrived. That is just one small habit in which Americans differ from Australians. Other members would know that there is a large Italian community in central Australia. They came out in the 1950s and 1960s to work in the mica mines in the Harts Range area. They spoke no English. A man called Aldo Fortunassa used to translate letters and assist these people with various official documents. This type of multicultural broadcasting service is not a luxury; it is a necessity.

I must disagree most strongly with the member for Koolpinyah. If you take people who do not have a good grasp of the English language and lock them into

a community and give them no assistance to learn English, you will disadvantage the older people. The younger people go to schools or enter the work force, but the older members really are disadvantaged. I think that a service such as this is not a luxury, but an essential service. It is long overdue in the Northern Territory, and I compliment the Leader of the Opposition for proposing this motion.

Mr LEO (Nhulunbuy): Like the member for Braitling, I come from a remote area. The petition that has been circulated in Darwin amongst various ethnic groups has also been circulated in Nhulunbuy. It has received considerable support from groups and individuals who represent many cultures in Nhulunbuy. They appreciate that the provision of an SBS service in Nhulunbuy is unlikely in the near future. They appreciate that there is some prospect of that service being provided for Darwin, but they do not feel in the long term that the buck should stop at Berrimah. They look forward to the provision of this service. They are certainly very much involved in this public campaign for its introduction. I have not had much to do with SBS television. What little I have seen was certainly very good. One of the novelties, as an English-speaking person, is that you are obliged to read subtitles when watching some of the movies. Despite the popular myth that subtitles make European movies a bit of a pain, I have found many of them highly entertaining. I do not think that the SBS appeals only to persons with non-English-speaking backgrounds. The programs that I have watched certainly did appeal to me. I think the SBS is an asset not only to non-English-speaking Australians, but to all Australians. I look forward to its introduction in the Northern Territory, not only in Darwin but also in Nhulunbuy.

Mr HANRAHAN (Youth, Sport, Recreation and Ethnic Affairs): Mr Speaker, I will be very brief. The Leader of the Opposition mentioned, in speaking to the motion, that he intends to write to the Prime Minister. I would like to suggest that, in doing so, he should remind the Prime Minister that, in December 1983 during the Northern Territory election campaign, the Prime Minister actually gave an election promise to provide SBS in the Northern Territory. In addition, I have a press release dated 20 March 1985, containing a timetable for the expansion of SBS television. I am sure the Leader of the Opposition has it too. On a bipartisan basis, perhaps we can hold the federal Minister for Communications to the commitment to provide the service to Darwin by the end of 1986.

May I just say that I certainly commend the efforts of the Leader of the Opposition. I am quite prepared to offer him all the work done by the Department of Youth, Sport, Recreation and Ethnic Affairs which has been making submissions not only to the Prime Minister and to the Minister for Communications, but also to the broadcasters and operators of the SBS. If the Leader of the Opposition is prepared to copy any of his correspondence with federal ministers, I would be quite happy to have the department cooperate with him and support all his efforts.

Mr B. COLLINS (Opposition Leader): Mr Speaker, I thank members for their support. I will certainly be prepared to copy the correspondence to date and any future correspondence for the Minister for Youth, Sport, Recreation and Ethnic Affairs.

One of the really annoying things about the exclusion of the Northern Territory from SBS came to my attention very recently. SBS has just completed a feature series on the contributions that ethnic communities have made to

life in the Northern Territory. I understand that 6 high-quality programs were made. The programs featured families and the contributions they have made. I understand that one of the programs deals with the Paspalis family, and that another is centered on the Chin family of Darwin including one of its most publicly distinguished members, a former Clerk of this Assembly. The other 4 programs are also centred on families. I must say that I would dearly love to see those programs. However, this will be the only place in Australia where that special series of Northern Territory programs will not be broadcast.

Some of the cynics in the media have said: 'This is one of those issues where you already have the nod and are just making a big fuss so that you can claim the credit afterwards'. I regret that that is not the case at all; I wish it were. I would be happy to admit to it and still claim the credit. It will be a hard fight and we may fail. You hear about all sorts of woes and worries when you approach the finance ministers in the federal government. They tend to say that SBS is the sort of service which screens nothing but opera, ballet and other programs which appeal only to a few. I think the fight to obtain SBS in the Territory will be a difficult one. I believe there is some strength in the argument because of the gross inequity that the Northern Territory is suffering because of the actions of the federal government in cutting that expenditure. I was aware of the offer of the mast at Palmerston and indeed I hope that offer is taken up, and the satellite is used to broadcast SBS.

I will transmit to the federal government and the Prime Minister the proceedings of the Assembly, including the contributions of members and the text of the motion. I hope that the Prime Minister, despite all the present economic problems, will prevail upon the Finance Minister to approve what I hope will be the positive submission by the Minister for Communications in the House of Representatives to re-establish the budget allocation for SBS in Darwin so that the service can truly live up to its propaganda by being a national broadcaster.

Motion agreed to.

MOTION Government's Foreshore Planning

Mr SMITH (Millner): Mr Speaker, I move that this Assembly is of the opinion that the government's foreshore planning is in disarray, and calls on the government to develop a coastal management policy which will properly protect coastal areas whilst allowing development proposals to be considered on their merits.

Obviously, I am moving this in response to a couple of major issues concerning the foreshore and the government's protection of it. I need to go back to 1 September 1982 which, according to the ministerial statement issued on that day, was the start of a 'brave new world' for Darwin's foreshores. I would like to start by quoting some extracts from the statement of the then minister, the member for Fannie Bay, on that occasion. I use the words 'brave new world' advisedly because it has some real 'brave new world' terms in it. I quote the then minister:

'I am secure in the knowledge that this policy is strong, practical and progressive. There has been no headstrong rush to turn this concept into a practical reality. The matter was considered

carefully initially and the issue has been weighed thoughtfully throughout the period since Cabinet announced an interim policy in March'.

It considered it for 6 months before coming up with what was called its final policy. Later, Cabinet's first principle was that the policy should be strong - in other words, that it 'should take firm steps to quell any fears that may have existed about inappropriate ad hoc development on the foreshore'. What was needed was:

'A definitive statement of just what could happen on the foreshore and what could not. Positive and explicitly-defined steps were called for and that is what has happened. The only way to win confidence with a policy like this is to be precise about it, not beat about the bush, not waffle about impractical ideas and not leave inconvenient loopholes'.

Does it not sound terrific? The first principle was that the policy had to be strong, the second principle was that the policy had to be practical and the third principle was that the policy had to be progressive. The intention was 'not to force a grinding halt to any development along the foreshore'. Rather, it was seen as necessary to define 'where appropriate development could be entertained'. That was the somewhat wordy and somewhat brave-new-world introduction to the policy.

We all know that the essence of the policy was that the government divided the coastal foreshore area of Darwin into zone A and zone B. Zone A, in simple terms, was the beach in the more populated areas while zone B was mainly the mangrove and less-populated areas. I hope we do not have an argument over that. In defining zone A, the government made it clear that no new developments would be entertained other than community recreation projects. It is interesting that the minister, in introducing the statement on 9 September 1982, came up with that slightly modified proposal. Previously, it had been 'no new development projects at all'. He amended that to read 'no new development proposals other than community recreation projects'. In his speech, particular reference was made to a proposal which had been received for certain surf lifesaving facilities at Casuarina. It is interesting that that proposal is being considered at present. I have no objections to the proposal for the surf lifesaving facilities at Casuarina. I think it could be argued against on the grounds of whether it is really necessary, but certainly it is consistent with the government's policy as it stands, and it should be considered on its merits.

In zone B, the government said that development proposals can be considered by the Planning Authority to determine whether they are appropriate and to take into consideration environmental factors. The government was quite lucky in the first 2 or 3 years after this foreshore protection policy was announced because no major issues arose concerning protection of the foreshore. However, in the last 12 months, we have had 2 major development proposals which show up the weakness and the ineffectiveness of the government's policy. One is the proposal for the marina development at Cullen Bay. I want to make it clear that I am not talking about the hotel; I am talking about the marina development. Under the government's zone A policy, this proposal should not even have been considered because under zone A 'no new development proposals can be entertained other than community recreation projects'. The plan, if implemented, would prevent that proposal from being considered.

We all know what happened. An exemption to the plan was granted and the proposal for Cullen Bay not only has been considered but has been approved, subject to a detailed environmental impact statement. The opposition supports the ability of the proposed developer to lodge an application to develop a marina at Cullen Bay. It is a scheme that fits very nicely with our proposal for a foreshore development policy. Our proposal was that people should have the ability to put forward marine-related schemes anywhere along the coastline. I accept that a comment made by the minister at the time was relevant. Obviously, you would need to have some zoning within the concept. You need to have industrial marine activities concentrated in one particular area, such as Frances Bay. I accept that as a valid point.

The beauty of our plan, and the weakness of the government's plan, is that we would have the ability to consider marine-related proposals on their merits, right through the various planning stages. The government has shown through the experience of the Cullen Bay marina proposal that its plan is weak. Prospective developers who have proposals within a zone A area must first seek exemptions from the total ban except for community recreation projects. That is the essential weakness of the zone A concept. To put it in a slightly different way, there could well be good proposals for marine-related developments in zone A. Under the government's present policy, this cannot be done without an exemption. This is a stupid way to approach it. Our way is much better.

The second example of the inappropriateness of the government's foreshore planning is, of course, the Floreat Plumbing proposal for Ludmilla Creek. In our view, that is a completely inappropriate proposal that should never have been considered because it was not a marine-related proposal. In other words, its very nature was not such that it had to be located on the foreshore. The minister will probably argue that it contained provisions for a small marina or at least some boat storage facilities. Essentially, it was not a proposal that had to be located on the foreshore and it should not have been considered. Under the government's proposal, it could be considered only because it happened to occur in a zone B area. For some strange reason, which I still do not understand, the government considers zone B areas to be less worth while than zone A areas. Perhaps the minister might attempt to tell us why the government has this division between zone A and zone B areas and why zone B areas are less worthy of protection than zone A areas. At the time that the then minister tabled the foreshore protection policy, he stated loudly and clearly that a coastal protection plan for the entire Northern Territory coastline would be available in 3 months. As far as I am aware, we still do not have a coastal protection plan for the entire Northern Territory coastline - and it is not 3 months later but 4 years later! I would be happy to be proved wrong but, if such a plan has been developed, it has been kept very quiet. Certainly, after a year or more of asking regular questions in this Assembly, I gave up asking because I was being given the run around. It is an essential part of any protection plan for an area as sensitive as the coastline that there be a thorough study of what is involved. The minister said the Conservation Commission was commissioned to undertake that plan. It would be nice to know where it is.

Also, in his foreshore protection policy speech in September 1982, the minister said that the Department of Lands was undertaking a study on the best way to manage mangroves and the effects of clearing mangrove swamps. Again, I have no knowledge that such a study has ever been completed. If it has been completed, the government has kept very quiet about it. It is a very important study indeed because it is becoming very clear, through research

done by people at the museum in Darwin and by people outside Darwin, that mangroves have a very important effect on the ecological balance. It has become clear that, if there is wholesale removal of mangroves, there can be a severe detrimental effect on the marine ecology over quite a large area. It is important that such a study be done, particularly if the government intends to keep on considering proposals which would result in the clearing of mangrove areas and their replacement with buildings of some description. We do not support that unless they are for very particular marine-related purposes. It is something that we would only undertake, as I hope the government would, after very strict environmental impact studies. I accept the point that the minister has shown his bona fides in both the circumstances that I have mentioned by calling for detailed environmental impact statements. But the point remains that, 4 years ago, a coastal protection plan was promised to this Assembly. This Assembly was also promised a detailed study by the Department of Lands on the best way to manage mangroves.

Having criticised in a fairly low-key way the government's original proposal, having pointed out at the time that there were problems with the government's foreshore protection policy and having had confirmed through the passage of time that the problems that I saw with it have in fact occurred, I would like to spend a little time talking about our policy which I think has withstood the passage of time. Our policy called for the establishment of a coastal protection zone which would be established from Buffalo Creek right through to East Arm. I forgot to mention that the government's present foreshore protection policy does not go as far as East Arm. It stops somewhere on the other side of Sadgroves Creek. Of course, there has been a lot of development around the East Arm area in the last 3 or 4 years and I think it is essential that the foreshore protection policy area be extended to that area. That would enable the protection of the foreshore areas in the existing Darwin area and would enable planned foreshore development to meet the needs of the Palmerston area.

The Labor Party proposed, and still proposes, that development applications be allowed anywhere in the coastal protection zone but that applications be restricted to ventures that, by their nature, must be placed on the foreshore. This would enable applications to be presented for marinas, ship facilities and small boat facilities but would preclude applications for residential developments, hotel developments etc in the zone. This overcomes the problem that the government has through its artificial division of the foreshore areas into zone A and zone B: it cannot, except by exemption - which is often a politically embarrassing step to take - permit development applications to be considered. Our proposal allows all applications to be considered on their merit, which is a better way of going about it.

I would invite the honourable minister to consider our proposal even at this late stage. I still think it is a superior proposal. It has survived the test of time better than the government's proposal. I think it is the way that foreshore planning should be done in future.

Mr HATTON (Lands): Mr Speaker, I will be inviting defeat of this motion. I will do so on the grounds that the motion is inaccurate. It says that the government's foreshore planning is in disarray, and that in itself is in error. We have a foreshore protection plan and, except for inaccuracies about the locations of zone A and zone B areas, the descriptions given by the member for Millner as to what is permitted or not permitted in zone A or zone B were correct. In fact, he could have been reading from my notes. I take it that he took it out of a speech that was presented in 1982. Those zones and those conditions still apply.

The member for Millner needs to understand exactly what the legal position of the foreshore protection plan is. The foreshore protection plan as such is a Cabinet prepared and endorsed policy. Its status is indirectly conferred on the policy by virtue of the Planning Authority having been directed by the Minister for Lands under section 66A of the Planning Act, which empowers the minister to issue directions of government policy to the Planning Authority. It is that direction to the Planning Authority in the administration of the plan that gives it a status. It is in fact a ministerial direction to the Planning Authority which the Planning Authority must take into account in respect of any application. That is the legal status of the foreshore protection plan. It is a Cabinet decision expressed and put into practice by ministerial direction to the Northern Territory Planning Authority. As the honourable member said, it divides the coastline of the Darwin area into 2 zones: zone A and zone B. Zone A is an area where no development proposals will be entertained other than community recreation projects. As the member for Millner mentioned, that was to take into account such things as the surf lifesaving facility at the Casuarina coastal reserve area. In zone B, development proposals can be considered by the Planning Authority to determine whether they are appropriate and consistent with controls contained in the Darwin Town Plan.

The honourable member for Millner mentioned 2 particular projects. The first he raised was Cullen Bay. I will deal with that in a moment. The second project is what is known as the Floreat proposal, and it related to Ludmilla Creek. In fact, that is the third development application over that area. This development application is subject to an environmental statement. The honourable member should be advised that the area encompassed by the Floreat proposal falls within zone B of the Foreshore Protection Plan, which allows development subject to the controls contained in the Darwin Town Plan and has been dealt with in accordance with that. Obviously, since the 1982 plan came into operation, it is subject to the Environmental Assessment Act which was enacted subsequently in 1984.

The honourable member for Millner made the point that he believed that marine-related developments only should be considered anywhere on the foreshore. I should advise that, essentially, the current Floreat plan encompasses a canal estate development. A canal estate development of that kind needs to be near the foreshore. It is a particular type of waterfront-related, urban development.

I am not saying that the proposal will succeed or fail. A number of environmental concerns have been raised. They will be dealt with through the appropriate procedures of the Environmental Assessment Act before the Planning Authority considers that application.

The well-publicised proposal at Cullen Bay by Hans Voss is subject to an environmental impact statement as well because of concerns about potential environmental effects on the coastline, in particular effects on tidal and current movements. That will not be dealt with by way of an exemption to the Foreshore Protection Plan; the member for Millner is in error there. We have amended the Foreshore Protection Plan to change that particular area from zone A to zone B. It is not an exemption; it is a revised policy. It still fits within that policy.

I do not think that anybody in this Assembly would say that any policy of any government would be expected not to be reviewed for 5, 10, 50 or 100 years, and to sit there forever unchanged. That matter went to Cabinet

before it was determined to vary it. There was quite detailed Cabinet consideration before I, as Minister for Lands, issued a directive under section 66A of the Planning Act to the Planning Authority to amend the Foreshore Protection Plan. That enabled the proposal to be considered by the Planning Authority under the normal conditions that it would consider any application for development within the planning area of Darwin. As with all developments, it is subject to considerations under the Environmental Assessment Act. It is true that, after examination of the provisional environmental report, it was determined essential that there be a full environmental impact statement before there could be any proper consideration of its environmental suitability and, therefore, before it could be considered and finalised through the Darwin Town Plan.

The Foreshore Protection Plan is not in disarray; it has withstood the test of time. On any rational consideration, I think it could be argued legitimately that the area should have been included in zone B. It was not included. In Cabinet's view, and certainly in my view, it has been zoned appropriately as zone B, and the Foreshore Protection Plan has been amended accordingly. Other areas on the coastline have been retained as zone A and will continue while that policy continues in existence.

It was never the intention of the Foreshore Protection Plan to allow developments along the coast, even marine-related developments. The intention was to retain some of our coastline, particularly open coastline areas which are accessible for community recreational purposes; for example, Mindil Beach, Vestey's Beach, East Point, Nightcliff Beach and Casuarina Beach through to Lee Point. All of those areas have been protected and developed for recreational use by the community at large. I would hope that that will continue. I will certainly fight to seek to retain those as a continuing community asset for the benefit of the Darwin community and visitors to Darwin.

There have been developments in coastal management policy. The member for Millner mentioned that apparently my predecessor in 1982 took a brave-new-world approach and suggested that we would have a coastal management policy available within 3 months. I am not suggesting that the minister was doing otherwise than putting forward a view that he thought could be achieved. I can assure members that coastal management policy is one of the vexing questions in conservation management throughout Australia. It is a matter of constant discussion at meetings of the Council of Nature Conservation Ministers and the Australian Environment Council meetings. It has been a matter for consideration between the Commonwealth, the states and the Territory as to whether it should be a Commonwealth responsibility or a state/territory responsibility.

Mr Speaker, that has proceeded but, in any event, we have made significant progress, not fast but considered progress and we are at the very...

Mr Bell: You have had plenty of time to consider it.

Mr HATTON: Certainly, we have had plenty of time, and we needed that time to do the job properly. In fact, the coastal management policy was endorsed by Cabinet on 4 July 1985. A set of principles was determined that will assist orderly management of the coastal zone. The policy also established what is known as the Coastal Management Committee, consisting of the chief executives, or their delegates, of the Departments of Lands and Ports and Fisheries, with the Director of the Northern Territory Conservation Commission as chairman. The committee's inaugural meeting was held on 19 November 1985.

That matter has not been announced publicly. It is intended that the public announcement of the policy will coincide with the release of an explanatory pamphlet which is being prepared by the Department of Lands.

At its inaugural meeting, the Coastal Management Committee recognised the existence of 2 important support groups. The first is the Joint Planning Group, chaired by a representative of the Department of Lands, and comprising senior government executives. In other debates in this Assembly, I have referred to joint planning groups which include a number of service organisations associated with planning initiatives.

In addition, there is a second group called the Darwin Harbour Review Group, a technical advisory group, chaired on a rotational basis, whose membership is drawn from 8 separate government bodies. Also, the committee identified 3 priority planning areas: the Darwin Harbour from Stokes Hill to Middle Point; Lee Point to the Adelaide River mouth; and the area around the Sir Edward Pellew Group. A draft publicity brochure is being prepared for the development of management policies for those coastal zones.

Mr Speaker, I do not have a copy of that policy here today but I am quite happy to make a copy of the government policy on coastal management available to the honourable member for Millner or the honourable shadow minister for lands. Also, I will provide him with a briefing on the work that we are doing towards the development of a comprehensive coastal management program which eventually will encompass all the coastline of the Northern Territory. This will cover the development of appropriate protection areas. We still need to address the issue of coastal protection in areas which are rather difficult to administer and I refer obviously to Aboriginal land. I do not intend that as a debate on the pros and cons of land rights: it is a practical fact of life. From a practical point of view, it is difficult, if not impossible, for this government to develop effective coastal management on the very extensive areas of the coast which are subject to the Aboriginal Land Rights Act and, therefore, to the complications of working through land councils and the federal Minister for Aboriginal Affairs. Certainly, if we were able to, we would like to provide proper protection for the coastline of the Territory. Probably, we shall place those areas at the bottom of the list for the time being and deal with the other areas first. Then we shall be able to address the additional administrative problems of trying to deal with Aboriginal coastal land. Nonetheless, it is our aim to develop policies to cover the entire coastline.

Mr Speaker, the member for Millner also mentioned mangroves. In any discussion of the coast of the Northern Territory and Darwin Harbour, inevitably the subject of mangroves is raised. It is true that extensive mangrove areas are particularly important to the ecology of marine life generally. In particular, they provide shelter areas for newly-spawned fish. Some marine life depends almost totally on the mangroves as a permanent habitat. There is not one mangrove tree but a wide variety of mangrove types. There are thin and ecologically-insignificant mangrove sections whilst other sections are particularly important due to their extent and the diversity of mangrove species within those forests. In addition, some mangrove forests are maintaining themselves and some are deteriorating. Some are particularly important because of the rarity of the flora within the forest and others are insignificant because they have only a small variety of species which are very common and have little or no significance in terms of marine biology.

We recognise that and we have been doing extensive work on mangroves and the effects on marine life of their removal. In 1985, there was a study of mangroves in the Darwin Harbour area. It took 12 months to complete stage 1 of that study. I received it late last year and have been investigating it. Work is proceeding on stage 2 of the study. The aim is to obtain a clear understanding of the mangroves and their importance in Darwin Harbour and the potential effect their removal could have on the variety or abundance of the marine life in the harbour or in related coastlines.

Mr Speaker, nothing has occurred that is inconsistent with the very preliminary recommendations of that study. We shall continue that study to ensure that there will be no destruction of mangroves in the Darwin Harbour area which will have an adverse affect on the variety or abundance of marine life in Darwin Harbour. However, as we do with all environmental issues, we must consider that, whilst mangroves have an importance for marine life, they can also have a detrimental effect on the health of the human population because they provide breeding areas for vectors of some tropical diseases. It is a fact that residential areas situated close to mangrove swamps make a very bad mixture.

Mr B. Collins: Name some.

Mr HATTON: Let me refer specifically to the mangroves at the end of the Frances Bay area abutting immediately onto the Stuart Park residential area. The buffer zone between the fairly-extensive mangroves in that region and the residential population is not sufficient. I hope that helps the Leader of the Opposition.

Mr B. Collins: No. Name some of the tropical diseases stemming from mangrove areas.

Mr HATTON: Malaria.

Mr Ede: You are years behind the times.

Mr HATTON: That is right; that is me. I am not a health minister. My friend the Minister for Health would be happy to deal with that. The fact is that they do not mix. However, we are examining this in detail and will determine an appropriate policy for the protection of the very extensive mangrove forests in the Darwin area. I believe they comprise something in the order of 30% of the mangrove forests of the Northern Territory coastline. They are not insignificant, and it would be quite inappropriate to attack them simply on the argument of development and the potential affects that they might have, not just on Darwin Harbour but on the coastal areas around it. We are addressing that problem through the Conservation Commission and future planning will provide for the creation of buffer zones where necessary. As we move beyond Palmerston and into what is on the structure plan as Newtown, members will note that developments are located away from the mangrove areas with appropriate buffer zones between them and residential areas so that neither the people nor the mangroves will be placed under pressure.

Mr Speaker, we have a serious problem to consider, however, where populations have abutted the mangroves and we must address those areas seriously. I refer particularly to the end of Frances Bay around to East Arm. We must address the issues of the mangroves in the Ludmilla Creek area to examine their ecological significance as mangrove forests and the potential impact of their removal on the marine life in Darwin Harbour. Certainly, in

the Ludmilla Creek proposal, that is one of the issues that must be addressed in the environmental impact statement, along with a number of others.

Mr Speaker, I sum up by saying that we have a foreshore protection plan. It has legal status under the Minister for Lands who directs the Planning Authority to consider the planning objectives of the government. It is the policy of our government that it could be amended only by a decision of Cabinet. Any such decision of Cabinet is then implemented by direction to the Planning Authority from the Minister for Lands. We are addressing the issue of mangroves and examining their ecological significance in the Darwin Harbour area as our first priority.

I should say also that the Department of Ports and Fisheries is carrying out research into the variety and abundance of marine species in the harbour so that we have a total picture of what is there. Then we can analyse the full importance of the mangroves, whether particular areas can be eliminated without affecting the harbour ecology and what areas must be preserved to maintain the harbour ecology.

In regard to coastal management, we have a coastal management policy in place now. Publicity literature is being prepared before it is publicly announced. I repeat my offer to provide a briefing for either the shadow minister for lands or the member for Millner in respect of those policies. I apologise for the fact that I do not have them here now and so am unable to make them available, but we would be happy to discuss and explain them in a briefing.

Mr Speaker, I invite rejection of the motion because it is wrong. Our foreshore planning is not in disarray and we have a coastal management policy. We are well advanced and this motion should not be passed.

Mr BELL (MacDonnell): Mr Deputy Speaker, as a conscientious shadow minister for lands, I listened intently to the comments of the member for Millner and the honourable minister. I rise with some alacrity to support my colleague and this motion. I think the honourable minister became rather more compelling the longer he spoke, but I think the overall message is quite clear: he failed to explain adequately the delays for which the government is responsible. Now that the honourable minister's predecessor has returned to the Assembly, he may like to contribute to this debate and explain how the government's policies, and subsequent actions, square - or, as my colleague explained, fail to square - with the government's brave-new-world statement of 1 September 1982.

In case he was not able to catch all of that, allow me to reiterate because, quite clearly, the statements the Minister for Lands made in this regard were not clearly understood by him. The member for Millner made 3 points. The first was essentially that the policy that the Australian Labor Party has put forward in this regard has been sensible and meaningful. The fact that my colleague's policy was clearly more sensible than the offerings made by the government could not have been demonstrated better than by the minister's apologia for the 2 developments discussed by himself and my colleague.

In the case of the marina that is being considered for Cullen Bay, my colleague explained very carefully that the opposition's policy would be not to divide the coastal areas into zones but to consider each application for a marine-related development on its own merits. My colleague explained

carefully that a marina at Cullen Bay would fall well within that policy. How would the honourable minister solve that problem? Easily - by a change of zoning. I think that even Blind Freddy would see that that does not amount to a positive - I apologise, Mr Deputy Speaker - even the honourable member for Wagaman would be able to see that there is a logical inconsistency that is thoroughly unmerited in such a serious consideration as land usage, particularly in such environmentally sensitive areas as foreshores. A comparison of the discussion offered by my colleague with the less than satisfying response from the honourable minister demonstrated that government foreshore planning is in disarray. Quite clearly, if it is necessary to amend the plan to change zoning in order that a proposal may be approved, that is scarcely a sensible policy. The sort of sophistry that the honourable minister displayed in that regard was breathtaking, to say the least.

My colleague referred also to the proposal in the Ludmilla Creek area. The honourable minister's explanation that this area is zone B which permits that type of development rather missed the point. The opposition policy in this regard is that, where such developments are not marine-related, they should occur elsewhere. I believe that that particular proposal was not marine-related and was inappropriate.

The 2 subsequent points discussed by the 2 previous speakers were the Coastal Protection Plan and the mangrove study. The Minister for Lands was erudite to the point of being prolix on the subject of mangroves and, although I am shadow minister for lands and a denizen of the sandhills and the spinifex, I have developed quite a taste for mangroves. Five years ago, I would have been the first person to concede that mangroves had an image problem, but my education...

Mr Coulter: I won't provoke you again.

Mr BELL: Well, it is these late sitting days. I must apologise to honourable members. I am very pleased to be able to say that my education with respect to mangroves, if not complete, has been extended considerably over the last 5 years, firstly under the tutelage of Dr Russell Hanley at the museum who was studying the ecology of mangroves. I was very fortunate to spend a morning with him and have some of the complex ecology of mangroves explained to me. From that day forward, I saw mangroves from a different point of view. That experience was enhanced by travel into areas of the electorate of the member for Arnhem where, on alighting from boats, I chased crabs around mangroves. I am quite happy to concede that the image problem that I once perceived mangroves to have no longer exists.

However, if mangroves no longer have an image problem, the Northern Territory government certainly has. With respect to its foreshore policy, I think my colleague and I have demonstrated quite adequately that the government's application of zonal arrangements is inconsistent. The Minister for Lands attempted to obfuscate the issue not only by passing to me notes asking whether I had a licence to catch the mud crabs in question, but by making such a prolix explanation of the legal position with respect to government decisions over the Foreshore Protection Plan. That is my first point. My second point in corroborating the argument of my colleague in this respect is that the government has done too little too late.

The honourable minister made a very brave attempt to apologise for inaction on the part of the Northern Territory government but I think that, in support of this motion, we have made a compelling argument that this Assembly

should be of the opinion that the government's foreshore planning is in disarray, and that this Assembly should call on the government to develop a coastal management policy which will protect coastal areas properly whilst allowing development proposals to be considered on their merits.

Mr SMITH (Millner): Mr Speaker, I will be brief. I think the member for MacDonnell and I have made the point that, to persist with a zonal policy after it has been clearly demonstrated to have failed, is the height of stupidity, and that the government would be much better off adopting the sensible policy that we suggested to it in 1982. It is interesting that, from a debate such as this, useful information is obtained from the government. I am pleased that the honourable minister deigned to tell us he has a draft coastal management plan now, even though it is 4 years later than the government promised it to us. It is good to know that he has something and, hopefully, he will reveal it to the public before another 4 years are up. Thirdly, it is good to know that the honourable minister has a proper understanding and appreciation of the importance of mangroves. I must say that I am pleased that, at long last, apparently a comprehensive and scientific study is being undertaken on the value of mangroves to the Darwin area.

Mr Speaker, as I think all speakers tonight recognise, it is very important that a proper study of the value of mangroves be undertaken because, once gone, they are irreplaceable. The honourable minister mentioned that there are a number of varieties and, basically, different varieties respond to the different salinity levels around Darwin Harbour. It is not quite as simple as saying that you can plant them and they will grow. It is a much more difficult process than that.

Mr Speaker, I wish to take exception to a comment that the honourable minister made. He said that there are some problems with the close proximity of mangroves and residential areas. He implied that the way to resolve that problem was to remove the mangroves. As the Leader of the Opposition said to me in an aside, environmentally there must be a better way of resolving any problems that arise through close coexistence. Hopefully, when the government looks at the problems with the Frances Creek mangroves, it will investigate means of resolving those problems without removing the mangroves.

Mr Speaker, due to the lateness of the hour, I conclude by stating that, in our view, it is quite clear that the government foreshore planning is in disarray. It is relying on what the minister calls changes to its zonal policies and what we call exceptions to its zonal policies to make the thing work. Although, under the minister, the government has made some significant advances in protecting coastal areas properly, there is still a long way to go. On those grounds, the motion should be supported.

Motion negatived.

MOTION
Public Accounts Committee

Mr SMITH (Millner): Mr Speaker, I move that:

- (1) a select committee of the Legislative Assembly be established to inquire into and report upon the most applicable methods by which the Assembly can improve its oversight of the public budgetary and accounting processes of the Northern Territory and in particular to consider:

- (a) the need to establish a public accounts committee;
 - (b) the need to establish a more effective method for the Assembly to scrutinise estimates of expenditure and actual expenditure by departments and statutory authorities;
 - (c) the most appropriate documentary system of reporting the budget to the Assembly; and
 - (d) developments in the parliamentary scrutiny of budgets in the Commonwealth and the states, including methods of improving parliamentary oversight of budgets which have been considered from time to time;
- (2) the committee consist of 5 members, 3 to be nominated by the Chief Minister and 2 to be nominated by the Leader of the Opposition;
 - (3) the committee have power to call for persons, papers and records, to sit in public or in private session notwithstanding any adjournment of the Assembly, to adjourn from place to place and have leave to report from time to time its proceedings and the evidence taken and such interim recommendations it may deem fit;
 - (4) the committee report to the Assembly by the last sitting day in August 1986;
 - (5) the committee be empowered to publish from day to day such papers and evidence as may be ordered by it, and a daily Hansard be published of such proceedings as take place in public; and
 - (6) the foregoing provisions of this resolution, so far as they are inconsistent with standing orders, have effect notwithstanding anything contained in standing orders.

Mr Speaker, on a number of occasions in the past, the opposition has proposed motions for the establishment of standing expenditure committees or public accounts committees, and they have always been rejected by this Assembly. In the past, we have proposed those motions because we have been concerned for a long time that this Assembly is not given enough tools to allow an adequate scrutiny of the budget process. This concern has been expressed in motions presented by the opposition from time to time. The opposition still believes that a standing committee on expenditure is an appropriate tool for this Assembly to assess the budget process but, more importantly, we believe now is an appropriate time to consider the broader question of what are the best arrangements through which the Assembly may oversight public budgetary and accounting processes.

At present, the Assembly is able to scrutinise budgetary processes through debate on the appropriations and, at least theoretically, through debate on the Auditor-General's report to this Assembly. The opposition has pointed out consistently that the budget papers presented by the government fail to provide sufficient information to allow a detailed scrutiny to take place. Unlike some other governments in the Westminster system, this government has not moved yet in the direction of allowing a wider accountability by providing more information to the Assembly.

It was only 200 years ago, with the passing of Burke's Civil List Act of 1782, that parliament started to exert its control over the expenditure of government moneys. Prior to that, the finance of government had been virtually free from parliamentary control. Interestingly, there has been little change in the substance of parliamentary control during those 200 years. Essentially, parliaments have concerned themselves with the allocations in the budget. In most parliaments today, it is called the estimates.

Quite legitimately, parliament has always believed it important to exercise rigorous control over the amount of money being spent. Our accounting structures, particularly the accounting structures that this government has developed, and the basis on which information is provided to this Assembly have been developed primarily to ensure such rigorous control over the amount of money that is being spent, and I am not critical of the government for that because, as I said, I think it is very important. Mr Speaker, if you want a demonstration of the government's attitude, you need do no more than refer to the speech made to the managers by the Chief Minister some 10 days ago in which he said: 'Another of my pet dislikes is the manager who, given a delegation for expenditure, exceeds his budget, especially those who exceed their budget without prior approval'.

Mr Speaker, I will say it again so that there is no misunderstanding: it is an important role of parliament that it have that power and that, generally, governments have that power and impress on their public servants the importance of staying within budget. Essentially, it is a negative control. Essentially, our budgetary accounts are collections of 'thou shalt nots'. One is that 'thou shalt not exceed thy budget' and a second is that 'thou shalt not transfer money from 1 allocation to another without approval'. And I have no problems with those.

Increasingly, we find that parliaments are starting to realise that negative controls, like those that I have mentioned, are not enough. Instead, emphasis is placed now on developing procedures to evaluate an adage that every consumer stands by: 'value for money'. In other words, the emphasis is more on the results you obtain from expenditure rather than the actual amount of expenditure. In other words, the emphasis is on an 'outputs' approach rather than - or as well as - an 'inputs' approach to budgetary expenditure. It is called by different names and it has different emphases in parliaments where it has been adopted. Some of the names have been quoted in this Assembly before, including 'program budgeting' and 'zero base budgeting'. What is common to them is that they attempt to develop mechanisms to measure the effectiveness of the dollars allocated in the budget.

Mr Speaker, a great deal has happened in this area in the last 10 years. We have not caught up with it yet and the essence of this motion is that, in the opposition's view, it is time we caught up with current thinking. As parliament has the ultimate responsibility for the accountability of public moneys, it is appropriate that parliament establish a committee to look at developments occurring elsewhere, to assess them, to determine their appropriateness or otherwise for the Northern Territory and to make recommendations on an appropriate system for the Northern Territory. I do not exclude the possibility, although I would consider it most unlikely, that the recommended system may well be the present system. We are leaving all options open. It may well be that the select committee will decide that the present system is satisfactory.

Mr Speaker, the terms of the motion provide for the establishment a select committee which will investigate a number of matters. In general terms, it will investigate the most applicable methods by which the Assembly can improve its oversight of the public budgetary and accounting processes. More specifically, it will look at whether we need a public accounts committee in the Northern Territory. The opposition believes firmly that we do. Whilst attending the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association conference in London last year, which was attended by representatives of more than 20 Commonwealth parliaments, I learnt that practically every one of them has a public accounts committee. Some of those parliaments are far smaller than ours. Some even have a public accounts committee chaired by the Leader of the Opposition, but I do not believe such a concept would be introduced here by either side. The parliaments see the committee as a tool for good government. Even some of the Commonwealth parliaments in countries that we might consider to be banana republics have a public accounts committee. It is interesting that they do, because such committees have become part of the Westminster system. The concept has been adopted by the great majority of parliaments that now operate under the Westminster system. We are one of the odd men out, Mr Speaker, and I think the stage has been reached when we need to hear very good reasons why we have not adopted the system. We have not heard those very good reasons.

Mr Speaker, what the opposition is saying through this motion is that the time has come to take a very close look at whether or not it is a good idea to establish a public accounts committee in the Northern Territory. We would go into it with our eyes open and with no predetermined commitments, but at least let us examine it. The other 3 paragraphs of part 1 of the motion all refer to examining systems that have been developed and determining whether they would be appropriate for the Northern Territory.

The best way to explain what is happening elsewhere is to offer some examples. This government has made considerable use of experts from Canada and procedures that are used in Canada. Some of the most advanced thinking in relation to budget accountability to parliaments has taken place in Canada. In the last 5 or 6 years, the Canadians have come up with a new set of documents that are presented to parliament. Previously, their documents were similar to our estimates and capital works programs - in other words, input-type documents. The new documents are called 'new departmental expenditure plans' and they concentrate on providing outputs information and outputs plans.

These developed departmental expenditure plans describe the programs and activities of each department in terms of the program objectives and the way that those activities contribute to those objectives. The departmental expenditure plans report on programs, provide justifications for resources, explain operations and delivery mechanisms, explain accountability and linkage between program and activity structure and organisation structure, and report on actual results against previous results.

Mr Speaker, let us leave the Canadians for a moment and turn to the Commonwealth government. Since the election of the Hawke government, the Commonwealth has moved away from a concentration on inputs alone towards an examination of program costs and benefits against the indicators of achievement. In other words, it has moved to the value-for-money concept. As a shopper can determine value for money by shopping around, we believe that it is appropriate and possible to evolve programs that enable a similar value-for-money concept to be developed for the public service and for government accountability to this Assembly. Recent reforms in South Australia

have been aimed at putting the emphasis on results and attempting to obtain value for money.

I want to turn back to the Canadian example and provide detail on how the system there operates and compare it with what happens in the Northern Territory at present. The department that I will use as an example is the Department of Correctional Services in Canada. That is not because the Department of Correctional Services here does things worse or better than any other Territory department but because that is the Canadian example I have been able to find.

Mr Coulter: Whereabouts in Canada?

Mr SMITH: It is a department of the Canadian federal government.

The Correctional Services Department in Canada has adopted a number of corporate objectives. Briefly, those corporate objectives are firstly, to hold inmates in a safe, secure and humane way and, secondly, to help offenders to help themselves to return to society as law-abiding citizens. The objective of holding prisoners safely is reported on each year to the parliament through a series of charts showing 5-year trends in offences such as murder, suicide, assault and - something we hope we never have here - hostage-taking. Holding securely is illustrated to the parliament by means of 5-year trends in escapes. Holding humanely is demonstrated through charts and tables on inmate programs such as work, education and health care. In other words, on each of those areas which has been identified as the corporate objectives of the Department of Correctional Services, the parliament receives a detailed outline of the aims. At the end of the year, it receives in the annual report a detailed assessment of how effective it has been in meeting the aims. Similarly, in relation to helping offenders help themselves to return to society as law-abiding citizens, information is provided on rates.

The costs of each of those programs is identified quite clearly and the charts and tables showing the running costs for all programs and activities are contained in the annual report given to the parliament. The sorts of information that can be extracted from the details provided to the Canadian parliament by the Department of Correctional Services includes such things as:

'Escape target for maximum security institutions of no more than 2:1000 inmates was bettered by achieving a 1.1:1000. The escape target for medium security of 11:1000 was substantially bettered by achieving 4.4:1000, a continuation of a 4-year decline. The percentage of parolees failing while under supervision has remained steady over the past 9 years at around 22%. The unemployment rate of inmates has remained in the 6% to 8% range over the past few years. The constant dollar cost per offender has been declining slowly but steadily over the past 5 years. The service was already below its 1990 target for person-years per offender'.

There is a list of other examples.

To give the minister in the Northern Territory his due, he has started to talk about some of those things, though in a less rational and organised way, and I mean no disrespect to the minister. At least he has made a start on some of those things. Hopefully, we will see the benefit of his talking about those things. He has expressed a concern about the cost of housing prisoners in the Northern Territory and the number of prisoners in our jails and he is

developing programs to attempt to come to grips with those 2 problems. What I am saying is that the logical extension of that is that that information should be provided in a detailed form to this Assembly and, at the end of the 12-month period, an assessment of how effective the programs have been in meeting those objectives should be supplied in the department's annual report.

Let us compare that with what happens here at present - and I must admit that I have not seen the Department of Correctional Services' report for 1985-86. When it was part of the Department of Community Development, the information supplied in 1984-85 was inputs information: how much was spent on prisons, how much the service costs, how many people were held under supervision and how many community service orders had been processed in the previous 12 months. Basically, it was all inputs information because there was nothing to indicate what the aims of the department were at the beginning of that period so that some assessment of achievement could be made.

That is as concrete an example as I can give but I think it demonstrates very clearly that it provides a very serviceable tool for the parliament to assess how effectively the government of the day has spent the money allocated to various government departments. I can understand that any government may feel slightly uncomfortable about this because it opens up its activities to more effective scrutiny. But, equally importantly, it provides a much more effective and efficient basis for operating government, because it gives people a positive challenge. You are not saying to them: 'Here is a certain amount of money. Don't overspend it or else the heavens will fall in on you'. You say to people: 'Here is an amount of money and these are the objectives we want you to work towards with that amount of money'. I think that is a much more positive way to go about it. If that system was spelt out clearly, precisely and fully - if that is not a contradiction - to the public service, its enthusiastic response would follow because it would provide positive benefits.

I accept that this is happening already in some areas. I must admit that, when I took advantage of an NTEC briefing supplied to me by the honourable minister, I gained the impression that NTEC is starting to operate on that basis. I was quite impressed with the way that the chairman explained how that commission is going about its task, how it budgets with limited finance and, particularly, how it reviewed its objectives when Commonwealth funding was halved so suddenly. I think those officers are on the right track. What I am saying is that the NTEC case should be formalised and made public, and the information should be presented to this Assembly.

Mr Speaker, I conclude by saying that we have deliberately taken a softer approach to this issue on this occasion because we have a genuine belief that the time has come at least to explore fully the types of issues that I have been talking about. We can do that through the establishment of a select committee which will enable the members of this Assembly to canvass adequately what is happening, particularly in other parts of Australia, and report back to the Assembly. It has to be done and I think that it can be done only by a select committee. Unfortunately, the workloads of ministers of the government prohibit their considering this matter either singularly or collectively. It is an important matter, and its time has come. That is why we have raised the matter and I hope that the government will give it more than the kneejerk reaction that it has given it in the past. We have put this forward with a genuine desire to improve the budgetary and accounting processes that this Assembly has available to it. I believe that, if we can improve those budgetary and accounting processes, the side benefit, which perhaps will be

the most important benefit, will be an improvement in the efficiency of government.

Mr TUXWORTH (Chief Minister): Mr Speaker, this motion might be described as a rose by another name. There is not much point in our dwelling all night on its merits. The Deputy Leader of the Opposition let his slip show when he said that the opposition members would be embarking on this with their eyes open, they did not have any preconceived ideas and they would like to look at all the options. It so happens that, on many occasions, the opposition has moved in this Assembly for the formation of a public accounts committee and, on the same number of occasions, we have rejected it. I advise the Deputy Leader of the Opposition that we will be rejecting his motion on this occasion also, and I move that the question be put.

The Assembly divided:

Ayes 17

Mr D.W. Collins
Mr Coulter
Mr Dale
Mr Dondas
Mr Finch
Mr Firmin
Mr Hanrahan
Mr Harris
Mr Hatton
Mr McCarthy
Mr Manzie
Mrs Padgham-Purich
Mr Perron
Mr Robertson
Mr Setter
Mr Tuxworth
Mr Vale

Noes 6

Mr Bell
Mr B. Collins
Mr Ede
Mr Lanhupuy
Mr Leo
Mr Smith

Motion agreed to.

Mr SPEAKER: The question is that the motion be agreed to.

The Assembly divided:

Ayes 6

Mr Bell
Mr B. Collins
Mr Ede
Mr Lanhupuy
Mr Leo
Mr Smith

Noes 17

Mr D.W. Collins
Mr Coulter
Mr Dale
Mr Dondas
Mr Finch
Mr Firmin
Mr Hanrahan
Mr Harris
Mr Hatton
Mr McCarthy
Mr Manzie
Mrs Padgham-Purich
Mr Perron

Mr Robertson
Mr Setter
Mr Tuxworth
Mr Vale

Motion negatived.

SUSPENSION OF STANDING ORDERS

Mr B. COLLINS (Opposition Leader): Mr Deputy Speaker, I move that so much of standing orders be suspended as would prevent my moving a motion that order of the day No 4 be now brought on.

Mr ROBERTSON (Leader of the House): You do not need to suspend standing orders. Just move it, Bob.

Mr B. COLLINS: No. You do need to suspend standing orders.

Mr ROBERTSON: It is a procedural motion.

Motion agreed to.

MOTION

Contingent and Actual Liabilities - Proposed Select Committee

Continued from 29 August 1985.

Mr SMITH (Millner): Mr Deputy Speaker, the opposition has introduced this motion because of the continued failure of the government to fulfil the requirements that most normal governments would meet, and that is to provide information to the Northern Territory people and the Northern Territory parliament on its contingent and actual liabilities. The motion proposes that: a select committee be appointed to inquire into and report on the Northern Territory government's contingent and actual liability; the committee consist of 5 members, 3 to be nominated by the Chief Minister and 2 to be nominated by the Leader of the Opposition; the committee have power to call for persons, papers and records, to sit in public etc.

This government has a continuing record of hiding its contingent and actual liabilities, of having information about them dragged out only after extreme questioning from the opposition and of having the Auditor-General state in his annual reports that various officers responsible for the collection of information on these matters have been tardy in presenting their findings, thus affecting the ability of the Treasury to put together a statement on contingent and actual liabilities. One can only assume that, as those officers have been reported by the Auditor-General as being tardy in the performance of those functions, that they are doing so on the instructions of their political masters who clearly do not want known the extent of contingent and actual liabilities that this government has entered into.

Mr Speaker, you may remember the unfolding saga of this government's contingent liabilities last year. From memory, it started with the statement by the government that it had some contingent liabilities connected with the Yulara development. For over 18 months, this opposition sought to determine, on behalf of the people of the Northern Territory, the extent of the contingent liabilities, but to no avail. The normal procedures open to this government to report on its financial commitments to this Assembly were

ignored. For 18 months or more, the Assembly was not given the opportunity to scrutinise properly the commitments of the Northern Territory government to its Yulara project.

You may remember, Mr Speaker, that the government hid those commitments through various inflated payments for an assorted range of government buildings and responsibilities in the Yulara village. From memory, the government was paying in the vicinity of \$2m in rent for the police station premises at Yulara. The opposition discovered that the total government commitment to Yulara in its first year of operation was in the order of \$7m. Last year, we heard a report from the Chief Minister which indicated...

Mr Perron: The Yulara agreements were tabled in the Assembly.

Mr SMITH: Yes, the Yulara agreements were tabled. But it was not possible to determine from that information the extent of the government's commitment. We spent hours...

Mr Perron: Ask questions.

Mr SMITH: Here we go again. In every debate on this particular matter, like Pavlov's dog, the honourable minister says: 'Ask questions'. That is his normal response in this sort of debate. I will give an example of the effectiveness of asking questions. Let us look at the series of questions that the Leader of the Opposition asked of the Chief Minister on the subject of government-financed overseas trips undertaken by office-holding members of the Legislative Assembly.

Mr Perron: Got a wad of it.

Mr SMITH: Got a wad of it, have we? We have 4 pages and I want to read into Hansard a letter from the Leader of the Opposition to the Chief Minister which points out that the information received from this government, even in answers to questions on notice, cannot be relied on. Another example occurred last night when, as I understand it, the Deputy Chief Minister provided me with some wrong information on a matter concerning a tender let to Capricornia Films. However, I will read this letter from the Leader of the Opposition to the Chief Minister:

'I write in reference to your reply to my question on notice regarding government-financed overseas trips taken by office-holding members of the Legislative Assembly. Your written reply is inaccurate and misleading - a fact, I might add, which has been acknowledged by 2 Cabinet ministers in public statements on this issue.

I find it inconceivable the government is unable to provide the total cost of these trips. I can only assume you are being deliberately evasive in providing full details of these trips which you are obliged by parliamentary convention to provide. It is strange indeed that the opposition has been provided with the total cost of trips taken by non-office holders of the Assembly while we are told you are unable to provide the total cost for office holders. I refer you to the written answer received to a separate question on notice in regard to travel by non-office holders'.

When we attempt to use the existing processes of this Assembly to obtain information, we receive misleading and incomplete information.

If the honourable Minister for Mines and Energy wants an example from his own portfolio area, he has only to refer back to a series of questions I asked of him on the operations of the Territory Insurance Office. It took about 4 attempts for him to get the information right after writing to me 2 or 3 times, in quite abusive terms, to say that I was mistaken. In the end, he had to admit that I was right and that he had been providing me with incorrect information. It is no excuse to say that procedures are available at present to enable a proper scrutiny of these matters because this government has neither the wit nor the intelligence to use the existing procedures to provide the information sought by this opposition.

Quite clearly, something more is needed for the proper scrutiny of contingent and actual liabilities than this government has provided in the past. Not only is there the Yulara issue but also a host of other matters which, in the view of the Northern Territory News last year, amount to contingent liabilities and actual liabilities of some \$700m. That could well be a slight exaggeration; it is very difficult to know. But we do know that there are contingent and actual liabilities associated with the whole Yulara project, the Sheraton project in Alice Springs, the Sheraton project in Darwin, the casinos and probably a few other things that we have not caught up with yet.

Mr Perron: Like superannuation, thanks to the federal government's decision. You can add another \$50m a year.

Mr SMITH: Whilst talking about superannuation, where are the superannuation bills that were to be tabled at these sittings so that they could be introduced by 1 July this year? All public servants expected to...

Mr Tuxworth: As soon as we know what the Commonwealth intends doing, we will be able to move.

Mr SMITH: Another government broken promise. Where is the statement that was promised on the Sheratons? It has not been delivered. We have a government that is out of control and which lacks the ability to deliver effective information to the people of the Northern Territory on the way it spends government money. That ranges from small things, in money terms, like filling out false claims for travelling allowances and not providing information on major things like contingent and actual liabilities which amount to hundreds of millions of dollars.

Mr Finch: You do not understand it when you get it.

Mr SMITH: We will make the judgment on that. How would we know? We have not been given the information and therefore cannot say whether we understand it or not. That is a charge we are quite prepared for you to lay when we have been given the information, but it is a bit specious for you to make the charge when the information is not available.

This motion would allow a committee of this Assembly, with a majority of government members, to inquire into and report upon the Northern Territory government's contingent and actual liabilities. It is important, not only for the people of the Northern Territory to know their exact financial position and to know whether they have a future here or whether this government will

put the Territory into hock so far that it might be better to leave. It is equally important to set up a select committee of this Assembly to investigate these matters so that we may provide some basic information to the Commonwealth government. Too often the Commonwealth has been given easy opportunities by this government to withhold funding because of the profligate manner in which this government throws money around. Too many times, this government has given the Commonwealth government easy opportunities to say: 'That crowd in the Northern Territory is being profligate with our money. We will teach them a lesson and cut them back'.

Mr Deputy Speaker, the Yularas, the Sheratons and the casinos provide those excuses and this government makes it worse by not revealing the relevant information until it is dragged out of it. No wonder the Commonwealth government adopts such a negative attitude to financial matters in the Northern Territory. As the Leader of the Opposition stated, you do not have to give Senator Peter Walsh an inch for him to take a mile but the government gives him a mile and then he takes much more than that. If we ran a tighter show and were able to convince the Commonwealth government that we were responsible economic managers who used the money we received from it wisely, we would have much less to fear when the Commonwealth government came to review its budget processes and the amount of money to be allocated to the Northern Territory. But, that does not stop the cowboys who think they have their own private bank into which they can dip their sticky fingers from time to time and from which, at other times, they can lend money to their friends on an unsecured basis, without any guarantees on whether it will be returned. It is a private bank, Mr Deputy Speaker. Then, they complain and scream when the Commonwealth government says: 'You are not fulfilling your financial responsibilities. How about being a bit more accountable?'

Mr Ede: Yes, look at the Workers Club.

Mr Leo: A \$2.2m offer and it was flogged off to a mate for \$1.6m.

Mr SMITH: That was another example of the profligate way in which this government has spent its money.

Mr B. Collins: It lost \$3m and the government gave it a further \$3m - great.

Mr SMITH: A Labor government would not have made an allocation of \$4.6m of government money to the Workers Club for that building.

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

Mr SMITH: Mr Deputy Speaker, we have made it quite clear that the key determinant of our lending policies on these sorts of projects would be their commercial viability. There would not be any room in our lending policy for friends or for buying votes. It would be run on a straight commercial basis as it is by governments elsewhere in Australia. It is unfortunate that, in terms of economic responsibility, this government is heading in the same direction as only 1 other government in this country - the Queensland government. It is doing the reverse of what is being done by other governments which have been forced by their populations and their parliaments to become more accountable for the expenditure of public funds, not less accountable. They have been obliged to establish procedures to account for their expenditures - procedures that lay out quite clearly contingent and

actual liabilities. They do not attempt to hide those contingent and actual liabilities.

On these matters, this government is out of step with the rest of Australia and, as the population of the Northern Territory wakes up to what is going on, it is increasingly out of step with the needs of Territorians. Mr Deputy Speaker, if you have any doubt about that, talk to anybody in the street. Take a taxi home instead of a government car and ask the driver what he thinks about the Chief Minister sticking his hand in the till; ask him what he thinks about the casinos affair or about Tuxworth Travel Pty Ltd; and then ask him about petrol prices and the Darwin Airport. The difference is that the latter are Commonwealth issues. We can scream, we can exert influence but we do not control those matters. However, we have the opportunity to run an honest government and, quite clearly, at this stage, we do not appear to have an honest government. That is what concerns people in the northern suburbs. They are noticing the distinct smell of corruption about this government as they find more and more examples of people opposite treating the Treasury of the Northern Territory as their private bank.

The select committee we propose will give us an opportunity to demonstrate to Territorians that we are serious about the credibility of economic management in this Territory, that we are concerned about spending their money properly and accounting for it properly, and that we are not just a bunch of cowboys intent on milking the system for all it is worth, both for ourselves and for our friends. Failure to support this proposal for such a select committee will be a failure on the part of government to undertake its responsibilities seriously. If it does not support this proposal, the government will stand condemned by all Territorians.

Mr TUXWORTH (Chief Minister): Mr Deputy Speaker, I have a considerable amount of information for honourable members and I will take some time to provide it so that they cannot complain that they do not receive enough detail.

It was interesting to hear the Deputy Leader of the Opposition because he often speaks about not receiving information. What he does not do is use intelligently the information that he receives, and he cannot blame other people for that. If he does not have the brains to ask the right questions to elicit the information that he wants, he cannot blame other people for that either.

Mr B. Collins: We will have a bit more of a debate about that if you like.

Mr TUXWORTH: Mr Deputy Speaker, there is plenty of time for more debate about these things.

Last August, I made a statement to the Assembly about the commitment of the government to major tourist developments in the Territory. In that statement, I reaffirmed our determination to pursue a vision of tourism as an industry which would reduce the extent of our mendicancy on the Commonwealth. I outlined the extent to which the new projects we were supporting were not living up to original expert predictions and mentioned some of the frustrating external influences which were dampening both tourism growth and project liability. These included the sad state of our airports, the lack of facilities in our national parks, the 2-airline policy, and high interest rates. In the circumstances, there was an evident need to reappraise and change or adapt our relationships with the projects.

On Yulara, I announced that commercial costs would be reduced by our adopting a normal town-like approach to the funding of governmental services through the progressive purchase of certain assets there. With the Sheraton Hotel in Alice Springs, I announced that, with the cooperation of the AIDC and Sheraton, we would reopen funding options by supporting a new company to be formed to purchase the property from the developers. On the Sheraton in Darwin, I announced a review of the relationship we had with the owners, to take place during the period leading to completion of construction. On the casinos, I highlighted the need for the new operators to develop their Asian markets in anticipation of the completion of the refurbishment of their premises. More generally, I highlighted proposals to integrate more closely the affairs of the respective project owners and their staff, to consolidate the governmental interface with both those projects, to work closely with the hotel operators to reduce net costs and develop marketing, and to appoint a special panel of expert advisers to guide this activity. I called for the support of the federal government in ameliorating those stated frustrations produced by its policies.

It is my purpose now to report on the progress that we have made on this new course during the past 6 months. It is a matter of record now that the Alice Springs Sheraton was completed on time and purchased on 12 September 1985 by a new company called Investnorth Pty Ltd. That company was formed with the TIO and Capel Court Corporation as the majority shareholders. Investnorth borrowed the necessary funds for up to 6 months on commercial terms from CIBC Australia Ltd. This period was to allow funding options to be considered and negotiations for longer-term funding to be concluded. Investnorth remains, and will continue, as the owner of the Alice Springs Sheraton. I will return to its position shortly.

With advice from the Special Financial Advisory Panel, options for centralisation of management and financial skills and the creation of a single focus for the governmental interface with the projects were then addressed. The outcome of the process was the restructuring of Abington Pty Ltd, the management company for the Territory Property Trust which owns the casino properties. Mr Harry Ewing, OBE, agreed to be appointed as a director of Abington and act as its chairman. Mr Ewing is a former General Manager of Travelodge Australia Ltd, now Southern Pacific Hotel Corporation and, from 1968-78, was responsible for the development and financing of hotels throughout Australia, Fiji, New Zealand, Tahiti and Papua New Guinea. From 1978-83, he was Managing Director of the Papua New Guinea Banking Corporation.

Abington has drawn together a small staff from Treasury and the NTDC to administer its affairs. It remains a management company providing a specialist core of skills to the owners of each of the major tourist projects in which the government has some direct interest. Its immediate aim is to enhance the viability of those projects by the application of effective management practices in the projects themselves and by developing coordinated measures from which all will benefit. Its objective is to eliminate completely the need for government support mechanisms for each project as soon as possible.

Abington will not take up an equity position in any of the projects. It will be funded out of management fees under agreements with the respective owner entities and, in respect of its governmental risk management activities and any channelling of government financial support obligations, by appropriation or loans through the Treasury. With this management relationship in practical effect, neither Investnorth nor the Territory

Property Trust will need to employ staff of their own. Operational staff for the Yulara resort will be concentrated at Yulara and key staff, with ownership-related responsibilities, drawn into Abington.

Also, Abington staff will manage the interface with the Darwin Sheraton owners. This approach is already producing significant administrative efficiency with associated certainty and purpose for operators, departments and others involved with the projects themselves. Abington and the advisory panel identified direct marketing as a priority issue. Mr Bill King, who had been a director of the Yulara Development Company, had identified to that company the vacuum in the market for holiday packages for Yulara, a vacuum which was becoming more evident with the success of the Northern Territory Tourist Commission and Australian Tourist Commission image-marketing programs in Australia and overseas. Unless a holiday-maker was prepared to travel by coach, there was really nothing available on the travel agents' shelves.

Mr King proposed the formation of a wholesale marketing company, constructing and selling fly-drive packages with an extended length of stay in Yulara. By its nature, Abington was able to extend this concept to holidays concentrating for their accommodation component on each of the hotels in which it had a management interest. Mr King was prepared to create such a wholesaling company, using his established industry contacts and reputation. He had severed his previous employment in the industry and was prepared to re-enter the market and devote his considerable energies to the benefit of the Territory properties. He agreed to resign his Yulara directorship if he were to be engaged in that way, and has done so.

Following an assessment of what other established Australian wholesalers were prepared to offer in this direction and further negotiation of the basis on which Mr King was prepared to enter into a relationship of this sort, an agreement was concluded with Mr King's firm, Destination Australian Marketing NT. Under this agreement, Mr King and his associates would work for that firm under a franchise from Abington. The firm is licensed to use Mr King's name, and this will gain immediate access to the target markets. Agreed costs of the firm will be paid by Abington and its incentive will be an industry-based commercial percentage of the commission on packages actually sold. Clearly, although there is potential for profit for Abington in this enterprise, the primary objective is to secure a new layer of custom for the hotels.

While the business of the market company builds, its expenses will be drawn in turn by Abington from the owners of each property in proportion to expected business. Such drawings will be expected to come from existing promotional budgets of the hotels, thus avoiding a flow-on to government under financial support arrangements. The first holiday package brochure will be in the market by mid-April. It is worth stressing that this activity represents new business which is not reaching the Territory at present. Whilst relatively exclusive as to its capture of the talents of Mr King, the arrangement Abington has made is not exclusive for the hotels concerned, and they can continue to work with and through any other wholesalers who are prepared to support their properties.

A further advantage of centralisation has been the opportunity to relate to the tourist industry generally, and the Sheraton organisation in particular, in a coordinated way. Two significant meetings have been held between Abington and senior Australian and Asian Sheraton executives. These meetings were a flow-on from my approaches to Mr Kapioltas, President of Sheraton, in the middle of last year. Sheraton have agreed to reduce their

operating fee now for both the Ayers Rock and the Alice Sheratons. The direct saving will flow through to reduce government support payments and is expected to exceed \$1m in the first 4 years of its application. Discussions are continuing over the fee for the Sheraton Darwin in respect of property promotion and tariff structures and levels, and contributions to marketing.

More generally, Abington is examining aspects of airlines' policy which impact on tourist flows, to allow input into the relevant forums. Also, it is considering the form of a tourist development study with the Northern Territory Tourist Commission and the Queensland Tourist Commission to give a firm planning basis for its work so that the scope and style of properties is commensurate with growth and demand.

Since its revitalisation, Abington also has been considering options for financing of the Alice Sheraton for Investnorth. We are advised that institutions are prepared to take equity in that company. However, the expected rate of return would need to be similar to alternative investment opportunities in Australia. Notwithstanding the fact that almost \$0.5m over budget was achieved by Sheraton in food and beverage sales to the end of December, its budget projections remain as they were when I made my statement in August. It is those budgets which will be considered by potential investors so that, if their return is to be set in relation to them, the value they will put on the company will be much less than the book value. I used the figure of \$26m as the measure of discount in August. Someone would have to put this sort of money in patiently if we were to sell out the equity now.

When the impact of marketing and other measures by Abington and Sheraton is capable of confident reflection in Sheraton's budgets, the extent of the patient component will fall progressively, and may disappear. As I have said, it is Abington's objective to eliminate government liability and it will continue to do everything necessary to reach the point at which equity can be introduced at a proper price. It would be foolish to take up equity at any price - and by implication make up the difference - when we have a real opportunity to influence the price in the medium term. The special advisory panel has supported this view strongly.

Accordingly, Investnorth has negotiated a \$28m floating rate 5-year loan facility with the State Bank of South Australia. CIBC has provided a further short-term bridging facility for \$9m and the original bill line has been terminated. This bridging loan is to be repaid when negotiations currently in train with other institutions are concluded. Fundamental features of these new long-term loan arrangements are that they can be drawn in any basket of currency, from time to time, and that they can be repaid early at Investnorth's own discretion. These features open a range of options for consideration in putting together a prospectus to investors as soon as projected hotel returns are maximised. In the meantime, the government will continue to stand behind Investnorth and appropriate loan funds to it, at interest, to enable it to meet any shortfall in its capacity to meet its on-going commercial loan obligations. Repayment of such injections will be an element of the ultimate investor take-up arrangements.

I now turn to the Yulara project. Yulara represents the most significant exposure but also the most significant opportunity. It is the hub of our tourism drive and our ace drawcard. In recent months, Abington has worked closely with the Yulara group of companies and advisers in considering a new strategy to enhance its viability. Yulara is to be developed as a resort destination and not simply a comfortable base from which to pay a visit to

Ayers Rock. Visitor experience will be enhanced by the provision of a range of additional facilities and services so that length of stay is extended. Yulara will be managed from Yulara itself, with close integration of activity to ensure that guests have a satisfying stay. There will be concentration on the training of all staff as a knowledgeable resource.

Specialised finance staff employed by Yulara will join Abington to share their expertise in the management of other projects. The gradual implementation of the stated policy of government to purchase those assets which normally it would own in a township has begun. This will allow Yulara to be relieved of some of its borrowings and will give it a more commercial platform for its approach. Yulara provides us still with the health, education, police, roads, recreation, conservation and communications facilities to serve the region. Our general annual contribution to the project remains at about \$7m, and the profile of investor return remains on course.

Mr Ewing has been appointed by the Territory Insurance Office as its representative director on, and Chairman of, the Yulara Development Company Board. Mr Alder, the chairman for the past 4 years, has been appointed chief executive. These moves integrate policy and executive resources between Abington and the YDC.

The Bill King marketing effort will build on the new resort orientation of Yulara. For the first time, 3 nights or more will be available in holidays, including Yulara. Much more effective and productive use will be made of the top-level accommodation components.

The operation of the casinos continues under the agreements I tabled previously. The operators, Aspinalls and Pratts, trading as Diamond Leisure Pty Ltd, are meeting their rental obligations to the Territory Property Trust. That rental is sufficient to meet the expenses of the trust, including interest on its borrowings and payment of a 10% dividend to unit holders. Diamond Leisure achieved an 8% increase in gross gaming win in its first lease year. The rent it paid was above expectation because of the impact of high interest rates. The solvency of the trust has priority under the operating agreements, consequently the provisional tax of \$43 000 will be refunded when audit verification of results is received. Diamond Leisure made an accounting loss notwithstanding this refund. It did not exercise its right to call on a loan from the NTDC to cover its loss, rather it is carrying its working capital needs through its own commercial overdraft facilities.

Abington and its advisers in the Special Financial Advisory Panel have been examining means by which the finances of the Territory Property Trust can be restructured to produce a lower rental burden on the operator. At the same time, Aspinalls has been looking at its relationship with Pratts and the trust ownership arrangements from its own perspective. Discussions between Aspinalls, the unit holders and Abington, with the involvement of the advisory panel, are continuing.

The refurbishment of the hotel casinos is now well advanced but proceeding at a slower pace than was anticipated. Control of this program is now with Abington, in its restructured form, and priority is being given to its completion by the beginning of the 1986 tourist season. A second layer of contractor activity has been introduced to the Darwin site with the appointment of Hansen and Yuncken to complete certain remaining elements. The total cost of refurbishment will be in the order of \$6m, funded by the trust

from borrowings serviced by the operator's rent. The scope of the work and the specification have been set by the operator according to his perceived market need. The salon privee, the cornerstone facility for the high-stakes market, will be finished soon. Groups of pathfinding Asian customers have begun to arrive already.

The Bill King marketing program will include packages tailored especially to accelerate tourist flows into the casino properties. The Darwin Sheraton, owned by Manolas Hotels, will open in July this year. As I have said, Abington is working closely with the owners, Sheraton and Bill King, to maximise the potential of this valuable addition to our tourism infrastructure. Whilst budgets for the hotel have not been finalised yet, there is no doubt that government support will be drawn upon under the agreements it has entered into. It is Abington's task to keep these to a minimum in the early years. Honourable members are aware that the financial arrangements for this hotel are that the property will be sold or offered for sale in 10 years and that any residual amount of government support remaining at that time will be recouped from the proceeds.

Mr Deputy Speaker, it is not my purpose simply to highlight all that has been achieved over the last few months in creating a sound foundation for liability elimination. Fine assets are in place and their proper management will see the achievement of true commercialisation of our tourist industry. However, I do wish to highlight the fact that what was...

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The honourable Chief Minister's time has expired.

Mr D.W. COLLINS (Sadadeen): Mr Speaker, I move that so much of standing orders be suspended as would prevent the Chief Minister from concluding his speech.

Motion agreed to.

Mr TUXWORTH: I want to highlight the fact that what was previously a fragmented approach to the satisfaction of our common ambitions has been converted to a thoroughly coordinated one and this will remain so under Abington. At the same time, we are mindful that external factors are still capable of influencing our success. There is a range of these including, at the broadest level, world economic conditions with a bearing on tourism flows over which, clearly, we have little or no control. Then there are those factors which could be removed or lessened in their impact by the federal government exhibiting a modicum of goodwill and its understanding that our success is its success. The major factor continues to be Commonwealth procrastination over the airport.

Mr Speaker, I would like to move on to some other points in relation to the employment that has been created by the establishment of these projects since the self-government period of 1978. Since self-government in 1978, the Northern Territory government has made a concerted effort to market the Territory's great potential for investment and development. The success of this effort can be gauged by indicators such as population growth. The population rate for the Territory in June 1985 was ...

Mr B. COLLINS: A point of order, Mr Speaker! We know of course, that the Chief Minister is using a ministerial statement on a general economic forecast for the Northern Territory that he intended to deliver later this morning in response to this debate. Mr Speaker, I refer you to the notice paper and the

very specific nature of our motion which currently he is debating. Unfortunately, his prepared speech does not quite fit. I would ask that the Chief Minister not digress from the subject we are debating.

Mr SPEAKER: Honourable Chief Minister, the terms of the motion are quite explicit and the information you are providing is not relevant to this particular debate.

Mr TUXWORTH (Chief Minister): Mr Speaker, the point that I am making is that our investment has created a great deal of employment. I was about to outline, for the benefit of the Assembly, the contribution to employment. It is extremely relevant, Mr Speaker. The opposition is concerned about the level of contingent liability. That contingent liability has, in turn, created jobs and I think we ought to reflect on that.

Mr Speaker, population growth for the Territory in June 1985 was 3.6% per annum, nearly 3 times the Australian rate. Half of this growth is a result of the people moving to the Territory from southern states in response to the Territory's employment opportunities. Opportunities for some 5000 Territorians have been created in the public sector since self-government. A further 14 000 jobs have been created from private investment in the Territory since 1978. During 1984-85, 7500 jobs were created and all but 1000 of those were in the private sector - clear proof of the Territory's successful encouragement of private investment.

Since self-government, a number of major developments have been built in the Territory and the government is pleased to have been associated with them. These projects have created many jobs. By June this year, the City of Darwin will have 3 international-standard hotels - the casino, Beaufort and Sheraton - and Alice Springs will have 2 - the casino and the Sheraton. These projects have provided jobs for many Territorians. In the construction phases alone, employment created by these projects has totalled 1700 jobs. More importantly, because they are continuing positions, these projects now involve 1300 operational jobs for Territorians, and this is direct employment creation only. It has been estimated that a further 1300 jobs were generated indirectly through a flow-on effect during the construction phases of these projects and, during the operational phase, another 600 employment opportunities are now available.

In the energy field - and I am digressing from the contingent liability and I accept that - 1200 jobs have been created directly during construction and 1000 indirectly, and 120 ongoing jobs, plus a further 100 through flow-on effects. Similar situations can be found in other industries, but the facts are that thousands of jobs have been created in the Northern Territory through the government's commitment to tourism.

For all the noise that is made, we ought to stop occasionally and ask ourselves what would happen if we had not given any of these projects government backing and had not gone ahead and built them? The fact is that we would not have had the original construction jobs, nor the continuing and flow-on jobs, nor the inflow of capital and expenditure in the community that people bring when they come to visit. In the Territory, we have always been faced with the chicken-and-egg syndrome. Until we can put the infrastructure in place, there is no way that we can encourage people to come here.

I would like to highlight some other points for the benefit of the Leader of the Opposition and his colleagues. One of the interesting things about the

government in the Northern Territory is that we declare much more about our financial affairs than any of the states do. In spite of the nonsense that is heard about what we do not tell people, more information is available here than will be found in any other parliament in Australia.

Mr Smith: Rubbish.

Mr TUXWORTH: It is not rubbish. Mr Speaker, if the honourable member knew what went on in any other parliament, he would not say the things that he does.

Mr Speaker, for the benefit of honourable members, let me highlight some of the major projects undertaken with state government financial involvement. An example in Victoria is the World Trade Centre. The hotel alone cost \$40m. The purpose of the building was to house the new Australian Ballet and Victorian Ministry for Arts. The ultimate cost was \$18m, comprised of \$3m in Australian Ballet equity, \$5.2m from a bicentennial grant and a State Development Program loan of \$10m. The story is that the government will provide loan funds through the State Development Program and rent from commercial sections will be split equally between equity and debt partners. It is an excellent project.

Mr B. COLLINS: A point of order, Mr Speaker! I think the Assembly has been extremely lenient with the Chief Minister. We are trying to be cooperative, but he is so far off the point now that it is not funny. We have been accommodating.

Mr SPEAKER: Does the honourable Chief Minister have many more points to make?

Mr TUXWORTH: Mr Speaker, I would like to touch on a government-supported project in Western Australia - the North-West Shelf gas project. It is a \$1200m project and ultimately the state put in \$5.8m to assist with capital overruns involved. I would say to the honourable member that that project would have to be one of the great developments for Australia and I would support it whether a Labor or a Liberal government put it into place. But the difference between Western Australia and ourselves was that, when the crunch came, the federal government jumped in with a \$140m-a-year contribution to the state coffers to assist with cash flow problems. The Northern Territory does not receive that sort of largesse. That is the difference between how Labor states are able to accommodate their contingent liability problems and how non-Labor states have to deal with the same problems.

The last point that I will deal with is the South Australian Grand Prix project, towards which the government contributed \$8.4m: \$2.4m from the state and \$5m from the federal government. Not bad, \$5m for a...

Mr B. Collins: What has that go to do with us?

Mr TUXWORTH: Mr Speaker, it has a great deal to do with us because we are dealing with the level of government contributions required to get some projects off the ground. A further \$1m came from the Jubilee 150 organisation.

I raise those 3 points to highlight the fact that, all over Australia, governments have commitments to projects to get them up and running. Some of the commitments are to ongoing payments. In the case of the pipeline,

\$140m per annum passes from the federal coffers straight into Western Australia. In other cases, capital components are injected to give the projects viability but, nevertheless, they are worthwhile contributions. I do not detract from the governments that do it, whether they are Liberal or Labor, because I think that they are good projects. At the same time, the projects we have supported in the Northern Territory are fantastic assets for the Territory and for Australia. They will all be operating and providing wealth and opportunity for the Territory in 40 years time, and we do not resile for 1 minute from the contribution that the government has made in this area.

Mr B. COLLINS (Opposition Leader): Mr Speaker, the motion before the Chair is to set up a select committee to investigate the contingent and actual liabilities of the Northern Territory. It would need to be an extremely broad-ranging inquiry. As a result of the debates that have taken place in the Assembly during the last couple of weeks, we all know that the most tangible and, certainly, the worst actual liability that the Northern Territory has at the moment is the honourable Chief Minister.

Mr Speaker, all honourable members know, particularly his colleagues on the frontbench, that the reason a suspension of standing orders was called to bring on the debate now before the Chair, on actual and contingent liabilities, was purely and simply a result of the Chief Minister gagging an opposition motion on general business day. We were forced to this as the only means of redress to place the matter of the Northern Territory's financial problems on the agenda again, although we have persisted for the 5 days available to us for the first time in 4 months.

The reason is quite simple. The Northern Territory's Treasurer got off to a flying start in that portfolio. He had a very auspicious start to his career as Treasurer indeed, and that was canvassed at some length in this Assembly. That was a debate which the government lost profoundly because the Chief Minister was as big a liability to his colleagues on that occasion as he is now. The matter that I refer to is one of the worst problems in terms of contingent liabilities that the government faces, and that the Northern Territory is facing as a result.

Shortly after he became Treasurer of the Northern Territory, the Chief Minister issued a public statement. It was 1 week before polling day for the last federal election and, in response to pressure from the Labor Party in the Northern Territory, the Chief Minister quite happily put his name to a press release, as Treasurer, which said in its first paragraph that the Treasurer of the Northern Territory assured the people of the Northern Territory that not 1¢ of public money had been used in the transfer of the casinos from Federal Hotels, the original owners, to Coonawarra Unit Trust, a trust that was established with total assets of \$10 000. We canvassed that in a major debate in this Assembly.

During that debate, the honourable Treasurer was forced to admit that that statement was false. He was forced to admit that he knew that it was false when he issued it, because he told the Assembly - and it is in Hansard - that he had given instructions personally, as Treasurer, for the transfer of \$22m of public money from the Northern Territory Treasury to be used as short-term finance for that transaction, 1 week before he had issued that statement. That was his auspicious start as Treasurer and trustee of the Northern Territory's public funds.

In respect of that particular contingent liability, we all know that the Chief Minister was fully aware that, had he answered honestly the questions put by the Labor Party on that occasion, Paul Everingham would not have won a seat in the last election - which he won by 600 votes. Even after the many years that he has been in politics, the Chief Minister cannot understand even the basics.

An honourable member opposite disagrees with me and says he won by 1200 votes; 600 is the correct figure. If 300 people are persuaded to change their minds, the result will be different. For the honourable Treasurer's benefit, what you have to do is divide the 600 votes by 2.

Mr Speaker, the one gentleman who was never in any doubt about that subject was the honourable federal member himself. It was said by many people in the CLP afterwards - and it was true and is true - that, had the Treasurer decided to set a precedent by being truthful, the CLP would have lost that federal seat which was won by such a narrow margin. If the extraordinary details that were revealed in this Assembly during that debate had been revealed 1 week before polling day, the result would have been very different.

Mr Coulter: He was 4000 in front in the northern suburbs.

Mr B. COLLINS: In response to that interjection, indeed he was 4000 in front in the northern suburbs. As we all know, the Minister for Community Development - and I stress this, Mr Speaker - is always removing Aboriginal Territorians from his consideration in respect of every matter, including voting in elections in the Northern Territory - and he has just done it again.

Mr Dale: It is a group you do not represent.

Mr SPEAKER: Order!

Mr B. COLLINS: Mr Speaker, the Chief Minister had a choice to make: he could be honest about what he had done as Treasurer of the Northern Territory and put at risk the result of an election or he could simply tell a great untruth - and it was a whopper - sort it out afterwards in the Legislative Assembly and scrape in. He took the latter course, the coward's course - which he has taken ever since - and issued a false statement which, afterwards in that debate, he admitted in this Assembly was false. He admitted that he had transferred \$22m the week before he issued the statement.

Mr Speaker, the Treasurer of the Northern Territory has continued as he began in respect of all our contingent liabilities and commitments - money that has been lost to the Northern Territory taxpayers by the actions of this government. The Chief Ministers gave a clear and unequivocal indication in this Assembly last week, in response to pressure from the opposition, that \$10 000 of public money had stuck to his own fingers. He admitted here that he was not entitled morally to take the money. We then witnessed the extraordinary and degrading performance of the member for Fannie Bay and various others in this Assembly trying to explain that, technically, he had not broken the law in pulling that little scam. It was revealed by the member for Fannie Bay that none of his political colleagues had picked up that little theft of public money; it was a public servant. Of course we know who that public servant was and I commend him because obviously he is a public servant with a keen political sense. He realised what political dynamite it was and is, and he reported it to the head of the government who carpeted the honourable minister, on his own admission, and directed him to repay the

money. Of course, the problem with that particular liability to the Northern Territory's public purse is that, on the last day of these sittings, we still do not know the answers to all of the questions that were put last week to the Chief Minister who has said that he is so good at answering questions about the financial matters of the Northern Territory. The Deputy Leader of the Opposition has certainly laid that notion to rest and I will just nail a few more nails into the coffin of that nonsense.

The honourable Chief Minister and Treasurer gagged the debate on any investigation into whether we could better manage our financial affairs in the Northern Territory. He gagged the debate and said we can ask questions on notice and we can write and receive replies etc. We have raised this matter repeatedly. The government's response to questions on notice is to wait a year, or longer in some cases, before issuing a reply and then to reply with useless gibberish and inaccuracies. The government is trying to cover up and hide information all the time. In particular, the Treasurer is doing that in respect of his own affairs. He is terrified that, if the information were made public, it would damage him even more than the damage caused to him by the way he has used this Assembly in these sittings, and that is what it is all about.

I wrote to the Chief Minister after 9 months of pursuing that particular liability for the Northern Territory. I knew it existed and I realised full well that I was being deliberately snowed and fudged off by a Chief Minister who was terrified that I would eventually uncover the grotty dealings that he had been engaged in on a person level. He realised the implications of that liability to his position as Chief Minister, Treasurer and minister responsible for the public service and the police among other things.

After 9 months of chasing that and being given nonsense in reply, I wrote to the Chief Minister on 10 January 1986 and said:

'Dear Mr Tuxworth,

I write in reference to your reply to my question on notice regarding government-financed overseas trips taken by office-holding members of the Legislative Assembly.

Your written reply is inaccurate and misleading - a fact, I might add, which has been acknowledged by 2 Cabinet ministers in public statements on this issue. I find it inconceivable that the government is unable to provide a total cost for these trips.'

Since the Chief Minister took over this government, there has been an overseas travelling bonanza on the part of the government that ...

Mr FINCH: A point of order, Mr Speaker! The Leader of the Opposition's speech is totally irrelevant to the motion before the Assembly. The motion refers to contingent liabilities.

Mr B. COLLINS: Mr Speaker, liabilities are liabilities.

Mr SPEAKER: The remarks by the Leader of the Opposition have been in process for some 12 minutes in the same vein, and relate to contingent and actual liabilities.

Mr B. COLLINS: Mr Speaker, money lost to the taxpayers of the Northern Territory is a liability that this committee could uncover. There has been an absolute bonanza of overseas trips since this Chief Minister took over as distinct from the last Chief Minister. Backbenchers have been flitting off to London. Other backbenchers have been carrying the suitcases for ministers. The reason is quite simple. If you have a leader of government who, on his own admission, is quite happy - he does not even tally the bill - to send you off whenever you want on an all-expenses-paid, first-class trip overseas with your American Express card, and asks no questions, when it is time to decide whether he should be changed for another Chief Minister who might not be quite so accommodating, he then gets your vote. That is what it is all about. The extent to which this has been indulged in has been a disgrace. The amount of money that it is now costing is becoming an embarrassment.

Mr Speaker, we support the need for overseas travel. But it is pretty difficult...

Mr Coulter: Tell us about your trip.

Mr B. COLLINS: Mr Speaker, I am prepared to let the Chief Minister explain to this Assembly the benefit to the Northern Territory public of just one trip, and there are many examples. Perhaps he could explain the benefit to the taxpayer of the trip undertaken by the Chief Minister, Mrs Tuxworth, Mr Saville and Mrs Saville when they visited Singapore and Kota Kinabalu via Perth on a 6-day trip that cost \$14 000. If our adjournment motion succeeds tonight, we will be able to ask that at question time at 2.00 this afternoon when we sit again. Perhaps the Chief Minister could then explain what public benefit came out of that 6-day jaunt, a little family outing for Mr and Mrs Tuxworth and Mr and Mrs Saville. No public explanation was given as to what benefit we were supposed to get from a 6-day jaunt to Kota Kinabalu and Singapore via Perth. That is just one example.

Those payoffs have been going on right across the board and we have been very accommodating in respect of that. We were very forgiving of the government but, as the amount started to reach dizzy heights, we started asking questions. We were astounded to have the Chief Minister admit to us that the government was not in a position to account for the actual cost to the taxpayer of those trips. That is precisely what he says here.

All honourable members would know that the accommodation and entertainment expenses in respect of those trips are quite often as much or more than the travel expenses. The accounting procedures, on the admission of the Chief Minister himself, are not in place in the Northern Territory government to provide that information even within a period of 9 months. As he explained to me, the reason is that procedures were not in place to allow that to be accounted for.

Mr Speaker, I ask the Chief Minister, who is defending the way in which the government handles public money, how he is supposed to assess responsibly - as he always does publicly - the value to the Northern Territory taxpayer of those overseas trips when he cannot even answer how much those trips cost because the information is simply not recoverable. I received the answer that, as a result of my question, the government will now investigate procedures that will allow it to work out for the first time actually how much these overseas trips cost the Northern Territory taxpayer. The reason that he never bothered to do that is because no expense is ever spared in respect of those overseas trips, at least in so far as this Chief Minister is concerned.

I know that the last Chief Minister had a very tight policy on the matter. But this Chief Minister does not; it is open slather. Members collect first-class tickets and travel with their Amex cards, and the government pays the bill at the end of the month with no questions asked.

That is what has been going on. Why would it not be going on when we have an admission in the Assembly that the Chief Minister himself was personally responsible for filling out travelling allowance claims over a 14-month period and collecting \$10 000 tax free that he was not entitled to. He did that with the full knowledge of his Cabinet colleagues. If his Cabinet colleagues knew that that was his personal behaviour irrespective of whether it was technically or legally correct or not, or whether similar behaviour on the part of a public servant would get him 3 years in the nick under section 81 of the Northern Territory's Criminal Code, it is understandable that his colleagues would say: 'Let's get on board Tuxworth's Travel Pty Ltd with our Amex cards. No questions will be asked. We know the Chief Minister himself does not resile from pocketing some of the public's funds. If he gets caught, he pays it back quietly and says nothing about it. Why should we exercise the slightest responsibility ourselves in respect of how we dispose of very large sums of public money?'

The Chief Minister had better not put out any more statements about what enormous benefit these overseas trips are to the Northern Territory until he implements for the first time some accounting procedures that actually allow the taxpayers of the Northern Territory to be told the actual cost of those overseas trips. That is just one glaring example.

As far as the contingent liabilities in respect of the major hotel developments are concerned, it is a very sorry picture indeed. He has the hide to talk about the South Australian Grand Prix. I would like 10 of those in the Northern Territory with the returns they will bring to South Australia. It has a 7-year renewable contract for the Grand Prix for an investment of \$5m. Compare that with the losses that the taxpayers have already sustained with the cuts in government services and increases in taxes and charges. That amounts to \$54m in just 2 budgets - the last one and the one coming up. He has the hide to talk about putting Yulara on a normal town basis and buying back capital works. We all know what a sham that was. That was a sham to hide the fact that Yulara needed an instant cash injection of \$27m out of 1 budget to prop it up.

What is the problem with that? We had been told by the former Chief Minister just 18 months before all this happened that none of this would cost the Northern Territory taxpayers a cent. We would get a third of the profits from the casino at Myilly Point for the privilege of putting in a few sewerage pipes and building a bit of kerbing and guttering. Those statements were made by the then Chief Minister. We now know what a sorry picture that was.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The honourable Leader of the Opposition's time has expired.

Mr LEO (Nhulunbuy): Mr Speaker, I move that so much of standing orders be suspended as would prevent the Leader of the Opposition from concluding his speech.

The Assembly divided:

Ayes 6

Mr Bell
Mr B. Collins
Mr Ede
Mr Lanhupuy
Mr Leo
Mr Smith

Noes 18

Mr D.W. Collins
Mr Coulter
Mr Dale
Mr Dondas
Mr Finch
Mr Firmin
Mr Hanrahan
Mr Harris
Mr Hatton
Mr McCarthy
Mr Manzie
Mrs Padgham-Purich
Mr Perron
Mr Robertson
Mr Setter
Mr Steele
Mr Tuxworth
Mr Vale

Motion negatived.

Mr LEO: Mr Speaker, I move that the Leader of the Opposition be granted an extension of time.

The Assembly divided:

Ayes 6

Mr Bell
Mr B. Collins
Mr Ede
Mr Lanhupuy
Mr Leo
Mr Smith

Noes 18

Mr D.W. Collins
Mr Coulter
Mr Dale
Mr Dondas
Mr Finch
Mr Firmin
Mr Hanrahan
Mr Harris
Mr Hatton
Mr McCarthy
Mr Manzie
Mrs Padgham-Purich
Mr Perron
Mr Robertson
Mr Setter
Mr Steele
Mr Tuxworth
Mr Vale

Motion negatived.

Mr SPEAKER: The question is that the motion be agreed to.

The Assembly divided:

Ayes 6

Mr Bell
Mr B. Collins
Mr Ede
Mr Lanhupuy
Mr Leo
Mr Smith

Noes 18

Mr D.W. Collins
Mr Coulter
Mr Dale
Mr Dondas
Mr Finch
Mr Firmin
Mr Hanrahan
Mr Harris
Mr Hatton
Mr McCarthy
Mr Manzie
Mrs Padgham-Purich
Mr Perron
Mr Robertson
Mr Setter
Mr Steele
Mr Tuxworth
Mr Vale

Motion negatived.

MOTION

Referral of Matter to Sessional Committee on the Environment

Mr EDE (Stuart): Mr Speaker, I move that:

- '(1) the following matter be referred to the Sessional Committee on the Environment - the health, safety and welfare of workers employed within the uranium industry in the East Alligator Rivers region of the Northern Territory; and
- (2) the committee report to the Assembly on this reference within 6 months from today'.

Mr Speaker, the motion I have put before the Assembly today raises some very vital issues which need to be addressed within the whole mining and quarrying industry in the Northern Territory. Those issues involve miners' and workers' safety. No one will deny that there is a need for strict standards of health and safety to be adopted and adhered to within these particular industries in the Territory. This is even more relevant when we discuss the uranium industry and the specific hazards associated with its operation and development. This industry should stand as the epitome of health and safety standards for all other mining industries. Special attention should be given to this area because of the special risks involved. The specific problems of the uranium industry relate to the risks of contamination during the mining and processing of uranium both to the environment and, most importantly, to those employed within this industry. These are additional to the general dangers involved in any mining industry.

Over the past couple of years, there has been a good deal of publicity on the high number of incidents and infringements recorded at the uranium mines. Such publicity highlighted the dangers posed to the environment and the ecology of the area. That is fair enough. However, the dangers posed to

workers within this industry appear to have been neglected in those discussions. I raise the issue of health and safety standards of workers within the mining industry in the Territory and move that this Assembly request the Sessional Committee on the Environment to carry out a full public inquiry into the standards of health and safety in the East Alligator Rivers region. It seems appropriate that this committee should oversee the health and safety of the workers in this area.

Mr Speaker, let me go through a few problems which have presented themselves in the past and which have posed dangers and health risks to workers. Over a 3-week period in mid-1985, there were 3 to which I referred: 19 June 1985, sulphuric acid plant emissions - an infringement; 26 June 1985, sulphuric acid plant emissions - another infringement; and 4 July 1985, sulphuric acid plant emissions - another infringement. The low standard of health and safety in the uranium industry is evident from ongoing incidents and problems at Ranger.

Mr Perron: What was the nature of the infringement?

Mr EDE: The nature of the infringement was emissions from the acid plant. If the minister does not understand that about an area that he is supposed to know, I fear once more for the health and safety of the workers. On 13 September 1985, another incident was reported. Scaffolding hired from a Darwin firm, GKN Quickform, was used to carrying out maintenance in the precipitation, drying and packing area. This equipment was checked and decontaminated under the supervision of the Radiation Safety Officer in line with the standard procedure. Subsequently, after the pipes and planks were returned to the firm's depot in Darwin, yellow stains were found on some of the scaffolding. Thorough checks were carried out by the Radiation Safety Officer and it was confirmed that the stains were attributable to ingrained residual yellowcake. The Radiation Safety Officers' report of this incident indicated that it was most unlikely that a member of the public could have been exposed to an unacceptable level of radiation. However, we wonder about the safety of the workers who are actually working with it. About a tonne of stained equipment was segregated from the rest, securely wrapped and sent back to Ranger for further analysis and decontamination if required.

On the afternoon prior to the latest release of sulphur dioxide, the acid plant operator had the choice of allowing a major sulphur dioxide emission or a major acid leak. The operator was told to keep the boilers hot and the process going. To do this, sulphur is fed into the system. To counter the resulting accumulation of sulphur dioxide, hydrochloric acid is pumped through the system. However, there was a leak in this section of the processing plant resulting from a corroded pipe. The options for this worker were not to pump hydrochloric acid through the system and thus allow the release of excessive amounts of sulphur dioxide or to pump the hydrochloric acid through the system and run the risk of the corroded pipe giving way and having a major acid leak. The responsibility for taking such decisions should not be imposed on the operator.

Management and workers at Ranger agreed to a policy of reducing and totally eliminating dangers from asbestos in the plant. However, no attempt has been made since those discussions and agreements to reduce asbestos at all. In fact, in a recent incident, asbestos was removed from a generator under repair and was left spread all over the floor, exposing the workers to that hazard. Subsequently, it was replaced in the generator.

There are very strict rules in regard to clean areas. These are very important and the workers abide by them. I refer to areas which are free of any contamination. One such area is the operators' small 6'x6' room within the packing plant. After a recent stop-work meeting, workers returned to find contaminated items in the room. They had been left there by staff who had been in there while the workers were out. There were 2 sample bottles without lids and a torch. The 2 sample bottles contained uranium in one of its forms. The important principle of taking every precaution to avoid contamination was violated in this instance.

Let me move on to another of the ongoing problems at Ranger which is of concern to the workers and to myself. The product bin houses the final yellowcake product prior to packing. It actually sits on top of the packing area. The product is a highly hazardous substance. As it is released into the packing bins, amounts of yellowcake fall outside the doors of the packing bins. There have been numerous demands to have this problem rectified but nothing has been done. The explanation offered is that the engineering problem involved in rectification is too difficult. Consequently, the problem continues.

Another concern is the ongoing spillages from under the leach pachucas. These pachucas are the large containers in which the ground ore or slurry is worked. The ground ore is spread into one and overflows onto another and then another through the process. During this process, there is inevitable spillage under the pachucas. The clearing up of this should be done regularly. However, the workers have found that the cleaning up under the pachucas is carried out only when industrial pressure is applied on the management. Clearly, in this case, there is no genuine attempt to maintain a clean and safe work environment.

I would like to move on to the ongoing problem of sulphur dioxide fumes present in the scrubber room and at the top of the recycling water tank. This is a problem during the final stage of the processing of the ore. Let me prefix this problem with an extract from a book on the effects of exposure to toxic gases. Briefly, it states:

'Sulphur dioxide is a highly irritating gas readily eliciting respiratory reflexes. It is intensely irritating to the eyes, throat and respiratory tract. Inhalation of its vapour in concentrations of 8 to 12 ppm in air causes throat irritation, coughing, constriction of the chest and lacrimation and smarting of the eyes. A concentration of 150 ppm can be endured only a few minutes due to eye irritation and the effect on the membranes of the nose, throat and lungs. Exposure to a concentration of 500 ppm by volume in air for 30 to 60 minutes is highly dangerous. Continued exposure to amounts greater than 1000 to 2000 ppm may be fatal'.

Mr Speaker, the continuous working level or the threshold limit value for sulphur dioxide is 2 parts per million. Readings recorded on 17 December 1985 indicated sulphur dioxide fumes in the scrubber room in the precipitation, drying and packing area were 7.5 parts per million. That is almost 4 times the acceptable level. This concern was discussed with the mill superintendent who agreed to make changes in an attempt to reduce levels. Tests were also carried out on levels above the recycling water tank. Results indicated a level of 50 parts per million or 25 times the acceptable level.

Only 2 weeks later, further tests were carried out which indicated levels were still high. There were 2.5 parts per million in the scrubber room and 50 parts per million above the recycling water tank. Again the mill department was notified and it suggested further measures to reduce levels. Only 2 weeks later, levels were found to be excessive. On 14 January 1986, results showed levels of 7.5 parts per million in the scrubber room, the same reading as before all these new measures were implemented, and 9 parts per million above the recycling water tank. At the time of this test, the scrubber room had shut down. It was not operating yet the reading was well above the threshold limit value.

In a memo from the Safety Coordinator to the General Manager, Operations, at Ranger, the following comments were made:

'From the frequency of the occurrence of the high levels of SO₂, it is obvious that the countermeasures already taken are ineffective or effective for only short terms. It is imperative that a permanent, long-term solution is found to this problem and implemented immediately'.

Let me refer this Assembly to another example of the lack of satisfactory standards for workers' safety and health. Workers were required to carry out work in the settler tank in the solvent extraction area. This area is known as area 26. It is used for the final processing stage before drying. The product in this tank is basically yellowcake; it has a muddy consistency and is bright yellow in colour. In the tank, there are double-sided, picket fence-type structures. Recently, during the process it was necessary to have alternate pickets removed because of a build up of the product. Workers were required to don rubber wader-type overalls and work in this substance to remove pickets. One of them said to me that he wondered what would have happened if he had fallen over. When the tank was empty, it was hosed out and cleaned. However, when the worker who replaced the lid on the tank came outside, he found that his shoulders were covered in yellowcake dust from working inside the tank and adjusting the lid.

The workers are not concerned about doing their job. Their concern is that area 26 does not come under any permit control unlike area 27, the precipitation, drying and packing area. If the workers do not take precautions, the management does not. At the moment, no special procedures are necessary for that particular area because it is not covered by the same controls that apply to area 27. I find that most inadequate and most unsatisfactory. As I said earlier, these are allegations. They are statements made to me by workers who have been unable to have the situation redressed.

Mr Speaker, I will go on to a couple of other allegations. An article in the Sunday Territorian of 23 March states that there have been 8 cases of leukemia and other cancer-related diseases among milling plant workers at Ranger. The article says the incidence is so high that it should be researched as part of a public inquiry into safety at the mine. It is very easy for the people opposite to say that it is nonsense and disregard such information but, if you or your child were working there, you would be a bit more worried. At least, I hope you would.

This article was written in the context of current industrial action being undertaken by workers at Ranger. Such action was a result of yet another

incident at the mine. On 4 March, there was a release of excessive amounts of sulphur dioxide gas in the acid plant, resulting in the evacuation of workers, many of whom suffered varying degrees of eye irritation and nausea. Not all these workers sought medical advice. That is not the point at issue. The point is that, on that day, a dangerous situation existed at Ranger. Such an occurrence should not have occurred. However, when it did, it should have been fully investigated with the worker's health and safety in mind. Workers' health and safety should be given more consideration in recommendations arising from such an investigation.

The fact is that the gas analyser which is used to measure excess gas emissions at Ranger has not been working since last November. There has been a lack of approved testing and no accurate continuous monitoring of gas emissions. This demonstrates the lack of commitment on behalf of the company and the contempt with which it treats the Department of Mines and Energy. I say that advisedly. As we know, Ranger is not allowed to substitute testing at particular times for continuous monitoring without departmental approval. That approval may have been given if requested. Ranger did not even bother to tell the Department of Mines and Energy that the equipment had broken down. It substituted a test which was carried out once per shift at the most. This was in a section of the works which had been the location of 3 infringements only a few months before.

However, this is only half of the story behind the incident. I would like to trace the course of events. I am informed that, on the day in question, 2 of the supervisors were arguing about whether they should start up the acid plant. One wanted to start it immediately and the other wanted to wait until it became hotter. They tried to start it once, but it was not hot enough. The argument continued. Eventually they started it at the lowest possible temperature. We all know that emissions are higher at the start than later. That is not at issue. However, in order to have the lowest possible emissions at the commencement of plant operation, 2 conditions must be met: temperature of the boilers should be as close as possible to operating temperature and the weather conditions should be suitable.

In this case, the plant was started at the lowest possible temperature. Furthermore, if the supervisors had looked outside, they would have realised that there was no wind. What were the effects? One of the workers was sent home sick. There were reports of a cleaner on his hands and knees outside and of another person vomiting. There are reports of trees dying - perhaps from old age. Perhaps members opposite can explain away the danger to the person who was on scaffolding, carrying out maintenance work. He was hit by the acid emission and had to cling on for dear life whilst being enveloped in the gas. If that person had not had something to hang on to and had plunged to his death, would they laugh it off so lightly? What is more, no evacuation plan was put into action.

This emission on 4 March was not reported to the Department of Mines and Energy within 24 hours. That is a further breach of the Mines Safety Control Act. Further, it was not even entered in the Incident Book until the workers forced the issue. I am not taking these incidents in isolation. What I am saying is that the repetition of incident after incident begins to form a pattern. I present them as examples of the unnecessary risk run by workers in this industry in the Alligator Rivers region.

Attempts have been made to settle grievances by mutually-agreed procedures. These agreements have broken down in the past because of

management's disregard for them. The unions drew up another procedure document and presented it in October 1985, in another attempt to create a procedure which could be implemented in disputes relating to health and safety. Talks discontinued when senior management refused to cooperate. The unions requested that an independent safety inquiry be carried out. In my opinion, that was quite reasonable, given the long train of events. I have only described some; I do not have time to go through all of them.

Management offered a National Safety Council inquiry if the workers went back to work. The unions were quite happy to accept that proposal provided it was a written commitment. At that stage, local management started backpedalling at a million miles an hour, saying that the matter should be considered by the board. While the workers out there had to bind themselves to their side of the agreement, the company would not be bound to its side.

Workers have a responsibility to take every precaution to ensure their safety is maintained in their own work place. However, it is only possible for workers to do that if their employer provides a reasonably safe work place and safe working procedures. The situation now is that workers have lost confidence in management's willingness to stipulate and enforce strict health and safety standards. The workers are on strike because of this loss of confidence. Somehow, somewhere along the line, the system has failed. I have mentioned some of the allegations relating to unsafe incidents and practices that have occurred at Ranger, and only some. Many of these are very serious. Where do the workers in the industry go from here? Obviously, their health and safety are of some concern to management. However, the company has to supplement those concerns with its responsibility to shareholders. The consequence of this conflict of interest is a deadlock between the company and the workers. The workers now see the company as being interested in safety only if it does not cost a buck.

The Department of Mines and Energy also has a conflict of interest. The department is responsible for the health and safety of the workers and for promoting the development of mining within the Territory. Clearly, it is now time for an independent body to investigate the allegations of inadequate safety standards at Ranger. I believe that the Sessional Committee on the Environment is the appropriate body. If it is not the appropriate body, why does it exist? It was set up specifically to oversee the operations of this highly hazardous industry in the East Alligator River region. Its powers include the right to inquire into the health and safety standards of workers in the uranium industry in that part of the Territory, which is what this motion is all about.

It is the responsibility of this Assembly, on the basis of the arguments that I have put forward, to give a directive to the Sessional Committee on the Environment to use its powers to investigate these and any other allegations of inadequate health and safety standards for workers. I believe the committee will need to commission independent advice from a reputable firm of occupational hygienists to assist it in that task. I believe such action is imperative now that we have reached the stage where there has been such a breakdown in trust between management and workers that it is placing the industry in jeopardy. It is time for the committee, set up by this Assembly, to become active and to conduct formal inquiries. It should find out what the workers' allegations are and what the company's response is. It should obtain independent advice from an occupational hygienist. Having determined what the problem is, it should ask why the procedures of the Department of Mines and Energy are not effective in bringing problems to light and explaining

satisfactorily the degree to which workers' health and safety have been put at risk. I ask all members to support this motion.

Mr DALE (Wanguri): Mr Speaker, it is wonderful to hear another submission by the opposition on behalf of a union. The opposition spokesman on mines and energy includes the issue of workers' health and safety in his responsibilities. That is fine. But if he has such a sense of responsibility towards his job, why does he flee the committee into which he can have some direct input and from which he can receive reports on all sorts of matters in the uranium industry? He is quite amazing. Apparently, we have another hit song: 'When the going gets tough, the opposition runs out of puff'.

Mr B. Collins: You said that, if he talked about it outside of the committee, you would report him for a breach of privilege.

Mr DALE: Is it not amazing? The union representative did not mention one of the allegations about an accident at the Ranger Uranium Mine. An accident occurred in the workshop at Ranger when a 15-year-old apprentice was left unattended when the work force attended a stopwork meeting. On his own initiative, he started to build himself a metal toolbox using a mechanical guillotine. His left index finger was crushed at a time when the work force was attending a stop-work meeting. There are plenty of other allegations that can be made along those lines.

Let me tell members a few things about safety and health at Ranger. There is 1 Safety Coordinator, 1 Fire Protection Officer, 2 industrial nurses, 1 Radiation Safety Officer and 1 Deputy Safety Officer. To give emphasis to the safety program, all departmental heads are designated as safety officers. Ranger has 1 fire attendant and 1 ambulance and can call in similar equipment from Jabiru if necessary. Ranger also has a Senior Training Officer who deals with induction and safety programs and acts as a backup to the Safety Coordinator. There is a Mine Training Officer who is responsible for training mobile plant operators. Monthly safety meetings are held for all award personnel. This includes a monthly talk on a particular aspect of safety. People who are interested, unlike the shadow minister who runs away from his responsibility, have a monthly meeting where they are made quite aware of relevant safety aspects.

A master safety committee, consisting of the Safety Coordinator, General Manager, and Radiation Safety Officer and a representative from each union, meets monthly. The unions have their own input. They do not need a committee of this Assembly to do their job from them. Mechanisms are already in place and so is the legislation. I will not even bother reading the rest of these notes because, if the member had played a real role on the committee from which he has just resigned, he would know that the legislation is in place. He would know that, when reports are made to the appropriate people, action is taken in accordance with the legislation. I wonder, given the bill that he will introduce a little later on this morning, whether he is not just having a bit of a double dip at this particular subject.

I am quite amazed. We have a man who has been placed in a position where he can do a good job and obtain sufficient information on the subject he is concerned with, yet he removes himself from that situation. It is absolutely incredible. All I can say is that it is another classic example of the opposition substantiating the case of unionists who are involved in an industrial dispute. Their mates are sitting out there looking after \$40m-worth of yellowcake. This is all part of the deal. This man, the shadow

minister for mines and energy, is playing games with unions. He is being used again. No committee of this Assembly ought to be used in the same way.

Mr B. COLLINS (Opposition Leader): Mr Speaker, once again, we find in matters of great importance, that one prominent member opposite has restricted his contribution, despite the fact that he has a very important contribution to make. I hope that, before the end of the debate, he will contribute something of a little more substance.

I was a former member of the Sessional Committee on the Environment, an important committee of the Assembly. As the appropriate shadow minister at the time, I personally assisted in setting it up. Indeed, I was responsible for extending its terms of reference so that it was able to play a more meaningful role in investigating problems in the uranium province. Unfortunately, these debates will be of academic interest to some researcher engaged, in a few years time, in writing an updated version of 'Work as a Health Hazard', the book on the horrors of the asbestos industry. The problem is that, when you have a bunch of ministers of the Crown who treat worker health and safety as a huge joke, it is very difficult. While members of the committee spend all their time explaining away everything and refuse to admit there is the slightest thing wrong in the work place, it will not get very far.

I had the same difficulty with the committee as the member for Stuart, although I chose a different course. I raised matters of extreme importance which subsequent events proved to be correct. I raised my concerns about subterranean aquifers under dam walls. The walls, all built with the best available technology, later collapsed. I was not in any way criticising the company because, as I said on a number of occasions, the management at Ranger and the management at Nabarlek were by and large operating in an environmentally effective way. However, there were criticisms to be made on particular matters, and I made them. On every such occasion, I was howled down by the member opposite who always had an adequate explanation for whatever was wrong. If the tree was dead, it was old age. If the worker was dead when he hit the ground, it was probably old age too. Whatever it was, there was a ready explanation for it. The alacrity with which the member used to put forward those suggestions was blinding. He used to get in front of the management. We used to be accompanied by Ranger's advisers. Before they would have a chance to explain it away, the member opposite would have his explanation ready. Everyone had a problem in getting a word in edgewise. He was so busy explaining away whatever it was that was a problem.

Mr Coulter: It is his physics degree.

Mr B. COLLINS: We proved him wrong about that too in the Legislative Assembly.

Mr D.W. Collins: Come on, when?

Mr B. COLLINS: In fact, I said in this Assembly on many occasions before - and I meant it and I will say it again as shadow minister for education - that the greatest contribution the Labor Party has ever made...

Mr FINCH: A point of order, Mr Deputy Speaker! The honourable Leader of the Opposition is raising irrelevant matters.

Mr B. COLLINS: Under which standing order?

Mr FINCH: Under standing order 67.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: There is no point of order.

Mr B. COLLINS: The greatest contribution that the Northern Territory Labor Party has ever made to the education services of the Northern Territory was to lose the election against the member opposite and at least get him out of the Alice Springs High School. On a number of occasions in this Assembly and formerly on the committee, I have listened to the opinions of the honourable member and cringed at the very thought of him ever teaching my son anything at all. It is not a question of substance.

Mr FINCH: A point of order, Mr Deputy Speaker! I refer to standing order 62. The Leader of the Opposition is making a personal reflection on the honourable member for Sadadeen.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: The Leader of the Opposition will confine his remarks to the matter under discussion and cease reflecting on other honourable members.

Mr B. COLLINS: Certainly, Mr Deputy Speaker. Those members opposite who have been on the committee used to behave in exactly the same way as I have just been describing. They were not interested in investigating anything; they were not interested in looking at anything.

The problem was that a member of the committee could not discuss any concerns in the Legislative Assembly unless the committee gave its permission. If he did, it would be a breach of privilege. Of course, the government has a majority on that committee and opposition members were effectively muzzled. Obviously, it has not occurred to the members opposite that, when one is the shadow minister responsible for that area, it causes a particular problem. Members on select committees are in danger of breaching privilege by raising matters of real concern to them that may have been before the committees. It is a far better and more workable arrangement for members of either the opposition or government on these committees not to have responsibilities in the Assembly for those portfolio areas. That normally is the case with government members because it is most unusual to find ministers serving on committees of this nature. In almost all cases, those committees are manned by backbenchers. There is a surfeit of them in this Assembly; we have plenty to dish around. It is a particular problem for a small opposition in an Assembly of this size because every member of the opposition carries shadow portfolio responsibilities. I am sure members, and particularly the honourable member for standing orders opposite, will understand the problem that I have.

Mr Coulter: Too bad it took him 2 years to wake up to it.

Mr B. COLLINS: In response to the member's interjection, that is a very sad reflection on the member for Stuart because he did what I did: he persisted for as long as he could as a member of the committee. We discussed this many times. What I used to do was simply to talk about what I wanted to talk about in the Legislative Assembly and wait for the government to complain that I had breached privilege. I breached privilege on at least a dozen occasions and it never woke up to it. I was never stopped; I just kept doing it and getting away with it. That is how I handled it.

I suggested to the member for Stuart that, if he found that it was inhibiting his proper role as shadow minister for mines and energy to debate these matters without being in breach of privilege of the Assembly, the most effective course was simply to discharge himself from the service of the committee and to contribute effectively as the shadow minister for mines and energy. That would allow another member of the opposition who was not in that same difficulty to take his place. In order to allow this Assembly to discharge its responsibilities more effectively, that is exactly what happened.

I am quite taken aback, alarmed, dismayed and distraught at the ulterior motives that have been suggested by the honourable members opposite for what in fact was an attempt by the opposition to try to expedite the business of the Assembly. I must say with some degree of anger that it is very dispiriting that the concerns of the workers in the work place are completely rejected by the member for Wanguri who is a member of this committee, because they are members of a trade union. That does the honourable member no credit whatsoever. The facts are that one of the major areas of responsibility in terms of workers' health and safety rests with the trade unions. One of the problems that I had very early in my life in the Assembly was that I did not feel that the unions were taking an aggressive enough role in protecting worker safety.

Mr Perron: That would be right.

Mr B. COLLINS: That would be right. It is obvious that the poor old unions are in the same position as many other people in relation to this government - they are damned if they do and they are damned if they do not.

As a result of representations that were made by me and others, a health physicist was employed by the unions. He produced an alarming report on the poor standards that applied in the work place at that time. One of the big problems with worker hazards and safety is that some workers simply will not obey commonsense safety procedures. I spoke in the Legislative Assembly on previous occasions about workers working in respirator areas without respirators because of the extremely uncomfortable environmental conditions that they had to work under for long periods. I saw workers not washing as they were supposed to wash and not using radiation monitoring machines to test the amount of radiation on their bodies. Of course, the ultimate responsibility rests with the company.

Mr D.W. Collins: What do you do - sack them?

Mr B. COLLINS: Yes. It does sack them.

Mrs Padgham-Purich: Then you have another strike.

Mr B. COLLINS: No, you do not. That just shows the profound ignorance of those opposite. Can I inform the honourable members opposite that, in very big companies like BHP, if workers on the worksite do not wear their safety boots and safety glasses and, after having been warned by the safety inspectors about those practices, they persist, they are dismissed for the obvious reason of avoiding enormous compensation claims. If those dismissals are proven, they are consistently supported by the trade unions because it is to their benefit also. It does honourable members opposite no credit to make these ignorant statements because, as members on this committee, they are supposed to be experts in this Assembly in respect of these matters. Their

view is that, if a worker is a member of a trade union, he bears absolutely no further consideration. The Labor Party has expressed concern about the health and safety of workers in what clearly is a problem area. There is no question about that. However, because they are trade unionists, they do not deserve the consideration of the members of this Assembly and indeed the committee that is set up to look after their interests. That is not an opinion that I am prepared to accept.

Mr Deputy Speaker, the motion before the Assembly is a valid one. What does the government have to lose by accepting it? It might give the committee something else to do other than to use up taxpayers' money on a regular basis by going out and having tea and scones with the management and being taken around the tailings dam for the 53rd time and saying: 'Oh! Isn't that lovely?' That is what we did for about 3 years. It was a very pleasant social exercise and a valuable one for Assembly members because of the regular contact with the work place. As a past member of the committee, I have to say in all fairness that I do not think we were too dynamic nor hard-nosed about our operations. It was very much a social exercise. By accepting this motion, it might just give the committee a little meaningful work to do that might surprise the committee in respect of the information that it might gather.

I am confident that, if this motion is supported and if the committee simply agrees to have a look at what is going on and report back, even if it finds that there is nothing wrong, the committee will receive the same total cooperation and assistance from the management of the mine as it has always received in the past.

In respect of my time on that committee, the management was always completely scrupulous with the information that it provided to the committee when it was asked for. Officers were always available to answer questions that needed to be asked. The mine management was always willing to take the committee to trouble spots such as the leaking tailings pipe that was a persistent problem because, at one stage, radioactive tailings were sprayed all over the place because a worker had put 4 bolts in the joint instead of the 8 that he was supposed to put in it - or maybe it was 2 instead of 4. Those are the sorts of things that are supposed to be picked up. The reason that they were not is because the inspections that were supposed to be taking place on a regular basis were not taking place. The joints were not being inspected during the night. We have all been through that.

There are things going wrong out there and it would not hurt the committee, instead of just continually tripping out to Ranger for a cup of tea in the boardroom and a very pleasant salad lunch - which I always appreciated when I was on the committee - to have valuable exchanges with management as to how the mine is going and to give itself a job to do. It would be the first job that it has had to do for some time. It should determine if these complaints are justified.

As well as assisting in the rectification of some serious health problems, it could also make a significant contribution to industrial relations. If this committee could divorce itself from this stupid attitude of judging on anti-union or pro-union aspects which has come out again in this debate, and consider itself to be a committee of the parliament, it may very well contribute in a very significant way to better industrial relations at Ranger and a more secure work place and better production at Ranger. It would do that by discovering on behalf of the workers and the management out there if

any problems do exist. It may well be that, if the committee does this job that has been put forward, and does not come to any conclusions, the unionists at Ranger will be reassured and satisfied that the complaints that they are making are in fact not real, if they are not real, or can be fixed, if they can be fixed.

Better relationships at the mine will not be fixed by people who just instantly prejudge the issues and who have made their minds up about what is wrong, and it is always that nothing is wrong, before they have looked at anything. I would suggest that honourable members should support this motion because the government has nothing to lose by it and the committee has nothing to lose by it. In terms of providing a more efficient operation at Ranger, with better and more stable industrial relations, this committee could make a positive contribution by supporting it.

Mr PERRON (Mines and Energy): Mr Deputy Speaker, on the subject of a union's responsibilities in this matter, I am amazed at how easily the Leader of the Opposition dismisses any responsibility for a worker who was required to put 8 bolts in a joint but put in 4 instead. I wonder how much he is getting paid...

Mr B. Collins: He is culpable and so is the inspector who must check it every 2 hours.

Mr PERRON: Should we establish a system to do the job at that level to check every single man's hands and fingernails personally every time he does it?

Mr B. Collins: No. Just when the schedule says he has to.

Mr PERRON: Are we employing human beings out there or what?

Mr B. Collins: No. Just when the regulations say it has to be done.

Mr PERRON: Should we follow him around, 2 m behind, all day and all night? Is that what is required?

Mr B. Collins: Don't get emotional about it. Calm down.

Mr PERRON: Is that what is required? I have some difficulty coming to grips with exactly what the honourable member for Stuart is trying to get at in proposing this motion. I would have thought that, if the committee wanted or felt that its terms of reference enabled it to get into this field, it could do so on its own motion. Of course, he has taken the brave way out and removed himself from any possible involvement. The committee has the power to look at it if it sees fit to do so. To my knowledge, we have had no requests from the union to the committee chairman. I am not aware of any requests by the union to get involved. I am not aware whether the union would be interested for the committee to look into it or not and whether it would be interested in the committee's decisions. I am not aware of any approach by the unions to the government over this whole series of matters that have been put forward.

The government has inspectors on site and they have looked into a number of the matters which the member for Stuart raised. There are reports on a number of those matters. But it has not reached the point where the unions have written to me as minister or to the Secretary of the Department of Mines

and Energy saying that all of these things have happened. They have not asked us to investigate these matters. There was a press conference a few days ago. Perhaps the honourable members opposite think that that should have been a sufficient trigger in itself.

It is a bit hard to see through this smokescreen, but the union seems to have combined the more recent complaints on health and safety with the negotiations that it has been having with the company, and which apparently have not been very successful for it. I have the log of claims that has been put forward by the union to the company for negotiation. The company's point of view is that, because the workers are not getting their way on some of these things, they have tended to exaggerate the arguments and introduce new matters.

Considering some of the things that they have put forward, I am not surprised that the company is having a little difficulty coping, particularly in this day and age when the country is trying to keep the lid on costs to the community. They are as follows: paid jury service, freeze on rents and messing, free power and water to all employees, paid time fortnightly to attend to necessary union paperwork, air-conditioned canteen to be established on site, senior site delegates to be allowed 2 days per week to conduct union business with no loss of pay, seats to be fitted to town bus stops, push bikes or motor-scooters to be supplied as a form of transport on site, the company to supply a comfortable bus for sporting groups to go to Darwin, 2 fixed car ramps in the light industrial area, the company to provide subsidised fuel to all award employees, hot meals to be supplied to all SPQ residents when meals are taken on site, discount supermarket for all award employees, and so on. There are quite a few more, and I do not need to comment on their merits. It is up to the unions to take them up with the company.

I am advised that the company is prepared to discuss some of these matters. There is a range of other matters dealing with pay, overtime and annual leave which the company is prepared to discuss in front of the Conciliation and Arbitration Commission. I understand that, at a recent meeting on health and safety issues with an arbitration commissioner, the company suggested, in respect of the unions' demands, that an independent person or group be brought in to carry out an investigation. I can see why the company might have some reservations about that. The company suggested a meeting of a group comprising representatives of the unions, the company, and the Department of Mines and Energy to examine health and safety matters at the mine. I understand further that this was rejected totally by the union. Yet members opposite are saying that, if the Sessional Committee on the Environment investigated and made some ruling on the matter, that would be definitive and final. The Leader of the Opposition said we have nothing to lose should the committee take 6 months to complete its investigations. But the unions may not take any notice of the committee's determination, although it might satisfy some other people.

Members should not get the impression that there is little action at Ranger on health and safety matters. The member for Wanguri listed a number of full-time officers employed at the mine to deal with them. In addition, there are government inspectors at Jabiru. I am sure union delegates know who they are, and that they can investigate complaints about the company. If the unions feel they are not getting any action, I am sure there is no problem in writing to the minister about the inaction or incompetence of government inspectors. If unions were to make those complaints about members of the Department of Mines and Energy, I certainly would be very happy to examine them.

In addition, I am told there are monthly safety meetings for all award personnel. These include a talk on a particular aspect of safety, followed by a general session. One would expect that, if workers are concerned about a range of issues which have not been attended to, they would be raised time and time again. There is the Mines Safety Committee consisting of the Safety Coordinator, the General Manager, the Radiation Safety Officer and a representative from each of the unions. This also meets monthly. If there are these grave and serious concerns, one would expect that they would be raised persistently at these meetings. If such matters are not eventually resolved, unions can resort to industrial action. Members opposite will say that they are doing exactly that; they are undertaking some industrial action and they have been doing so for some time. Before the big announcement about health and safety, the industrial action started over the log of claims. I think it is a bit hard to divorce one issue from the other.

The member for Stuart mentioned a number of items which were extracted from the union's list of 14 items entitled 'Incidents and Ongoing problems Raised with Ranger Uranium Mines'. I have a very brief note from the Department of Mines and Energy on each of those 14 items. In a couple of cases, the department has no knowledge of them. That surprises me. I would have thought that, if the union was so concerned, it would have brought the items to the attention of the mines inspectors. Most of them are alleged breaches, and I appreciate that the member for Stuart was careful enough to say so. He said that the breakdown of the SO₂ continuous monitor late last year had resulted in there being no satisfactory tests since that time.

Mr Ede: No continuous monitoring since that time.

Mr PERRON: That is right. There has been no continuous monitoring since that time, although it has started again now that they have fixed the machine. However, I am advised that the Reich test is regarded by those who are knowledgeable in this field as a perfectly satisfactory technique for monitoring the presence of sulphur dioxide emissions. It was being done each day to the satisfaction of the department. It was not to the department's satisfaction that the breakdown of the SO₂ monitor was not advised. It should have been, and we have sought some further explanation from Ranger about that.

The member for Stuart certainly beat up the story in the press recently about the SO₂ emissions. He almost gave the impression that a bomb had exploded out there. I can only go on the advice provided to me by the department that, when the acid plant was started in fairly unfavourable weather conditions, with the sulphur dioxide emission at its normal high level at the commencement of plant operation, the gas did not disperse as was expected. It is a very pungent gas, with a noticeable odour and taste.

However, despite the fact that workers in the vicinity sought shelter wherever they could, I am advised that no one reported to the first-aid station with any problems. One would imagine that they would have lined up by the dozen if they had been in some difficulty; that is why there is a first-aid station on site. One person reported the following day, and I am told his complaint was not serious. No one reported to the Jabiru medical centre on the evening of 4 March. Obviously, they had the opportunity to do so after returning to Jabiru if symptoms had developed at a later stage. Also, no one considered the matter serious enough to activate emergency procedures in which all personnel have been trained. It does seem that the story has been exaggerated by the shadow minister. That is not unusual. Members opposite try to sensationalise just about everything.

In this matter, we must realise that there are several parties with responsibilities. Certainly, the company has a responsibility to run adequate programs to promote health and safety and to train people in appropriate procedures. It should monitor, as best as it can, the practices of workers on site. We all know that, if workers take a defiant attitude about such matters as wearing goggles or washing their hands properly, it is very difficult to ensure that accidents do not happen. The company has a very distinct and important role to play. Certainly, the unions should encourage their members to adopt proper safety practices at all times. They should do their best to police their workers. Of course, the Department of Mines and Energy has a role as well in monitoring the situation and investigating and reporting on incidents which occur. That happens continuously.

The honourable member for Stuart has said virtually that the Department of Mines and Energy and its inspectors are really quite useless in this regard and that nothing they say can have any weight placed upon it because the department happens to want mines to continue in operation even though it has a responsibility for industrial safety. I dismiss that totally. We have a division that involves the mines inspectors. They take their roles very seriously. Obviously, they are responsible for any slip-ups in their own performance, as we all are. I just do not accept at all that we should dismiss the government inspectors. If we are going to dismiss them as being irrelevant and take no notice of them, then we may as well sack them all. We could save the taxpayers quite a few dollars and send the Sessional Committee on the Environment out there every week to do the job for them. I do not think that is the way to get this job done.

If the unions are genuinely serious about the 14 points they have raised here, then they should put a submission either to myself as Minister for Mines and Energy or to the Chairman of the Sessional Committee on the Environment, if it fits within his terms of reference, and ask for this matter to be examined. At the moment, the unions have come nowhere near it. They have asked for their own independent expert from wherever and they have asked the company, and that is a matter between the union and the company.

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH (Koolpinyah): Mr Deputy Speaker, I would like to say at the outset that the member must certainly be aware of all the supervisory bodies at the uranium mine at Jabiru. My remarks on this will be brief. If one counted the number of people engaged in the uranium industry at the mine and one counted the number of people on supervisory committees plus all the people employed by the Ranger mine whose job it is to look after the health, welfare and safety of the workers, I think we would come up with 2 very interesting figures.

In the area, we have the following: the Department of Mines and Energy, the OSS, the Alligator Rivers Region Coordinating Committee, the ANPWS looking over everybody's shoulder like big brother, the NLC, somebody from the Environment Centre appointed to the coordinating committee and representatives from all the unions in the area. The member who put forward this motion also wants the Sessional Committee on the Environment to have an overseeing role. If the committee were to do that, I believe there would be a definite demarcation dispute.

Without putting too fine a point on it, I think we are being taken a lend of. We have enough supervision out there. If there is a job to be done, most ordinary people get on and do it but, according to ALP policy, if a job has to be done, a committee must be formed. In this case, there is a job to be done,

but only if the workers are not on strike and if there is somebody to do the job. Let us all stand around and inspect, supervise, check and watch the work being done and how the worker happens to do it.

This attitude expounded by ALP members opposite is not in the best interests of the uranium industry in the Northern Territory. I doubt whether the honourable member would be so active, alive and alert to his wrongly perceived ideas regarding the negative aspects of the health, safety and welfare of uranium workers if this happened to be the South Australian parliament and if we happened to be talking about workers at Roxby Downs. I do not think he would be nearly as vocal because he would be muzzled by his mates before he said very much at all. The honourable member may be paying lip service to the jobs of workers in the uranium industry in the Northern Territory but the fact of the matter is that he does not want the uranium industry to go ahead. By putting forward motions like this and expressing other views, it is perfectly obvious to anybody with one eye open that the members opposite are expounding again the obstructionist views of the ALP down south which does not want the uranium industry to go ahead up here. However, it is fine for it to go ahead in South Australia. No doubt, when uranium is discovered in Western Australia, it will be fine for it to go ahead there too and it will also be fine for it to go ahead in New South Wales.

This is just making difficulties where no difficulties really exist. I am not against the proper care of the workers in the uranium industry but I consider there are adequate safeguards, both on the part of the government and the mine management, to look after the health, safety and welfare of the workers without the necessity for this motion to be carried so that the matter is referred to the Sessional Committee on the Environment.

Mr HARRIS (Education): Mr Deputy Speaker, I did not intend speaking in this debate but I am afraid that the accusations of the Leader of the Opposition need to be answered and the matter needs to be clarified and placed on record. There was a time when I had some respect for the Leader of the Opposition's views in this Assembly but he started to slide some years ago and he is right at rock bottom at present.

This morning, he claimed credit for extending the terms of reference of the Sessional Committee on the Environment. I can assure honourable members that it was not through the actions of the Leader of the Opposition that the terms of reference of the sessional committee were extended. The committee worked as a group, examined this issue and the terms of reference were extended.

He said that he used to bypass the system and was smart by half by debating in here issues which were outside the terms of reference of the committee and which breached the confidentiality of the committee. What a load of nonsense! I ask honourable members to check the record and just see how many times the Leader of the Opposition in fact commented on the issues that were of importance in the uranium mining province.

When I was Chairman of the Sessional Committee on the Environment, we visited the Alligator Rivers region on many occasions. We looked at matters that were important. I can assure members that, when something was wrong, we looked at it and addressed the problem. There was ample opportunity for members of the committee to make their point. There was ample opportunity for members, when reports were placed before this Assembly, to debate the issues. That needs to be placed on record because those issues could have been debated

here and there was nothing stopping them from being debated in this Assembly. Obviously, there were personality clashes, but I am not going to get into that argument. The point is that the Leader of the Opposition was referring to the committee as a whole. I can assure members that it was not just a matter of having cheese and bikkies, as he put it. He might have taken it that way but I can assure you, Mr Deputy Speaker, that other members of the committee looked at the matter in a responsible manner and addressed the problems that were raised from time to time.

I just wanted to clarify that because the Leader of the Opposition has an inflated ego. He believes that everything that happens is a result of his interference. Tonight he took the credit for extending the terms of reference of the Sessional Committee on the Environment, which is totally incorrect. He stands condemned for it.

The opportunity is there for members to debate the issues. The opportunity is there for other people to contact the Sessional Committee on the Environment if they have concerns in relation to any aspect of uranium mining in the Alligator Rivers region. This motion does not need to be supported. As the Minister for Mines and Energy has already pointed out, there is ample opportunity for these matters to be addressed. They are being addressed and I have every confidence in the Sessional Committee on the Environment.

Mr D.W. COLLINS (Sadadeen): Mr Deputy Speaker, I spent nearly 3½ years on the committee with the Leader of the Opposition. When debating uranium issues in the Assembly, he used to make a great deal of noise, grandstanding in his usual style. But when the committee visited the Alligator Rivers region - Ranger, Nabarlek or the like - he was about as tame as one could ever imagine.

Our chairman at the time, the honourable Minister for Education, was absolutely scrupulous and fair in the way in which he chaired that committee. He gave us all ample opportunity to question, to probe and to request answers whenever we dealt with people and groups in relation to our duties. We met with the OSS, DME, ANPWS and Ranger environmental officers. Generally, a group of these people would move around with us and examine every incident that occurred and explain to us what had happened, what had been done to rectify the matter and what procedures were being put in place to try to prevent such occurrences. Also, there was the Alligator Rivers Region Coordinating Committee which comprises people from all of these areas together with the NLC and the unions. All of these groups operate at Ranger and Nabarlek. I think the member for Koolpinyah was very right when she said that, if you compared the number of actual workers to the number of people involved in all these supervising groups, you would be rather horrified at the proportion of overseers.

Let us consider the Office of the Supervising Scientist. It takes a really hard line on uranium mining and seems to be the toughest group although, more recently, I believe it has been happier with the environment and the general situation at Ranger. Possibly, the OSS is becoming more practical. In fact, some of its conditions concerning the discharge of water from areas outside the restricted release zone have been less demanding than those of the Department of Mines and Energy.

It was suggested by the member for Stuart that officers of the Department of Mines and Energy have a conflict of interest because their aim is to keep

the uranium industry going. I do not believe that is true. My experience of these people over 5½ years is that they are keen to see that mining is carried out in the most safe and sensible manner, with the interests of the workers very much at heart. If there are accidents and injuries to workers, there will be tremendous pressure applied by various groups, including some of the ratbag element in the environmental lobby, screaming that the operation should be closed down. It is imperative that staff of the Department of Mines and Energy be very safety conscious in order to keep the industry going.

Incidents and infringements do occur. I know that, when this happens, people at Ranger get their knuckles rapped. Procedures are then put in place to try to prevent reoccurrences. The Sessional Committee on the Environment is kept continually informed about these matters. Departmental staff ring me if there is an incident which is not reportable. They do this as a matter of courtesy, and I generally inform the committee at the next meeting. If there is an infringement I generally notify the members, particularly the shadow minister, who has now removed himself from the committee. I think he would testify to the truth of that. Our terms of reference cover the environment, and I am prepared to accept that the workers are a part of that environment. If these matters are put to the committee, appropriate action is taken. I cannot say what the committee might decide on any particular thing but matters raised are investigated if we feel there is a need to do so.

A great deal of noise was made tonight about the recent sulphur dioxide emissions. The minister answered many points, particularly those concerning the sulphuric acid plant. The terms and conditions of the operation allow for higher sulphur dioxide levels at the commencement of plant operation. Sulphur dioxide is not a very pleasant gas. It can take the breath away, and its effects are marked. I dare say most members have smelled it, even if only as part of the mixture in fire crackers. The gas is used extensively in the dried fruit industry, where it is lit up in boxes in fairly high concentrations. I am sure members know a fair bit about it.

On the particular day in question, there were a couple of conditions which contributed to unusually high levels of sulphur dioxide: the operating temperatures of the boilers were not as high as would have been desirable, and the prevailing atmospheric conditions. There was a lack of wind. There may also have been an inversion, although this has not been proved. In the case of an inversion, the hot gas will not rise and disperse in a normal manner. It will reach a certain level and stay there before cooling and descending again. It has been stated that nobody complained at the time about being overcome by the fumes. It was not until the next day that one person came in. Investigations were eventually carried out by the mining engineer. He drew some conclusions which I would say were definitely not proved, because the Reich test and even the continuous monitor do not monitor the concentrations at start-up. However, he concluded that, because the starting up temperature of the converter was not at its optimum, there may have been some higher levels of sulphur dioxide.

The important point is that these matters have been considered and procedures recommended to try to prevent reoccurrences. I am sure that that is what would have happened if the incident had occurred at one of the sulphuric acid plants in Port Adelaide. No great fuss would have been made about it. What should happen at start-up is that atmospheric conditions should be checked to ensure that there is enough wind to disperse the gas and that there is no likelihood of inversion effects. These things have been recommended. This type of incident - and I describe it as an incident rather

than an infringement - will occur occasionally. It has been investigated by experts, and there are more experts out there than you can shake a stick at. Procedures have been put in place in an endeavour to prevent a reoccurrence.

As the minister said, there are union representatives on the Alligator Rivers Region Coordinating Committee. They have every opportunity to raise safety matters, and they should be doing that frequently. If incidents arise which concern them, we would be prepared to examine them. Let us keep in mind that the member for Stuart has called these matters 'allegations'. We would be prepared to consider such allegations, and it is within our terms of reference to seek advice from more than one source to ensure even-handedness. If we are not satisfied with the advice, we will probe deeper. Every member of the committee has a chance to raise matters, and the committee will consider them on their merits.

The member for Wanguri made a very relevant comment when he pointed out that these matters are suddenly raised as great concerns at a time when there is an industrial dispute at Ranger. In fact, the matters raised by the member for Stuart go back over several months and have been dealt with by committees. We have had the chance to probe them, but suddenly they are dragged up in the context of the dispute. Like the member for Koolpinyah, I cannot help but believe that this is done for rather spurious reasons. I reject the call for this Assembly to dominate the committee.

Mr LEO (Nhulunbuy): Mr Deputy Speaker, I will attempt to clarify this matter.

This is the first time we have sat in 4 months. This is the first general business day in almost 12 months. Therefore, we have not had much opportunity in the past year to move a motion like this. I really do not understand the paranoia of members of the government who have spoken in this debate. For their sakes, I will read the motion: It says that:

'(1) the following matter be referred to the Sessional Committee on the Environment: the health, safety and welfare of workers employed within the uranium industry in the East Alligators region of the Northern Territory; and (2) the committee report to the Assembly on this reference within 6 months from this day'.

If the government rejects this motion, it is saying that it is not interested in the health and safety of people employed in the uranium industry. It is not unusual for matters to be referred to committees of this Assembly. During these sittings, there have been at least 5 matters referred to the Speaker for his determination as to whether or not they should be referred to the Privileges Committee. It happens all the time; it is why committees exist. It is why they have been established by this Assembly. If members of this government use their sheer weight of numbers to refuse to refer this matter to the committee which was set up to investigate such issues, it is saying to people employed in the area that it does not care. What does it fear? Why not investigate the matters? What harm can it possibly do? I really do not understand the government's paranoia. It is lunacy and absolute nonsense! That is what it is supposed to do. If the government rejects it, I am certainly prepared to tell the workers that it does not have their interests at heart at all. It will have rejected the importance of the safety of people employed at that mine.

If members opposite want to shout, I will shout over the top of them. The paranoia of these people is impossible to understand and it is impossible to believe. I suggest they simply read the motion calmly, in a manner that would benefit an Assembly member, and try to understand what they will be saying to people employed in the mining industry if they reject it.

Mr EDE (Stuart): Mr Deputy Speaker, I do not intend to discuss the reasons why I left the committee. I think they have been covered adequately. However, I would like to make a couple of points.

The naming of a whole range of people involved in safety procedures does not prove there is a deep concern with safety. Every person could be called an officer. However, if the procedures for reporting were not working, I would hope the government would wonder why, and I would hope it would want to do something about it. Is it the government's intention to reject this motion? What about these allegations? They will not go away. Is it going to forget about them? It has been notified now, by a member of this Assembly, that there are a number of allegations. I have asked it to examine a number of allegations; I have asked it to conduct an inquiry. I hope that, as a government, it will rethink this before it rejects it.

The Minister for Mines and Energy says an investigation is not possible because the unions might disagree with its findings. That is certainly a new slant for him. He says the safety issue is connected with a log of claims. That really gets up my nose. It is a sick allegation. He thinks workers' health and safety can be bought off for a few extra bucks.

His statement regarding the Reich testing is patently incorrect. Currently, the Reich testing is being carried out once a shift. As I understand it, his own department notified Ranger that this is not enough and should be doubled. Judging by the minister's remarks, everybody has a role except the committee.

You can sum up the member for Koolpinyah's statement in a few words. She says that all those other people are interested, so why should we take any notice of what is going on? She is saying that because the Department of Mines and Energy, the OSS and the WLC are out there doing their job, there is no function for the committee. Other members who rambled on about this particular subject did not come to grips with it as she did. At least she had the courage to come out and state that she did not see a role for the committee.

The member for Koolpinyah has gone home. The member for Koolpinyah either does not know the function of the committee or has a very low opinion of its ability. I hope that other members will have a look at the wording of the motion before they decide which way they will vote. It simply asks that the matter of health, safety and welfare of workers employed in the uranium industry in the East Alligator Rivers region of the Northern Territory be referred to the committee, and the committee report to the Assembly in the terms of this reference within 6 months. As the Leader of the Opposition said, it would make a difference to 'the usual routine of tea and biscuits'. I see he did not get any cheese. In my experience, the committee does not notify people, apart from management, about its meetings, nor does it invite people to make representations to it. As far as the workers in the industry are concerned, it could be referred to as the phantom committee. It floats in and it floats out. It sits behind closed doors with management, drives around in a company bus, and then is gone. The only time that we got close to

a worker was when we went down for a free feed at the mess, and an excellent feed it was too.

The fact is that the committee has yet to notify people about when and where it will be sitting so that they can make allegations to it, as is their right. I hope the committee will now do this. I hope the motion will be passed so that the committee will receive workers' allegations regarding health and safety, and investigate them and report back to this Assembly. I call for members to support this motion.

The Assembly divided:

Ayes 6

Mr Bell
Mr B. Collins
Mr Ede
Mr Lanhupuy
Mr Leo
Mr Smith

Noes 15

Mr D.W. Collins
Mr Coulter
Mr Dale
Mr Dondas
Mr Finch
Mr Firmin
Mr Hanrahan
Mr Harris
Mr Hatton
Mr McCarthy
Mr Manzie
Mr Perron
Mr Robertson
Mr Setter
Mr Tuxworth

Motion negatived.

MOTION

Northern Territory Government Alice Springs Policies

Mr BELL (MacDonnell): Mr Speaker, I move that this Assembly express its concern at: (a) the deteriorating relationship between the Northern Territory government and the Alice Springs Town Council; and (b) the Northern Territory government's failure to address itself to vital planning issues, including the provision of public transport in Alice Springs.

It is with some regret that the opposition finds it necessary to introduce the motion now before the Assembly. However, it has been made necessary because of the outrageous behaviour of certain ministers and the government in general in relation to matters of importance to the residents of Alice Springs. The motion is in 2 parts and there is a relationship between them. The first part expresses concern at the deteriorating relationship between the Northern Territory government and the Alice Springs Town Council. The state of that relationship has been well documented. I will give some examples of it and the member for Stuart will deal with the subject more comprehensively. The second part of the motion expresses our concern at the Northern Territory government's failure to address itself to vital planning issues, including the provision of public transport. The evidence is that the Northern Territory government has made a mess of planning issues in Alice Springs. The failure to provide a bus service is an example, and it is my intention to address that and other matters.

Firstly, I wish to raise 2 related matters that may be of interest to the honourable member for Flynn. One involves the development of the drive-in site, south of the Gap. In sum, the minister supports the development, which is outside the town boundary, while the Mayor of Alice Springs is opposed to it. The mayor holds the view that linear developments - so-called ribbon developments - should not occur south of the Gap. Her approach would leave the southern approach to Alice Springs relatively undeveloped, unlike the situation in the overwhelming majority of towns in the entire country. The member for Flynn, however, who was well-known for his support of high-rise buildings in Alice Springs until he conducted a 5-minute telephone survey, sees nothing wrong with that type of development. I hope that development south of the Gap is controlled so that the magnificent approach to Alice Springs remains magnificent.

This issue leads me to another: the town boundary. Plans to expand the Alice Springs Town Council area were opposed by several members opposite. They included the Minister for Community Development, the member for Flynn and the vocal member for Braitling. The member for Braitling described the move as a blatant attempt at empire building. He went on to say, without producing one shred of evidence whatsoever to substantiate his claim, that the council cannot do its job even within the present boundaries, let alone in an area 26 times larger. The council argued that, because future developments such as Undoolya would ultimately require the municipality to spread, it might as well all be done at once. One could reasonably argue that such an approach would allow a balanced, coordinated, and well-planned development. But I doubt that will be the case. The member for Flynn, with his characteristic lack of vision, said: 'I do not see any reason why it cannot be done in stages'. Such a piecemeal, ad hoc approach is regrettably characteristic of the pattern of development in Alice Springs under the aegis of the Northern Territory government. In many respects, there is an absence of coordinated planning. In the context of this motion, some of those matters will be addressed.

Before doing so, I would like to refer to yet another affront to the Alice Springs Town Council, this one being caused by that other denizen of central Australia, the member for Sadadeen. I refer of course to the erection of those extraordinarily attractive Territory Tidy Towns signs in Sadadeen, which were erected without the council's permission and without any reference to the council. I was really quite surprised. I can remember just about driving off the road when I first saw one. I thought, 'Good heavens, I hope we only have to put up with them for a couple of days'. When the council acted, I thought: 'Good on them. They have got onto something worth while at last'. But I then discovered that there had been an extraordinary box-on. The member for Sadadeen made representations to his conscientious colleague, the Minister for Transport and Works. It seems that the signs on roads have nothing to do with the council and everything to do with the minister. They are still causing consternation to citizenry and passing motorists.

This government's bumbling and clumsy approach to local government really makes me wonder. Collectively and individually, the members opposite have quite clearly denigrated the role and performance of Alice Springs Town Council in relation to planning and other matters.

The first thing to be said about public transport in Alice Springs is that, apart from taxis, it does not exist. The second thing to be said is that there should be a public transport system. It is the Northern Territory government's responsibility, one way or the other, to provide it. Alice Springs is a rapidly developing country town. In recent years, it has been

the fastest growing town in Australia. The population profile and growth rate, together with the layout of Alice Springs, suggest the service is warranted. No doubt at least one government member will say that it was tried and it failed. I recently circularised my colleagues in central Australia, and I thank the member for Flynn, as I do the member for Sadadeen, for their responses to the proposal for a public transport system. The town has grown considerably since the experimental service supposedly failed some years ago.

The nature of the service recently proposed is qualitatively different to the earlier one. This might go some way towards allaying the fears of the member for Sadadeen. The system recently proposed offered a town bus service for 5 days a week in between and after school bus service hours. It involved 2 air-conditioned buses to service the Gillen, Race Course, East Side and Camel Farm areas of Alice Springs. It required a subsidy of about \$100 000 which, by comparison with government expenditure in similar areas, pales into insignificance. I point out that, in general, public transport systems require subsidies. In most places, it is accepted that such subsidies are money well spent on the basis of public responsibility and social need. It is noteworthy that the Alice Springs Town Council feels, as I do, that public transport is the responsibility of the Northern Territory government. No less a luminary than Alderman Weber is reported as saying the council favoured the idea of public transport, although it was impractical for the council to subsidise it. Certainly, Alderman Weber can be regarded as one of the more hard-nosed members of the Alice Springs Town Council, as well as being the President of the Country Liberal Party in central Australia. Surely his testimony must carry some weight. I have been involved in discussions with an organisation behind the town bus proposal and I heartily support that proposal. It is perhaps indicative of the priorities of this government that it is not prepared to spend money where the needs of people are evident.

Let me turn to another issue. I refer to the Alice Springs Structure Plan. As members would be aware, during my time in this Assembly and as shadow minister for lands, I have raised many matters concerning town planning and planning concerns in general. Additionally, about a year ago I convened the Shape of Alice Springs Seminars. Further, I have on many occasions made submissions on planning matters, which I suspect have outnumbered those of my colleagues who share town seats in Alice Springs. Accordingly, I feel some satisfaction at the level of interest in planning matters now evident in Alice Springs.

For example, features have appeared in the local press under the regrettable, but I am afraid accurate, heading of 'Urban Ugliness'. A significant focus of current interest is the future shape of Alice Springs or, more specifically, the fate of the Alice Springs Structure Plan. Allied to that is the proposed development of White Gums by various CLP notables. Supposedly, the reason for the delay in the release of the Alice Springs Structure Plan is a result of negotiations on the location of a seismic array associated with the joint geological and geophysical research station. The office of the Minister for Lands was reported as saying that he was waiting for the results of negotiations between the United States and Australian governments before taking the matter to the Territory Cabinet for decision. The head of the seismic monitoring facility, whilst aware of informal discussions, said he did not know why there had been a delay. He noted that there was no pressure on any side and said no formal requests from the Northern Territory government had been received. Ergo, it would seem this matter is not perceived by the Northern Territory government as urgent. Could it be that the Northern Territory government or its supporters have a vested

interest in shortages of serviced land and resultant higher house prices, land prices and rents?

I refer to a recent article in which an Alice Springs alderman said he had difficulty accepting that the seismic array was a problem. Alderman Bob Kennedy said that the government joint planning group had carefully considered the seismic array problem and costed it before making its unanimous recommendation for Undoolya. Mr Kennedy said, and it is well worth repeating: 'This delay begs the question as to whether Mr Hatton might be considering an alternative to Undoolya'. This is despite the fact that Undoolya was overwhelmingly preferred and recommended in the submissions to the joint planning group. The Alice Springs Town Council considered the draft structure plan and its preferred option is for the development of Undoolya only. My submission supported the development of Undoolya and the commonage area. Alderman Kennedy went on to say that, if Mr Hatton did not decide soon, there would again be problems in the provision of housing in Alice Springs. I have this feeling of *deja vu*. Unfortunately, it would seem the government has not learnt from its planning errors. Its own reports say that some years elapse between a decision to develop and the provision of serviced blocks for sale. A decision needs to be made now.

As I said before, the related issue is White Gums. It is clear that the government wanted the rural residential subdivision at White Gums to proceed. It allocated some \$3m for headworks in this year's budget. I take no comfort in the Minister for Lands' qualified rejection of the White Gums proposal. The rejection was qualified and not absolute. I will monitor the future of the White Gums area with considerable interest, as will my constituents in the vicinity.

Just for the record, there are a couple of curious aspects that I must mention in relation to the White Gums development. These relate to the minister's evident lack of knowledge of a pipeline survey under way in the vicinity of the proposed development. Again, I quote Alderman Kennedy: 'It seems incongruous to me that we have the Northern Territory Minister for Lands stating he is unaware of the survey that is going on over Crown land. It has been commissioned by the Northern Territory Department of Works'. I find it hard to believe that the Northern Territory Minister for Lands can say he does not know about the survey given that, as several people know, he had dinner with the developers on Friday night.

On ABC radio, Alderman Kennedy also said:

'I am not satisfied as to why there has been no announcement regarding the outcome of the Alice Springs Structure Plan and the deliberations of the joint planning group. It needs to be pointed out that the joint planning group was set up at the request of the Minister for Lands, in his own department, to investigate all of the submissions that were received from all of the government departments in regard to the Alice Springs Structure Plan. Now the joint planning group made its recommendations back in October last year and its recommendations were unanimous for development of Undoolya'.

Today's news bulletin also reported that the minister has stated that informal approaches have been made regarding relocation of the seismic array. The Cabinet submission went up last October recommending Undoolya. At this stage, we are still only making informal approaches about a major decision regarding the town's future and we are not really displaying the urgency that

the situation requires. We should be now well into formal negotiations for relocation of that seismic array.

In the same broadcast, he said: 'Undoolya has been nominated by the joint planning group as being the area in which the town should develop in the future'. It seems to me that the decision to go to Undoolya should not be influenced at all by any private subdivision at White Gums or anywhere else for that matter. There is no reason why private developers using their own funds should not be permitted to undertake developments and to put them on the market. At the same time, there is a very urgent need for the Northern Territory government to make its own plans quite clear and get started early. Otherwise, given 2 or 3 years down the track, we will find this town back in the situation of having a land shortage which will lead to dramatically increased prices similar to what we have seen over the last couple of years. The demand will continue and the town will continue to grow, but the supply will not be there because we will not have planned early enough to start a satellite township at Undoolya.

Alderman Kennedy is not a Labor Party loyalist; he is a candidate for CLP preselection for the seat of Araluen. What more powerful testimony can I have to support the very terms of this motion? There is a deteriorating relationship between the Northern Territory government and the Alice Springs Town Council. The Northern Territory government's failure to address itself to vital planning issues is clearly demonstrated by those comments, not only from Alderman Kennedy, not only from other members of the Alice Springs Town Council, but from citizens throughout central Australia who are concerned about this particular issue.

There are other issues that I would like to raise in the time that remains to me. First of all, I would like to corroborate the terms of this motion by making a reference to the difficulties that have been experienced by squash players in Alice Springs. Squash is a very popular game in Alice Springs. There are currently 8 squash courts in the centre at Alice Springs. In addition to that, 3 more courts are being built at the Memorial Club in Alice Springs.

There is a little history attached to this that honourable members might be interested in. As far back as 1983, the proprietor of the squash courts in Alice Springs said: 'Look, I am suffering a downturn in business because of the impact of indoor cricket, and that is fine, but I understand that you are going to spend some money on building extra squash courts in the town and that could send me through the hoop'. The proprietor of the squash courts at that stage, I understand...

Mr VALE: A point of order, Mr Speaker! The honourable member is not sticking strictly to the topic under debate. The squash centre has nothing to do with the deteriorating relationship between the Alice Springs Town Council or the transport system nor for that matter, with planning.

Mr SPEAKER: There is no point of order.

Mr BELL: Mr Speaker, the proprietor of the Alice Springs squash centre was apprised by a government minister at that stage that it had no intention of causing any problems for a viable private enterprise. Unfortunately for the proprietor of the squash courts and for squash players in Alice Springs, it very much did cause problems. The extra courts were built, the numbers going through the existing squash courts fell and the courts had to be put on

the market. The honourable Minister for Youth, Sport, Recreation and Ethnic Affairs might like to bob up in this debate and give us some of the fruits of his understanding of the issue and a progress report on exactly where that is up to as far as the Squash Racquets Association in Alice Springs is concerned. In passing, I would like to point out to the member for Sadadeen that he was berating me last night because I did not have enough issues to bring up in the context of these sittings. Well it is now 3 o'clock in the morning on the day after the sittings was supposed to finish. I hope he is satisfied because I have a couple more to go.

Blatherskite Park used to be in my electorate. Unfortunately, it now comes under the aegis of the Minister for Youth, Sport, Recreation and Ethnic Affairs. The showgrounds are a fine development. I am quite sure that a majority of members here would have attended the annual show at the new showgrounds and been most impressed by the developments that have been carried out by the showgrounds committee. Along with other members, I received representations because the Blatherskite Park Trustees are concerned that, with the relocation of the sewage ponds, they no longer will be able to use effluent in order to further improve those particular showgrounds. They have come up with the eminently sensible suggestion that, if a trunk sewer has to be taken south through Heavitree Gap out to the new sewage ponds near the Brewer Estate, a return line for effluent could be laid in the same trench and that could be used to continue the development of the showgrounds. The possibility of providing a water supply from bores is not a realistic one, I understand. Unfortunately, the Minister for Transport and Works is not here. He might like to comment on that particular aspect of planning issues as they concern citizens of central Australia.

Mr Speaker, I would like to clarify a further matter. It is quite clearly a matter of some importance to the Minister for Education as well as to members of this Assembly whose seats are within the Alice Springs area: the junior-senior high school proposal as it affects Alice Springs. Before the honourable member for Braitling bobs to his feet, let me reassure him that this is a planning issue. As I said earlier in my comments, Alice Springs is one of the fastest growing towns in the country and the provision of education facilities is of vital concern.

My understanding is that the existing Sadadeen High School is to become the senior high school, the existing Alice Springs High School is to become a junior high school and the old Anzac Hill buildings are to be refurbished to become the other junior high school. I understand that this refurbishment will take some considerable time and that it is currently under way. In the context of this debate, I would appreciate an undertaking from the Minister for Education that that Anzac Hill junior high school will be ready for the commencement of the 1987 school year.

In closing, I remind honourable members that my colleague, the honourable member for Stuart, will take up further issues in the context of this debate. I will leave that to him. I do not think that, on the basis of what I have had to say, there could be any doubt that this Assembly should express its concern at the deteriorating relationship between the Northern Territory government and the Alice Springs Town Council. Nor can there be any doubt that this Assembly should express its concern at this government's failure to address itself to vital planning issues, including the provision of public transport in Alice Springs.

Mr VALE (Braitling): Mr Speaker, I am going to be very brief because of the lateness of the hour. I do not intend to be around during the early hours of the morning. I do not intend to be around for Halley's Comet.

The honourable member for MacDonnell, with his scatter-gun approach, tended to hit anything and everything. In respect of the motion relating to any deteriorating relationship between the Northern Territory government and the Alice Springs Town Council, one swallow does not make a summer and one donnybrook does not mean that a whole relationship is deteriorating. If an argument broke out between 2 factions in the Australian Labor Party, the member would tell us that it is democracy at work. Just because I have had a blue with the council about its empire building, the honourable minister may have had a minor disagreement over the water-slide and other members may have had disagreements, it does not mean that the relationship between the Alice Springs Town Council and the government is deteriorating. I think it is a fairly healthy sign.

The member mentioned the development south of the Gap. Twenty years ago, there was no picture theatre. When it was built, it had a netting fence which was fairly untidy. Then they decided that there were too many people getting too many freebies so they put up that ugly, galvanised-iron fence. That would hardly win an architectural award in central Australia. The Australian Broadcasting Commission building down the South Road near the pumps is probably one of the ugliest buildings south of Alice Springs. Together with the Mereenie pumps on the other side of that ABC facility, it is all very ugly. None of them would get a nomination for an architectural award.

It would be lovely to have large, wide-open spaces south of Alice Springs in a kind of rural setting. But you can bet your bottom dollar that, the more wide-open spaces out there, the more illegal camps that will develop. Quite obviously, the honourable member for MacDonnell has not driven in behind Yulara in recent months or he would have seen exactly what type of mess greets the tourists and other visitors to central Australia.

I think the last thing we want to see at this stage in central Australia is a public transport facility, with buses clogging up the road systems. Let me look at 2 issues. Those people who need public transport - senior citizens, the Spastic Council, the special school and the old timers - all have buses provided. Most have been funded entirely or at least assisted with funding by the Northern Territory government. The schools all have buses. They are the people who need buses and they are certainly well catered for.

Some weeks back, when the Mayor of Alice Springs, Mrs Oldfield, called for a bussing system, I checked it out at 6 o'clock one morning. I did a count through 240 houses. Of those 240 houses, only 16 had no cars in the drive-way. In many cases, there were 2 cars or more. Of course, the Australian Labor Party will not have it that the general public should own cars. It is a bit like what one of its federal members said years ago about home owners being would-be capitalists. It is the same type of argument. It wants to socialise the whole system and provide a bus service. In central Australia, the vast majority of people want their own cars so that they can at least use them during their leisure time. I believe that Alice Springs is well catered for in the needs area. There are buses for the people who need them. The family groups have adequate facilities with their own cars.

Mr EDE (Stuart): Mr Speaker, I have just one point in regard to what the honourable member for Braitling said. I find it particularly unfortunate that

he is not sticking up for Alice Springs on the bussing issue. I just point out to him that, when Darwin was the size of Alice Springs, it had a public bus service. What is wrong with Alice Springs? Why is he always knocking the place.

Without doubt, the relationship between the Northern Territory government and the Alice Springs Town Council is a very long way from being harmonious. Incidentally, the same can be said for the relationship between the Northern Territory government and the Darwin City Council. There are plenty of examples of where Northern Territory ministers and backbenchers have treated the Alice Springs Town Council with contempt. Their actions have contributed in a large part to the deteriorating relationship.

Let me begin with the Alice Springs aquatic centre which involved the Minister for Lands and the member for Sadadeen. Most people would be aware of the issues involved. The council voted 7-4 against the complex, water slide etc to be built on land next to the YMCA at Sadadeen. Aldermen made it quite clear that they were not against the development of an aquatic park but wanted to retain that particular piece of land for community use as ovals and later as park land. However, the council was overruled. The minister must have made up his mind before the council voted on the matter. On the day following the council's decision, the minister issued a statement. In fact, it was only a matter of hours after it had made its decision. I will quote it in full:

'Lands Minister, Mr Steve Hatton, said he believed that the Alice Springs Council decision on the aquatic centre was illogical and contrary to public opinion. "I am not going to take any notice of it", he said. "It is contrary to the wishes of the community".'

That may not be the most arrogant press release I have ever seen but it is certainly in the top 2. It really does express extreme contempt for the duly-elected third tier of government. Not surprisingly, certain aldermen were appalled at the minister's arrogance and said so. Alderman Bob Kennedy said the timing of Mr Hatton's release indicated he was not aware of arguments presented by the aldermen at the meeting. Mr Kennedy went on to say, and I quote:

'It appalled me that the minister can make a statement like that without taking any notice of the council's decision and without consulting them'.

In a classic understatement, the Alice Springs Town Clerk said that it was unfortunate for the future of local government in the Territory when the Northern Territory government overrides the wishes of a council. I can only endorse those remarks. Indeed, it is unfortunate.

There are additional matters of concern in relation to this issue. Previously, I have drawn attention to the virtual gift of land to the developers and the support of the honourable member for Sadadeen for the proposal. Ignoring the childish performance of the member at the council meeting, I would like to mention the actions of persons unknown. It was reported in the media that some aldermen received abusive phone calls in the early hours of the morning following the council meeting. I am sure you will agree, Mr Speaker, that that is just not on. I would point out that the member for Sadadeen said that he was mystified as to who was involved. In fact, the member for Sadadeen is quoted as saying: 'There is no point in shitting in our nest'. That is not a classic or indeed a particularly

delightful turn of phrase, but there it is, quoted in full in the Centralian Advocate. He was quoted as saying that those who voted against the proposal would be tossed out of council at the next election. So much for good relations between the levels of government.

Recognising that the honourable member for Sadadeen's comments are inconsequential, I would like to return to the Alice Springs Town Council's response to the minister's action. The Alice Springs Town Council convened a special meeting and subsequently issued a 4-page statement. Some CLP members on the council, including Territory CLP Vice-President and Alice Springs CLP Chairman, Bob Liddle, did not want the statement sent. It was sent, however, with the voting being 6-5. The 5 against, as you might expect, were Aldermen Weber, Browse, Millard, Liddle and Peterkin. Obviously, they are still on the short list for preselection. The 6 brave soles who were prepared to have it on with the minister were Aldermen Kennedy, King, Shanahan, Lim, Castagna and Oldfield. No doubt their names and addresses have been taken.

The situation is analogous to that of the Northern Territory government in its relationships with the federal government. How often does the Northern Territory government complain about its treatment at the hands of Canberra? I suggest that this happens quite frequently and yet the Northern Territory government is clearly guilty of the charge it levels at Canberra. No wonder the Alice Springs Town Council was upset. The council issued a statement which was sent to the minister. It was attached to a letter from the mayor, which reads as follows:

'My Dear Minister,

Further to my previous correspondence on the above matter, I now advise that, following certain statements made to the media last week, council met on 1 March 1986 to consider whether an appropriate response should be made to you. Consequently, council has issued the attached statement which, without wishing to perpetuate any of the heated tone of your statement, seeks only to put before you the council's views on the development proposed on lot 6448. Council hopes sincerely that reason will prevail throughout the progress of this matter and looks forward to your appreciation of its provision'.

The statement said by way of introduction:

'This statement had been made necessary following certain statements by the Minister for Lands in the news media. The council wishes to make it quite clear that it does not necessarily oppose the concept of an aquatic entertainment centre in Alice Springs. Indeed, the council was not asked to express its view on the concept but only as to whether or not it had any further interest in the land. The council has not had any formal dealing with the developers of the aquatic centre and considers that, as a matter of procedure, the ambitions and intentions of the developer form no part of the council's contention that the future disposition of any part of lot 6448, for purposes other than the public recreational open space, is a matter for community concern.

Given this basic philosophy, council has some sympathy with the situation of the developers in that they have unwittingly been led to believe by the Northern Territory government that no prior commitments in the planning sense have ever existed in respect of the

land. The Minister for Lands has been reported as having made certain statements following the meeting of the council. It has been noted with some disappointment that these reported comments were made before the minister had any proper notification of the decision before him. If correctly reported, all 3 of the minister's statements are unfounded on the following bases: (1) the council decision cannot be said to be illogical by reason only that its premisses are different to those of the minister; (2) council considers that, as a properly-constituted level of government, it is entitled to insist, on both legal and moral grounds, that notice be taken of its declaration; (3) it is wrong to assert the council's decision is contrary to the wish of the community if the only evidence of community support for the alienation of public open space for commercial development is a number of signatures on what was, in reality, a very one-sided petition.

Council has 11 members who are tuned not only to public opinion but also to long-term public issues such as the appropriate use of public recreational assets?'

I would remind honourable members this is in response to a 3-paragraph press release. In the Alice Springs Town Council view, the minister had it totally wrong. I will read a couple more extracts:

'The council stated that, by logical deduction, the council has at all times felt entitled to believe that the future use of the area in question was assured and that processes of forward planning should proceed on that basis.

Council categorically deplores the failure of the minister to: institute formal consultations with the council on the proposed aquatic centre; accord to the council the regard due to it as a democratic institution of the legislature; pay proper attention to both the process undertaken by the council and its members in reaching its decision to oppose this method of utilising public recreational land; preserve the integrity and reputation of the developers by informing them of the nature and extent of the council's interest in the land.

Accordingly, this council seeks, firstly, an acknowledgement from the minister that it has the right to put its considered view on matters affecting this community without the risk of being further criticised and, secondly, an alternative method of satisfying the aims of the aquatic centre developer by allowing that developer to deal directly with the council on matters associated with the needs for future recreational facilities in Alice Springs.

The above statement has been issued at the direction of the council and is fully contained within the minutes of the special meeting of the council held on Saturday 1 March 1986'.

That statement amounts to a very comprehensive payout of a minister of the Crown. I have gone on at some length on this matter because I believe it is important. The Alice Springs Town Council is not known for its Labor Party affiliations. In fact, the converse is true. In that context, the Alice Springs Town Council is most significant. It is beyond doubt that, through his unbelievable arrogance, he has seriously undermined the role of local

government. That damage may be irreparable. In any responsible legislature, a minister so condemned for incompetence by a duly-elected tier of government would be replaced. Accordingly, I suggest that course of action to the Chief Minister.

Lest the Minister for Lands feels hard done by, I would now like to turn to the Minister for Community Development who, through his efforts, lack of efforts or uncertainty, has put the Alice Springs Town Council offside. I refer, of course, to the transfer of the Araluen Arts Centre from the non-existent Araluen Trust because the minister forgot to or delayed appointing the trustees to the Alice Springs Town Council. It would seem the minister regarded this transfer as a fait accompli. It was all organised except for one thing: the Alice Springs Town Council did not know that it was supposedly involved in negotiations. A Centralian Advocate article, under the heading 'Araluen Anger', says it all, and very well too:

'Araluen user groups are angered by the lack of response from Mr Coulter on the fate of Araluen'.

It claims that Mr Coulter has left it in ignorance and has not bothered to reply to its many queries. It accuses the minister of negligence for his failure to appoint 4 members to the Araluen Trust, which would have enabled it to function. Members of the trust and Friends of Araluen believe the minister's failure to appoint members was illegal. I should add that the minister had the names for some 6 months before he chose, in the context of the Araluen by-election I suppose, to make the appointments. The amazing thing is, however, that the minister has been silent tonight about his performance. With due respect, silence is probably one of his better attributes.

He announced in a press release that negotiations were progressing smoothly for the transfer to the Alice Springs Town Council of responsibility for the Araluen Arts Centre. He said the government was concluding a package arrangement with the town council. However, the announcement that resolution was close came as a surprise to the council. Territory CLP Vice-President, Alderman Weber, well known for taking photographs of peace marches on Palm Sunday, said he was amazed when he heard reports of what Mr Coulter had said.

Mr Coulter: They only had a special council meeting 2 months before.

Mr EDE: This was reported on 21 February 1986. Mr Weber said that he had seen the minister the previous weekend and there had been no talk about Araluen. The minister said that he had had discussions with the council 3 months regarding Araluen's gardening, accounting and, more recently, management. The Town Clerk, Mr Roy Mitchell, said that there had been no further negotiations with the Northern Territory government since the council indicated before Christmas that it was prepared to discuss the matter. 'The council has made no decision', he said. Initial discussions are certainly not concluding arrangements. In making that leap, the minister has destroyed his own credibility. I might add that he has had a little help from his friends.

It would seem that I have driven both ministers out of the room. In his press release of 18 February, the minister said: 'I have been monitoring the progress of negotiations since they began in earnest last November, and I am happy that resolution is close'. Given that nothing happened, I will be intrigued to hear the minister's explanation of how he monitored it.

I refer finally to a letter from the Alice Springs Arts Foundation, the president of which is Mrs Ruth Weber. This letter was addressed on 8 March 1985 to Mr Bell, member for MacDonnell.

'Dear Mr Bell,

Due to the lack of response by the Minister for Community Development to the request of the many that attended a meeting on 19 February 1986 at the Araluen Arts Centre to appoint trust members to the Araluen Arts and Cultural Trust, it is requested that you use your influence and position to have this matter rectified. It is ridiculous that a centre as important as Araluen is made practically immobile due to the lack of trustees. It can be seen that the staff at that establishment are most unhappy about the state of affairs, let alone the user bodies. Nominations for vacant positions on the trust have been with the minister for the last 6 months. Surely this is an extended time, even for the wheels of government in the Northern Territory. Your assistance and advice on the outcome is much appreciated'.

In passing, I note that the performance of the minister in dealing with a dispute at the Alice Springs Prison was similarly unimpressive. Workers adequately summed up the situation by saying that the minister does not know what he is talking about. I would find it very difficult to improve on that description of the Minister for Community Development.

Mr D.W. COLLINS (Sadadeen): Mr Speaker, I want to deal with some of the matters raised by the member for MacDonnell. The first matter concerned the Territory Tidy Towns signs in Alice Springs. In 1984, I was approached by Territory Tidy Towns officials from Darwin and the organiser of the Sadadeen branch of that competition, Mr Ashley Meaney, to organise the erection of some signs to signify that the electorate had won the competition. I willingly made approaches to the Department of Transport and Works in Alice Springs. Mr Kevin Jordan was very happy to assist with the proposal and he asked me to ascertain what was required on the signs. He had them made, and I then advised Mr Meaney to liaise with an officer of the Department of Transport and Works concerning their location. It did cross my mind that the council should have been approached concerning the location, but I must confess I thought that there would have been a relationship between council and the department, and that the person who would erect the signs would resolve the matter. Unfortunately, that did not happen.

I am quite happy to take the blame for 2 of the signs being erected on roads under the control of council. I was away when the nonsense appeared in the newspaper and the hurt expressions came from council. On my return, I was quite happy to have the 2 signs relocated so that all the signs were on roads under the control of the Department of Transport and Works. Not checking with the council was an error on my part. I am happy to apologise for it.

However, I am not happy about the actions of the council in deciding to clear the total length of Stott Terrace, particularly in view of the effects on the laundromat. When the area was cleared of all vehicles, the laundromat's business dropped to virtually zero. After being approached by the proprietor, I made approaches to Mr Jordan of the Department of Transport and Works, who referred it to Roads Division which determined that a 5-minute unloading zone was feasible. There was a furore again from the council. How dare the Territory government, having taken over Stott Terrace, allow a

5-minute unloading zone! How dare it allow women with children to have the chance to stop and unload their washing, leaving their children with the proprietor while they parked elsewhere!

The council was quite happy to destroy a person's livelihood. That is exactly what was happening. The business went from a thriving concern to virtually nothing. The unloading zone was a sensible solution, and I can only heap praise upon Mr Kevin Jordan, one of the most helpful officers whom I have ever come across in all my dealings as a member of this Assembly. If something can be done, he will do it without fuss and nonsense. I want to give a warning to the member for MacDonnell. He said to me, maybe a little jokingly, that, if Mr Meaney achieves his aim of winning the overall Territory Tidy Towns competition, flashing lights will be added to the Territory Tidy Towns signs. I am sure the member would be only too happy to see them.

I now turn to the issue of the bus service. I was involved in organising a trial service after being elected to the Assembly in 1980. During my doorknock campaign, I asked people what they thought about the idea of a bus service. The response was good enough to make me keen to see something started, at least on a trial basis. A survey was conducted by a Commonwealth department, in a rather stupid fashion. It did not reach the relevant people. I prevailed upon the then minister, now the Speaker of this Assembly, to support a trial. There was considerable publicity about it. During a 6-month period, we varied the routes, times and hours, spending \$10 000. It demonstrated very conclusively that, in spite of having said that they liked the idea of a bus service, people in Alice Springs did not support it. People in Alice Springs are very independent. They find their own way around. Many families have 2 cars, even if that is quite a luxury for them. Families with only 1 car apparently get together with friends so that one car is used to take 2 men to work while the wives have the other car to do the shopping. I believe this is excellent social intercourse in a town which has people arriving from all over Australia. Almost all of us in Alice Springs have been through the experience of arriving as strangers, and we in turn accept strangers readily. Some very good contacts and friendships are made by people pooling their resources; it makes them independent. In addition, there are many little buses in Alice Springs belonging to various organisations. The competition from these alone would make any attempt to run a private bus service very difficult indeed.

The member for MacDonnell mentioned an operator who said he could run a couple of buses around town outside school bus hours for \$100 000. If there are to be buses, surely people should be able to use them to travel to work. This would clash with the time when kids are being bussed to school, and would negate one of the major drawcards of a service. I spoke to the operator and I can tell you his main interest was the road between Ayers Rock and the Olgas. He indicated that he could do something in Alice Springs for \$100 000, but it would be a half-hearted effort.

Alderman Weber was also mentioned. The member for MacDonnell was quite correct when he said that the council believes that the bus service is a government matter. Alderman Weber was talking on behalf of the council, not necessarily on his own behalf. Aldermen have to be clear about whether they are talking on the council's behalf or their own.

Mr B. Collins: You straighten them out, Denis.

Mr D.W. COLLINS: I am doing my best.

I should also point out that the council has voted to hold no further discussions on the bus service within its current term of office.

As far as town planning is concerned, the media has covered adequately the intention of the minister. He will put the recommendation of the joint planning committee before Cabinet when the matter of the seismic array is resolved. The seismic array is run by the joint US and Australian geological geophysical survey group. There is nothing sinister about its operation. I have been out there and I am sure any member who so desires could be shown over the facility by the personnel from Detachment 421.

The equipment simply measures vibrations in the earth's surface; it picks up vibrations from earthquakes and nuclear blasts. The two are very easily distinguishable. Earthquake vibrations always start off small and build up to a crescendo whereas the nuclear blast causes a rapid vibration from the beginning. There is nothing sinister about it; it is an important base. I understand that the minister has approached the Commonwealth to take the matter up with the United States government to determine whether it can be moved. If it is not moved and the subdivision goes ahead, it will no longer be functional. Traffic vibrations could mask the vibrations from nuclear explosions and earthquakes.

I now turn to the issue of the aquatic centre. There have been many allegations that the government's relationship with the council is deteriorating. Actually, I have never had a better relationship with the council. I have had far more correspondence and discussions with individual aldermen over this matter than any other matter I can remember.

I will give a brief historical outline. One of the developers, Mr Moore, came to me in late November 1985. He outlined his proposal for the aquatic centre. I did not accept his proposal without a considerable amount of questioning. He was proposing to erect the facility on a particular block of land in the heart of my electorate. I would not support any project whose operation might cause great concern to my constituents. I acted as devil's advocate, checking matters such as noise and light levels and the appearance of the centre. As far as I am concerned, the developer's answers were satisfactory. I then gave him my support for the aquatic centre and its proposed location in the centre of town. I am very happy to go on record as stating that I have no financial involvement with it. If there was such an involvement, the rules of this Assembly would require me to declare it. There never has been such an involvement and there never will be. However, I support a project which I know the people of Alice Springs are very keen about. In fact, I gave them notice in my Christmas newsletter that I was hopeful it would go ahead. There was a lot of interest shown.

It was easily ascertained that the land belongs to the government. I attended meetings between the developer and the government department, and with the Minister for Lands. I think he would agree that the developers really had done their homework and knew the answers. They knew the location of power and water services and everything else. It was a pleasure to support people who had done their homework in such a manner.

Some 5 years ago, when land zonings in Alice Springs were reviewed, it was suggested that an area which includes the proposed development site should be zoned O2 for public recreation. A letter had been written to council suggesting that the area could be used for sporting fields and possibly walking tracks. The council replied with a letter indicating that it agreed.

It wanted the government to develop the area initially so that it could take it over afterwards. In the current economic climate, there is no way the government could afford what the council would like. It likes to collect the credit after we spend the money. When the aquatic development was proposed, and after it had been investigated, I believe the minister was rather enthusiastic. However, we felt we should place the matter before its council as a matter of courtesy. The council offered me the opportunity of addressing it on the matter. I did so. However, it voted 7 to 4 against allowing the land to be used for the development.

Much has been made of some abusive phone calls. The first I heard of them was in Darwin on the Wednesday following council's decision. I do not doubt the word of the aldermen who said that they received abusive phone calls. When I returned to Alice Springs, Alderman King was the one who had the courtesy to inform me about what had occurred. He was not absolutely sure but he thought that maybe one of the developers was involved. I spoke with one of the developers in the privacy of my office. When I raised this suggestion, he was very surprised. He asked: 'Why would we want to shit in our own nest?' That is not a term which...

Mr B. Collins: It does not help if you say it softly: it still goes into Hansard.

Mr D.W. COLLINS: Very good. It still goes into Hansard.

The developer's reason for saying that was that he was still hopeful, as I was, that the minister would judge the project on its merits, and the council's decision would not be the end of the road. He was saying that he did not want to make any enemies in this matter. When a journalist from the Centralian Advocate interviewed me, I explained this to him. However, his story in the Centralian Advocate indicated that I had asked why we should do it in our own nest. I did not say that. It was a deliberate misquote by a journalist. Fortunately, he has gone to Israel, and I can only wish for him there everything the Arabs wish the Jews. The ABC report of supposed threats that people would be tossed out of the council because they had not supported this matter was taken out of context. What I said was that there are many issues which determine an election but, when so many people have been rejected by the 7 councillors, they then must take the consequences of their actions and people may well remember.

Let us consider the support that has been given to this matter by the people of Alice Springs. I issued a newsletter to let people know that it had been leaked to me that a group in the council recommended to the council that it was opposing the centre. I made it very clear that the opposition was to the site and not so much to the aquatic centre itself. Then one person in the electorate rang me up and said: 'Look, have you thought about putting out a petition?' I said: 'I had not really but I will.' We started a petition on the Friday afternoon, and it had to be before the council by the following Thursday. In that time, we collected 2500 signatures and I have another 500-odd here. I have never seen a petition which has been supported in such a spontaneous manner. I only collected one sheet of signatures myself. The rest were collected by other people. Some of them were strangers who came into the office, collected forms and then brought them back. That was spontaneous.

We also had support from the phone-in with 8HA. There was tremendous support there. The only one to oppose was our lady Mayor. The circular I put

out asked people to ring up their councillors to express their support and to discuss the matter with them. I know that some councillors had a host of phone calls - 50 or 60 phone calls - supporting it.

On those grounds, I believe the minister was justified in his statement that he was acting on the wishes of the people of the town. He had the support of the people of the town. He made his judgment on the merits of the development. I give him full support and so does the vast majority of people in Alice Springs.

Mr HANRAHAN (Flynn): Mr Deputy Speaker, I will be as quick as I can be in addressing the questions that were directed towards me by the honourable member for MacDonnell. Mainly, I wish to address part (a) of the motion before the Assembly. We are dealing with trivia.

The honourable member for MacDonnell referred to the development of the drive-in site and the retention of the drive-in as one example of the deteriorating relationship between the Alice Springs Town Council and the Northern Territory government. I point out to the honourable member for MacDonnell that Her Worship the Mayor of Alice Springs went to great pains at the time that she made her press statements to say quite clearly and emphatically that she was acting as a private citizen and not as the Mayor or a representative of the town council. I must admit that Her Worship does have difficulty understanding that the people of Alice Springs have a lot of trouble in making that distinction. Obviously, in listening to the Mayor, the people of the town believed that she was speaking on behalf of the town council. I point that out to the member for MacDonnell because, to the best of my knowledge, and I am sure I am right, the Alice Springs Town Council has never addressed either issue.

The developers of the drive-in site put a proposal for development to the honourable Minister for Lands. The original proposal clearly stated that the drive-in would remain. I think some of the points raised by Her Worship were way off beam. As for the retention of the drive-in, the member for MacDonnell is well aware that I made statements completely in support of the retention of the drive-in. We had representations from the operators of that drive-in who advised us that they owned all the equipment - the screens, projection equipment, speakers etc - and that they wanted to move it to another site. We said: 'Great, we will help you find another site'. They said: 'No problems about money. We can do all that ourselves'. Therefore, I wrote to the Minister for Lands and asked what we could do to help these people because, if there was any way that we could keep the drive-in going, we would pursue it. That was our approach. Unfortunately, the people had not quite levelled with me because they then sat down after we entered into negotiations and asked me for a loan of some \$100 000 which changed my mind on the drive-in facility.

Mr Deputy Speaker, the aesthetic South Road development has really been addressed in this Assembly by previous speakers. However, for the benefit of the member for MacDonnell, I had already approached the honourable Minister for Lands who is at the present moment conducting an inquiry into all development proposals along the Stuart Highway approach from the south into Alice Springs. That was already under way. So there is no point of contention there between the Northern Territory government and the Alice Springs Town Council.

I think the honourable Minister for Community Development will address the town boundary extension issue further but, just to put it into perspective,

the Alice Springs Town Council came forward with what can only be described as a ludicrous proposal. In doing so, at no point did the Alice Springs Town Council communicate that proposal directly to the Northern Territory government or the Minister for Community Development. The first time we found out about it was on the front page of the Centralian Advocate. Subsequent to that, the Minister for Community Development and I held 2 public meetings involving mainly the residents of White Gums and the farm area, which are in the electorates of MacDonnell and Flynn. I must admit that I did not see the member for MacDonnell there. They subsequently established a rural advisory council with full terms of reference and with the cooperation of the Alice Springs Town Council which has a representative on that council. That council represents a wide cross-section of the people living in the area.

On the issue of bus transport, I fail to see how there can be any point of contention between the Alice Springs Town Council and the Northern Territory government because the Alice Springs Town Council has a motion on its books not to address the issue of public transport for the life of the current council. I think that settles that beyond any shadow of doubt.

In respect of the Territory Tidy Towns issue, I ask the member for MacDonnell, if he is at any time contemplating putting flashing lights on the member for Sadadeen's signs, to approach the council because it has a policy that addresses flashing lights on signs.

Without going into great detail on the Alice Springs squash courts, I can advise the member for MacDonnell that a reply to his recent letter to the Chief Minister was signed today. The Alice Springs squash courts have been purchased. There is a lease-back arrangement to the Alice Springs Squash Racquets Association. There are tender requirements on the operator's side of it so there is no sweetheart deal. The moment I have the lease in place and full details are available, I will be very happy to receive a letter from the member for MacDonnell and I will give him every single detail that he requires on the circumstances surrounding it. There is nothing fishy about it. In fact, I am very pleased to say that I have been able to assist the Alice Springs Squash Racquets Association, the same as the Northern Territory government assists nearly every sporting association throughout the Northern Territory.

Mr HATTON (Lands): Mr Deputy Speaker, I would like to thank the members of the opposition for providing this Assembly with a bit of comic relief at this very early hour of the morning. It has been a very long and tiring day and it is pleasing to get a bit of comic relief in the form of debate in this Assembly. If we were before the Conciliation and Arbitration Commission, I believe that I could successfully stand up and say that there is no case to answer and sit down.

Mr B. Collins: You would not appear before it on principle.

Mr HATTON: I certainly appeared before it.

Mr B. Collins: That is right. It was before you sold out.

Mr HATTON: I would like to take up a few of these points. Most of these matters have already been dealt with by other speakers. The honourable member for Flynn mentioned the drive-in river site development. We are not in dispute with the council about that. In fact, I have had a number of discussions with the mayor, none of them acrimonious, about what we can do to

plan properly the development in the area south of the Gap. We are working in cooperation on that project quite successfully.

In respect of town boundary extensions, my colleague, the Minister for Community Development, will deal with that.

The member for MacDonnell said that piecemeal development of Alice Springs was characteristic. That could not be further from the truth. We certainly did have a difficulty with land release for residential land in Alice Springs when a correct decision was taken not to proceed with residential land development into the Mount John Valley area but rather to proceed into the Larapinta Valley and then to develop a structure plan for the future development of Alice Springs beyond the development of Larapinta. That structure plan has been finalised; it has been produced. There has also been a draft structure plan prepared for the Mount John Valley. We are finalising the CBD structure plan for Alice Springs. All of that has been done in consultation with the Alice Springs Town Council and is being discussed with a joint planning group which includes members of the Alice Springs Town Council.

Specifically in respect of the Alice Springs structure plan, the recommendations from the joint planning group is the Undoolya option. I have no problems with its recommendations. I would be happy to support its recommendations to Cabinet if I could get one little question answered: will it be possible to move the seismic array? More importantly, will it be possible to have that seismic array moved within the next 2-3 years. If not, the whole Undoolya option cannot work.

The joint planning group, of which the Alice Springs Town Council was a part, held informal discussions with people. From those informal discussions, there was an indication that there would be no problem. I am not prepared to go to Cabinet on those informal undertakings. I have instructed the Department of Lands to get a firm written commitment from the Australian government. It must be from the Australian government and not from a supervisor or some person in Alice Springs. I am not denigrating the person in Alice Springs, but it is a matter for the Australian government to deal with. Those negotiations have been proceeding with the Australian government for the last month. The Deputy Secretary of the Department of Lands has been conducting the discussions. I am awaiting one thing only: a letter indicating that it is possible to move the seismic array. Then I will take the submission from my drawer, sign it and send it to the Cabinet Secretary. Without that indication, we could adopt a plan for the development of Alice Springs and announce it publicly, only to find that it cannot be implemented. I do not want to be in that position. I want to be able to put forward a plan which can be acted upon.

It is important, as the member for MacDonnell said, that we have a plan and that we follow it. We have to make some decisions in the context of the 1986-87 budget concerning the completion and release of Larapinta stages 4 and 5. These are the 2 stages which are yet to be developed. The intention is to release stage 5 for tender this month or early next month. My problem is that I have had representations from every developer in Alice Springs begging me not to do that yet. They argue that there are so many blocks of residential land available in the already developed or developing Larapinta Valley subdivisions that further releases will result in an oversupply of land, causing great loss to them. I do not know whether that is right or wrong, but I will be in Alice Springs next week and I will be meeting with the developers. I will be investigating the situation myself, as is my habit.

Members opposite know that I spend a considerable amount of time in Alice Springs, dealing with the multitude of important issues which need to be addressed there. Next week, I will be addressing the issue of the further release of land at Larapinta. Current plans are to release 2000 house blocks in the 2 years from the middle of 1985 to the middle of 1987. We are on target, and can accelerate if we need to. The Master Builders Association and the developers say that is too many and the market will be flooded. We are ahead of demand for land release in Alice Springs. The structure plan concerns needs for release in 1988-89 and 1990. I would be negligent to recommend something which could not be implemented because of a decision which is outside the control of this government. I will not do that.

The member for MacDonnell said that I gave qualified rejections concerning White Gums. I do not know how he can possibly say that when I sent to the White Gums developers a specific notification that their subdivisional application had been rejected. I did not say they should reconsider their position. I advised formally that the White Gums subdivisional development had been rejected. It is true that we are discussing the possibility of providing other land that may be suitable for subdivisional development, and possibly considering a land swap which would bring the areas with environmental problems under the control of the Northern Territory government as Crown land. We could then provide some form of protection for the waterways, and address other problems raised by environmental studies.

I now turn to the famous aquatic centre. We have heard much discussion about the horrible things that I did in criticising the Alice Springs Town Council. I am reluctant to discuss this matter simply because Her Worship the Mayor of Alice Springs has asked me not to make further comment. She does not want to promote the suggestion that there are public squabbles between the government and the Alice Springs council. I respect that position, but comment is being dragged out by the opposition.

It is important to recognise that the O2 zoning, which covers the area proposed, is an appropriate zone for the development. The area is vacant Crown land under the control and ownership of the Northern Territory government. It is not council land. The remnant area of that particular block is 11.76 ha and it is certainly available for the council if it wishes to take it over to develop walkways, nature reserves, ovals or whatever. Discussions with the council led me to believe that the area was surrounded by houses and that we were promoting a terrible development which would destroy open space for residential populations. I have since been out there, and I think you would almost need a pair of binoculars to find the nearest house. There is the Todd River, 2 schools with ovals, roads and open space towards the hills. There are no houses anywhere in the vicinity.

The alternative suggested to me by some aldermen was land adjacent to the Alice Springs swimming pool. This is right in the centre of town, right near a busy road and, more importantly, the only way it could be used would be by evicting the Women's Centre. When I asked the Alice Springs Town Council who would do that, it said the government could do it. I was not prepared to do that and I do not think members opposite would support the eviction of the Women's Centre to erect an aquatic centre on a block next to the Alice Springs swimming pool complex in the centre of town, abutting existing residential areas, rather than in an appropriately zoned area that is well away from residences and which does not interfere with the opportunity to develop plenty of ovals. The location preferred by the government is a good one. Knowing the views of the Alice Springs people as expressed to myself, the local member

and the council, and looking rationally at the situation, I am quite prepared to support the development. I do not apologise for that.

Whilst there has been a hiccup in our relationship with the council, it certainly is not deteriorating or destroyed. On the contrary, over the last 12 months, the relationship between the Alice Springs Town Council and the Department of Lands has improved dramatically. We were having problems early last year with disputes over approvals for subdivisional areas. We were having problems with moves by the Alice Springs Town Council to take control of planning functions presently controlled by the Northern Territory government.

I met with all Northern Territory councils in the second half of last year. I met in Darwin with all the mayors, town clerks and officers of the Department of Lands. We went through all the issues, and we have developed procedures to involve councils closely so that they are able to participate with the Department of Lands in the evaluation of development proposals. Contact at officer level between the Alice Springs Town Council and the Department of Lands is occurring almost on a daily basis on a whole range of issues, including subdivisions and building development proposals.

However, I ask the member for MacDonnell to remember that, in the case of the aquatic centre, the council took a decision that was outside the ambit of its powers under the Local Government Act. It took a decision that was properly the decision of the Northern Territory government. We approached the council about the use of that land because of earlier discussions about its possible use for private development. A couple of aldermen decided to beat up the story and make a name for themselves. They did it quite successfully, calling special council meetings and passing resolutions on matters over which they had no authority. Then they tell me I have to recognise them as a legitimate part of the 3-tiered government system. I do. But, they say I should refrain from criticising any decision they make. Government decisions can be criticised and council decisions can be criticised. Councils do not have to agree with criticisms, but they should not try to make themselves immune from them, especially when they intrude in areas where they have no authority. I am quite entitled to say that I will not take any notice of such decisions. The Alice Springs Town Council had no right to make that decision; it could have decided to make representations to me. Instead, it said the development must stop. That was beyond its power.

I conclude by saying that, apart from that particular fight and a couple of small incidents which inevitably occur between levels of government, our relationship with the Alice Springs Town Council has been good. It is stronger now than it was 12 months ago and it will continue to improve because I like to work with local government. I want to work with local government in a cooperative and constructive manner. That is happening and there is no justification for this motion.

Mr COULTER (Community Development): Mr Deputy Speaker, one thing puzzles me about this motion concerning the deteriorating relationship between the Northern Territory government and the Alice Springs Town Council. I wonder if the member for MacDonnell comes to this Assembly with any authority on behalf of the council. I know we are not in dispute because I have researched the matter. I have looked at the front page of the Centralian Advocate and the matter does not appear there. That is where the council does its business with me and tells me about our disputes. Therefore, the member has misled the Assembly. He has come here today without any facts, and without the support of the council itself.

The member for Stuart quoted from the Centralian Advocate in some detail. It seems to me that the council discussed the issues 2 or 3 months before the press report appeared. However, when I make an announcement about Araluen or community development, nobody in Alice Springs gets to hear about it.

Let me discuss the aquatic centre specifically. On ABC radio on 6 March, the Mayor of Alice Springs said that she believed there was general public support for the aquatic centre. She said most of the aldermen thought it was a great idea but that she herself had not seen a copy of the circular. I will repeat that for members who may be nodding off at this wee hour of the morning. She had not seen a copy of the circular but she understood that it asked people whether they wanted an aquatic centre and suggested that they should tell the aldermen what they wanted. It did not say anything about the positioning of the centre. In fact, before the petition was printed, the member for Sadadeen took it to the mayor. I will read this because I would not like to mislead anybody. On the radio, the mayor said that she had not seen it. Clearly, she implied that she did not know what was in either the circular or the petition. However, the member for Sadadeen has pointed out that this is demonstrably untrue. He said: 'The facts are that I read out the contents of the circular over the phone to the mayor as a matter of courtesy before it was printed'. Although she did not see it, the member for Sadadeen had discussed the contents of the circular with her. As usual, when it became an issue, she had never heard of it.

The honourable member for Flynn pointed out the extension of the Alice Springs town boundary. Once again, I know that there was an issue there because I read about it in the front page of the Centralian Advocate. I knew that the council was making moves in this particular direction. In all fairness, I had had some preliminary discussions with the council and it told me that it had a proposal that it would put to me. Little did I know that it was cutting down on postage and was using the Centralian Advocate to forward that information to me. I congratulate the council on the avoidance of duplication and unnecessary mailing in order to deliver that particular message to me.

As a result of that, the member for Flynn and I organised public meetings and did the basic thing which I believe the member for MacDonnell and the member for Stuart had failed to do. We went to the people and we tried to find out what the people wanted. I am talking about the little people whom the Special Minister for Constitutional Development talked about today in his excellent farewell speech in the Chan Building. The little people are the people who count. They put us in this Assembly; they put the aldermen in the Civic Centre in Alice Springs.

We went to the little people. We discussed those concerns with them and they were amazed that these decisions had been made in their absence, and without any communication with those people who were most affected by this. As a result of that, we set up the Alice Springs Rural Advisory Council. We asked for a nomination from the Alice Springs Town Council to serve on that advisory council. That advisory council's role is to advise me as the minister on possible issues and on how we might go about extending the Alice Springs town boundaries to incorporate some of the farm areas and some of the other areas relating to this particular issue.

That is the way that this government does business and that is the way it will continue to do business. We will continue our good working relationship with the Alice Springs Town Council. It is doing a job down there. It is not

easy to be responsible on some of the bread and butter issues which can become real issues in any community. It is doing the job rather well.

The question of Araluen came up. As early as July 1985, the Chief Minister and an officer from my department, Mr McLaughlin, met with the Araluen management in Alice Springs to discuss its budget for this year. It had in fact put in a claim for some \$600 000 to run the Araluen centre. Its previous budget was about \$350 000. At that meeting, it was agreed that \$400 000 would be provided for the 1985-86 operating subsidy and \$140 000 would be available on a draw-down basis to cover the 1984-85 deficit. To date, \$346 141 has been released and \$100 000 was made available this month. Despite constant departmental contact with staff at Araluen, it was not possible to resolve the outstanding issues. Consequently, the department's finance manager, Mr Carswell, flew to Alice Springs and discussed issues with the centre management. After a subsequent exchange of correspondence, a level of funding has been agreed to.

On Friday 21 February, Roy Mitchell, the Town Clerk of Alice Springs - who has been most cooperative in the discussions on Araluen - sat down with officers of my department. The agenda items at that meeting covered such issues as the basic role of the centre, the proposed management structure and any legislative changes that might be required to enable that management structure to exist. We discussed things like funding arrangements, the Northern Territory government subsidy, the council's investment and basic accounting concepts. We did that prior to the press statement on Araluen. We discussed how the council could get involved, in particular on 3 issues: the accounting, gardening and general management of the centre. We have come a long way since those early talks. The level of agreement is reaching the stage where we will soon have a proposal. I have said to the people in Alice Springs that I will go down there. As we did with the Alice Springs Rural Advisory Council, we talk to the user groups. We will talk to the people about that infrastructure and how it might work.

I have appointed the new trustees to Araluen. That is no longer an issue. The trustees are appointed. They are in place. The centre can operate. It has a quorum. It is the same as this motion now before the Assembly. There is no issue. The simple fact is that the members for MacDonnell and Stuart have no issues. They have no mandate from the council to talk in this Assembly about a problem that exists between the Northern Territory government and the Alice Springs Town Council.

Mr Bell: What about the 6 month's it took you to appoint the trustees?

Mr COULTER: The member for MacDonnell raises the fact that it has been some 6 months. Under the present legislation, that has nothing to do with the council. That is not a council issue. It is a discreet unit that operates in complete isolation to the council. Two people from the council are on it: Roy Mitchell and the Mayor herself. There is a connection through their representation. In closing the debate, the honourable member for MacDonnell may have something to say on this particular issue and I look forward to his contribution.

I support the Minister for Lands. We do have a good working relationship with the Alice Springs Town Council. Both the Minister for Lands and myself will be in Alice Springs next week and we will be having discussions with the council on a whole range of issues. I am confident that a satisfactory resolution will be found on those wide-ranging issues and that we will

continue our longstanding good relationship that has been developed over a number of years by going through the proper channels and by working together to achieve what is best.

I certainly know that the member for Braitling would agree that Alice Springs is a magnificent town in the centre of Australia. It has the prosperity, the growth rate and the potential to be the most exciting town in the whole of Australia. I look forward to working with honourable members in the future for the development of this particular town. However, it will be increasingly difficult if the member for MacDonnell and the member for Stuart continue to bring on these nonsensical motions. It is sheer nonsense and, I suspect, totally unsupported by the council. They do not have a mandate from the people to bring these issues in front of the Legislative Assembly because they do not exist. The issues simply do not exist.

Mr MANZIE (Transport and Works): Mr Deputy Speaker, it has been a most disappointing display by both the member for MacDonnell and the member for Stuart this morning. They appear to me to have trotted out a couple of old speeches and theories that they have been running for the last few years. As the Minister for Community Development pointed out, there is absolutely no substance to anything they have said.

To tidy up, I will just cover 3 points that have not been covered yet. The first is public transport. We had a very eloquent plea from the member from MacDonnell and from the member for Stuart regarding the need for public transport in Alice Springs. They described a scenario that really had my heart bleeding. However, when one looks at the facts, one cannot see where the substance was in their arguments.

A few years ago, as the honourable member for MacDonnell pointed out, there was an experiment carried out in Alice Springs regarding public transport. There was a trial in 1982. For a period of 17 weeks, a bus ran in Alice Springs. It was subsidised by the government, not to an amount of \$100 000 as the honourable member for MacDonnell would have us believe but by a total amount of \$9671.67. While that bus ran for a period of 17 weeks, how many passengers did it carry? Would you believe 3127 or 12 per 1000 of the population of Alice Springs? That was an average of 184 a week at the time. For one 12-month period, the bus service in Darwin carried 2 245 000 passengers or 720 per 1000 of the population. There is absolutely no comparison.

The committee that was established to run that experiment consisted of the member for Sadadeen and the mayor. During that trial period, the committee recommended that the trial cease. It said: 'Stop it. It is just not going to work'. I find that contradicts greatly the heart-rending story we heard today. Obviously, the facts bear no relationship to the story that was told by members of the opposition.

Another point raised was the removal of the sewage farm and the water for Blatherskite Park. The member for MacDonnell had a simple solution. Obviously, it must have something to do with his simple thought processes because he forgot one thing which is not simple: the cost. My advice is that the cost of bringing the water back from the Brewer Estate, if the ponds end there, will be in the order of \$3m because water does not run uphill. A pumping station, pipes and tanks would be necessary. It is not a simple solution. However, we do not want to let the facts get in the way of a good heart-rending story. I can assure members that we are looking at the problems

of Blatherskite Park. You, Mr Deputy Speaker, quite rightly brought the matter to my attention and arranged a meeting, which I attended, to talk to local people about their concerns about water. I can assure all members of this Assembly that we will be looking at the problem and that we will be ensuring that some system of water supply will be in place if the ponds are moved to the Brewer Estate.

This is my final point. For the last 5 or 6 years, the member has been telling every member of the Territory community that there is no planning for Alice Springs, that there is no structure and that it will all fall apart. He said himself that it is the fastest-growing town in Australia. Nevertheless, any person can go to Alice Springs and buy a block of land. There are vacant blocks of land. Any person can drive around Alice Springs. There are no parking meters. For a town that has had no planning, as the member opposite would have us believe, it is certainly in fine shape today. I have full confidence in the Minister for Lands because, if planning and development continue in Alice Springs as they have in the past, we certainly will not have the sorts of problems that other places have in this country.

Mr BELL (MacDonnell): How extraordinary that was, Mr Deputy Speaker. The member for Stuart and I put together a comprehensive, cogent explanation of various difficulties confronting the citizens of Alice Springs yet we have been met with a mixture of mirth and derision that does the Northern Territory government no credit whatsoever. Quite clearly, we have demonstrated that the relationship between the Northern Territory government and the town council is not a productive one. It is deteriorating. Quite clearly, we have demonstrated that the Northern Territory government has failed to address adequately planning issues, including the provision of public transport.

The member for Braitling is a little difficult to reply to because, apart from his bizarre propensity for taking early morning surveys, we did not learn a great deal. We established that there are a fair number of cars on the road at 6 o'clock in the morning, but I am really not sure that he provided any convincing evidence against the public transport proposal. I mention that point to start with because it was also raised by the member for Sadadeen and the Minister for Transport and Works.

Much play was made of the previous bus service trial which cost about as much as the Chief Minister reeled off the Territory taxpayer in tax-free travelling allowance. I am quite sure that government members find the analogy distasteful but I am afraid that, given the nature of these sittings, such comparisons are ever-present in my mind, as I am sure that they will be in the minds of Northern Territory electors. Of course, the key problem is the length of the trial period for the public transport system. The member for Sadadeen referred to a 6-month trial period. My understanding is that there has to be a period during which people become accustomed to buses being available so that public transport becomes a part of their lifestyle. That takes a considerable length of time.

Another point concerned the high rate of car ownership. There will be increasing pressure on roads in Alice Springs if, for example, the Undoolya option goes ahead. There will be an even more pressing need for ...

Mr Finch: What relevance does this have?

Mr BELL: The member for Wagaman asks what relevance this has. Let me just fill him in. He has a notice paper in front of him. It is the one with Wednesday 26 March on it.

Mr Coulter: Today is Thursday. That is how out of date you are.

Mr BELL: Members of the government are obviously disoriented. This is Thursday, but the notice paper is for Wednesday. Just look at order of the day No 8 which refers to public transport. For the benefit of the member for Wagaman, that is exactly what I am talking about. He probably does not get to Alice Springs too often, so perhaps he can go back and have another whisky.

Mr Dale: Where is Bobby Collins at the moment? Can you tell us that Neil? Having little kippies, is he?

Mr BELL: I think I will allow that to be included in the Hansard to show how absolutely pathetic it is.

Mr Dale: So was your allegation.

Mr BELL: Mr Deputy Speaker, can I have a little protection from the Chair?

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Honourable members will respect the wishes of the honourable member for MacDonnell. It has been a long night and morning.

Mr BELL: Mr Deputy Speaker, as I say, I think the public transport system is necessary. I think a bus service needs to be given more active consideration. The Minister for Transport and Works compared the number in a 6-month trial period with the number currently being carried by the Darwin Bus Service. It has taken many years for that number to be built up, as my colleague mentioned. The number of people in Darwin when that bus service was commenced is comparable with the number in Alice Springs now. The government ought to think about it.

Let me turn now to the aquatic centre. Much comment was made by various people about the aquatic centre. I will go easy on the honourable member for Sadadeen. I will not talk about his use of Legislative Assembly stationery to support the commercial enterprise of his choice in his electorate.

Mr FINCH: A point of order, Mr Deputy Speaker!

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: What is the point of order?

Mr FINCH: I refer to standing order 62. The honourable member for MacDonnell is making personal innuendos about the honourable member for Sadadeen.

Mr BELL: Right! I will into him. I will really into him! I won't be patient. I was going to go easy on him but I won't now.

Members interjecting.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! The honourable member for MacDonnell will withdraw the imputation against the honourable member for Sadadeen about misuse of parliamentary stationery. It can only be done on a substantive motion. The honourable member must withdraw.

Mr BELL: Mr Deputy Speaker, at some other time, I will consider the question of the use of stationery in this context. I withdraw unreservedly any imputation that the honourable member for Sadadeen may have misused his

stationery in circularising support for the commercial enterprise under discussion at this stage.

Two issues have been confused by a number of government speakers with respect to the aquatic centre. The first was the merit of the proposal that there be an aquatic centre and water-slide. The second was the merit of the use of the particular block of land under consideration. Let me place on record here, as I have done elsewhere, that the idea of an aquatic centre and water-slide is an excellent one. What I take the honourable Minister for Lands to task on is the valuation of the land. I was interested to hear from the Minister for Lands that the cost of the O2 land was \$310 000 and the heap of diatribe that he poured on me for failing to understand these things. Let me say in response that we are talking about commercial recreation, comparable with say the dust bowl - the bowling alley. They are both commercial recreational facilities. I have no objection to the rezoning of O2 land for commercial recreation. They know that. But everybody should have a fair go. That land should have been put up for tender. Too much of the negotiation surrounding this particular block of land smacks of sweetheart deals.

That disposes of the honourable member for Sadadeen with the exception of an issue that the Labor Party branch in Sadadeen has given some special attention to - namely, shops in that vicinity. You will recall, Mr Deputy Speaker, the article in the Centralian Advocate: 'Urban Ugliness'. The problem was very well described as a lack of public and commercial facilities in the honourable member's electorate. There still continues to be no action in that regard by the government. I was surprised that the member only decided to mention that by way of interjection and not by way of considered comment. Of course, I have my doubts about the member's capacity for such mature consideration.

The honourable member for Flynn was guilty of the same sort of sophistry that his colleague, the Minister for Lands, was guilty of in an earlier debate this morning. He tried to suggest that the mayor was somehow speaking as an individual and not speaking on behalf of the council, which he seemed to think mattered. As far as I am concerned, that is splitting hairs. As far as I am concerned, the comments of the Mayor of Alice Springs represent an important reflection of public opinion in the town. I suggest that it is a matter of some concern that the member ignores it in the way he does. However, I was interested to hear of the inquiry and development proposals for the Stuart Highway. I found that most interesting. It certainly sounds like a change of heart from the ad hoc approach that we have become rather accustomed to with this government. I look forward to hearing of the developments in that regard.

The member for Flynn said the government has spent \$100 000 on the squash centre proposal and that has kept the squash centre afloat. I think that is terrific. I hope it works out. However, I still think that the government should realise that, if it had taken the right decisions 2 or 3 years ago, that \$100 000 might not have been required. I look forward to seeing the agreements that are reached in that regard.

Mr Hanrahan: Where did you get the \$100 000 from, Neil?

Mr BELL: I will check the Hansard tomorrow, but I believe that he mentioned a figure of \$100 000 in his speech to the Assembly today.

Mr Hanrahan: Please do.

Mr BELL: The honourable Minister for Lands charged on with the hoary old chestnut about the Mount John Valley area and what a great job the Northern Territory government had done in rezoning it for tourist development. I suggest he does a little homework and looks at a bad old Commonwealth town planning exercise in 1975 which had the Mount John Valley allocated for exactly the same development then.

I appreciated and I am quite happy to acknowledge the constructive contribution to this debate made by the minister with respect to the seismic array. I will have to study his comments a little more carefully. I am still not satisfied that there has not been unreasonable delay in that regard. As I say, I will look more closely at his comments and correspond with him further in that regard.

Mr Deputy Speaker, the Minister for Transport and Works mentioned the Blatherskite Park trustees. I thank him for his information about the costing of the line that would be required to pump effluent back to the park from the new sewage farm down in the Brewer Industrial Estate. The figure he mentioned was \$3m. Perhaps now that the Minister for Lands does not have to spend the \$3m on headworks for the White Gums rural residential allotment, it might be more apposite for them to be used for this purpose. I just throw that up as an idea. Perhaps the 2 ministers can get their heads together.

In a fine encomium, the Minister for Transport and Works said Alice Springs is in fine shape. Let me just point out to him again that there is considerable concern. When the local media raises questions of the quality of planning decisions, the quality of the results of planning decisions and the quality of subdivisions in Alice Springs, I really fail to see how the minister can come to that conclusion.

Finally, let me turn to the stentorian Minister for Community Development. I think that, if we wanted any further evidence of the deteriorating relationship between the Northern Territory government and the Alice Springs Town Council, we got it from him. We got about 5 minutes of diatribe about the way he does business with it. He suggests that the fault is all on its side. I noticed that he was backed up with a roaring chortle from the minister for mindless energy, but I really fail to see how the honourable minister's comments can be supported, particularly with respect to Araluen. With respect to Araluen, there still remains a question. I asked him and he did not answer. I asked him why it took 6 months to appoint trustees. We quoted the letter:

'The Alice Springs Art Foundation, on behalf of other user groups, thinks it is ridiculous that the centre has been rendered practically immobile due to the lack of trustees. It could be seen that the staff of that establishment are most unhappy. Nominations for vacant positions on the trust have been with the minister for the last 6 months'.

That is not good enough. We have substantiated the contents of this motion, and I commend it to all honourable members.

Motion negatived.

TABLED PAPERS
Tenth Report of the Subordinate Legislation
and Tabled Papers Committee

Mr FINCH (Wagaman): Mr Speaker, I lay on the table the Tenth Report of the Subordinate Legislation and Tabled Papers Committee.

First Report of the Publications Committee

Mr DALE (Wanguri): Mr Speaker, I lay on the table the first report of the Publications Committee, and seek leave to move a motion.

Leave granted.

Mr DALE: Mr Speaker, I move that the report be adopted.

Motion agreed to.

MOTION
CAT Scan Facilities and Radiological Services
at Royal Darwin Hospital

Mr LANHUPUY (Arnhem): Mr Speaker, I move that this Assembly express its concern at the inadequate CAT scan facilities and the continuing problems with radiological services at the Royal Darwin Hospital.

This matter was raised in this Assembly as a matter of public importance by the Leader of the Opposition on 29 August 1985. In reply, the Minister for Health advised that a specialist was arriving in Darwin within 2 weeks of that sitting day to advise the department on the types of machines available and the best suited to our environment and that, when those facts were before him, the minister would then ascertain whether the machine would be purchased in advance of the estimated time frame of 1986-87. As I understand it, the specialist arrived in Darwin a few weeks after we raised this matter and I believe that an inspection of radiological services in Darwin was carried out and that a report is in the hands of the minister. However, the government has not seen fit to release this report to the opposition or to the people of the Northern Territory. The CAT scanning facilities available to Territorians have not improved and the situation is still just as serious as when we raised this matter in the Assembly last year.

Mr Speaker, I ask the Minister for Health on behalf of all Territorians to release the report on the CAT scanning facilities at Royal Darwin Hospital to the public and to tell us what action the government intends to take on this matter so that people in the Northern Territory can receive the adequate health services that they deserve and are entitled to. The technology and equipment are available and I am sure that the public would view the expenditure of money on adequate health facilities to be of much higher priority than moneys spent on tourist facilities. The member for Casuarina and Deputy Chief Minister told us last year that he viewed this as a matter of public importance and he agreed there was cause for concern. But I can only assume that he has changed his mind as we have heard nothing on this matter from the government since it was raised by us in this Assembly last year.

When we raised this matter last year, I expressed the real concern that, besides the inadequacies of the CAT scan machine, there were also inadequate numbers of radiology staff which was resulting in lack of radiology reporting

and the loss of x-ray films. There is one radiologist on the full-time staff of the Royal Darwin Hospital and, as I understand it, this person intends to leave by April this year. There are also 2 visiting radiologists doing a total of 6 sessions. One of them does 4 sessions of ultrasound work and the other does 2 sessions of general work. On average, 1.6 radiologists are available to patients when the department is fully staffed. The alarming fact is that the average annual workload for each radiologist works out to be over 26 000 examinations because the hospital carries out in excess of 49 000 examinations per year. But the Royal Australasian College of Radiologists recommends that a radiologist with administrative duties should have as a maximum acceptable workload only 10 000 examinations per year. Our radiologists are carrying out almost 3 times that number of examinations. Obviously, because of this extreme and excessive workload placed upon radiologists at our hospital, it is no wonder that problems have been and are still occurring. It is no wonder that patients' films are frequently lost and it is no wonder that there is inadequate reporting on examinations. The radiology staff at Darwin have voiced their complaints and the opposition has made these complaints clear to all members in this Assembly. But the government has taken no action to rectify this serious situation.

To make it clear to the minister once again, it is obvious that, for the adequate health care of Territorians, it will be necessary to employ a further 2 radiologists this year. To retain these radiologists in Darwin, it is imperative that we provide them with reasonable working conditions and adequate and effective equipment to work with. There is a shortage of radiologists in this country and we cannot expect to retain them in the Royal Darwin Hospital if, due to low staff levels, they are forced to carry out administrative tasks as well as the heavy workload of their examinations and, of course, the frustration of working with inadequate, outdated and faulty equipment. We cannot blame them for taking their expertise elsewhere.

I turn to the issue of the CAT scanner itself. This unit is a Technicare Delta 190 which was manufactured in 1976 and subsequently installed in the hospital in 1979. It is important to note that there is no similar unit presently in use in Australia. This fact is of concern because spare parts for this type of machine will no longer be manufactured after the end of this year. Because this machine is 6 years old and because of the way it was constructed, a considerable number of breakdowns are occurring. There is also a high incidence of breakdowns due to air-conditioning problems at the hospital. In addition, the design of this particular CAT scanner is such that it takes 5 times longer to carry out a scan than the time taken by modern units. This excessive length of time means that fewer scans can be carried out each day, and it also increases the risk to patients.

It is clear from these points I have mentioned that the Royal Darwin Hospital has a desperate need for a new, up-to-date, whole-body CAT scanner to be ordered now. Even if the government were to decide to place such an order now, it would be 6 to 8 months before new equipment could be in place at the Royal Darwin Hospital because it would need to be imported from overseas. A whole-body scanner obviously has many advantages over a mere head scanner: firstly, because of its dramatic additional diagnostic ability and, secondly, as a valuable facility in the Royal Darwin Hospital's increasing teaching role.

I urge the government to support this motion. In fact, if it does not, it will express to Territorians that it has no concern for providing them with adequate health care. I would also urge the government to release immediately

to the public the report on radiology services and to take appropriate immediate action.

In summary, the CAT scanner at the Royal Darwin Hospital is out of date, often breaking down and inefficient. There will be a shortage of spare parts in the near future for this machine and we believe there is an urgent need to purchase a new, whole-body CAT scanner now. There is also an urgent need for additional radiologists to be employed in Darwin Hospital. Of course, it is essential that we manage to keep those radiologists at the hospital by ensuring they have favourable working conditions. This is an extremely serious matter, and the public eagerly awaits a response from this government. I urge the government to consider the matter urgently. I hope that it will see fit to equip the Royal Darwin Hospital with the latest-model machine. It is not good enough to expect the present private set to satisfy the services that are of great importance to the people of the Northern Territory. If this government is serious about its responsibilities in relation to the health of the people in the Northern Territory, then it should do its utmost to purchase a CAT scanner to satisfy the needs of the people of the Northern Territory. I hope that the honourable Minister for Health will be able to give us some relief on that.

Mr HANRAHAN (Health): Mr Speaker, I certainly do not take the motion before us lightly. If I intended to deal with the motion very briefly, I would simply say that there are adequate CAT scan facilities in Darwin and acknowledge that there are certain problems continuing in the radiology section at the Royal Darwin Hospital but that they pertain to staff recruitment.

Last year, there were complaints in this Assembly that films were being lost as a result of inadequate control and reporting systems at the Royal Darwin Hospital. This problem has been rectified, although I am sure that no person would expect any system to be perfect. I am sure the odd film still goes missing.

At present, there is no waiting list for special radiological investigations, although this may cease to be the case when Dr Bateson leaves at the end of April. Discussions are under way to have Dr Whitlocke perform the special investigations. It is also planned to have a medical manager appointed to ensure smooth day-to-day functioning of the department until Dr Bateson can be replaced.

Mr Speaker, I intend to address the availability of radiologists as one of the most integral parts of the efficient functioning of any department of radiology, in particular, the operation of a CAT scanner. The Royal Darwin Hospital has advertised extensively throughout Australia and in appropriate countries overseas for the last 2 years for specialist radiologists. Two radiologists from within Australia have expressed interest. One of them has visited Darwin to look over the hospital and the department. There is no indication yet whether that radiologist will take up a position here or not. The other radiologist is expected to visit Darwin in May to have discussions with the department. There have been 3 written applications from radiologists overseas in response to the advertisements placed by the Department of Health. An offer of employment has been made to a radiologist in the UK and a reply is awaited. The Royal Darwin Hospital certainly wishes to employ 2 radiologists. There is a possibility that another private radiologist can be attracted to Darwin in the very near future and I am sure sessional work at the Royal Darwin Hospital would be offered.

I have deliberately not released to the opposition nor to the public the report compiled by Dr Max Schieb, the consultant with the Veterans Affairs Department who visited Darwin and Alice Springs between 8-12 September 1985. I intend this evening to quote at length from the report. I indicate that I consider the report to be of a confidential nature and I will not be tabling it or making it available. I can assure the Leader of the Opposition that I will not in any way quote selectively.

Mr B. Collins: I will know if you do.

Mr HANRAHAN: I am very well aware of that.

Dr Schieb carried out a complete review of the Radiology Department of the Royal Darwin Hospital. He addressed such issues as the ultrasound facility, the water bath and the linear array scanner. He made one important recommendation that the Department of Health is addressing at this moment. It involves a possible \$60 000 expenditure for the purchase of a high-quality, real time sector scanner relating to ultrasound.

The member for Arnhem mentioned workload. This is a very pertinent issue in respect of the overall efficiency of the radiology department. It goes without saying that we have had problems relating to the availability of radiologists. We are well aware that we need to recruit and employ additional radiologists. However, I point out to members that various medical magazines in Australia and overseas contain offers of employment to qualified radiologists with salaries starting at \$150 000 and incentives such as cars and houses. You can understand the difficulty in attracting people to work as employees of the Department of Health. We will need to strike a balance to ensure that we do not lose existing radiologists and that we are able to recruit additional ones.

In excess of 40 000 examinations were performed in the radiology department at the Royal Darwin Hospital in 1984. That represented an increase of some 6000 on the 1983 figures. There is only one full-time radiologist at the hospital. There are 2 visiting radiologists undertaking a total of 6 sessions. I compliment the member for Arnhem on the accuracy of his information. One does 4 sessions, all of which are ultrasound work, while the other does 2 sessions of general work. Thus there is a real time equivalent of 1.6 radiologists available when the department is fully staffed. This results in an average annual workload per radiologist equivalent to 26 250 examinations. What the member for Arnhem did not mention is that the Royal Australian College of Radiologists recommends that, for a radiologist with administrative duties but without teaching duties, the maximum acceptable workload is 10 000 examinations per annum. If the workload is greater, some aspects of this work must suffer - either his administrative duties or his clinical duties, and often both.

On the matter of complaints, Dr Schieb's report indicates that there is a high incidence of films being lost. I have advised the Assembly that that issue was addressed last August, September and October. I understand that since then there have been virtually no complaints of films being lost.

It is obvious from the statistics that a second staff radiologist is needed urgently in the Royal Darwin Hospital. Advertisements were placed in Australian capital city newspapers, but they attracted no replies. As a result of our upgraded advertising campaign, particularly overseas, we have been able to attract some interest. However, we still have no definite

confirmation that any radiologist is prepared to work at the Royal Darwin Hospital. Recruitment and remuneration really are problems.

I have no qualms in verifying to the Assembly what I said last year: I certainly recognise the problems with the head scanner located at the Royal Darwin Hospital. I believe that the fault was obvious when it was installed. I do not think people realised the sensitivity of the computer's operation and the need for proper air-conditioning facilities. The hospital scanner is not located in a suitable environment. That leads to widely fluctuating temperatures and humidity levels which no computer can readily tolerate. The other scanner malfunctions were caused by a mixture of software, hardware and general mechanical problems.

I would like to address Dr Schieb's comments concerning private radiology practice in Darwin. The CAT scanner in Dr Whitlocke's surgery was manufactured in 1980. It was installed in Darwin when Dr Whitlocke commenced his practice in 1983. Dr Schieb considers that a single private radiological practice in a city of 60 000 people would normally be considered a highly viable economic entity. The city's population may be compared with that of Wagga Wagga in New South Wales. Dr Schieb says that Darwin is different because of its high proportion of young people. He concludes, on the basis of statistics from the radiology department at the Royal Darwin Hospital, that simple radiology is the basic service required here. There is not a great need for traumatic head pathology. He makes some very pertinent comments about the equipment located in Dr Whitlocke's surgery. He says:

'The quality of work which emanated from Dr Whitlocke's practice was considered of a standard that was quite acceptable and comparable to that which might come out of most other private radiology practices. I had the distinct impression that the CAT scanner was probably in need of expert calibration by the installation engineers. The picture quality was not quite that of which such a machine is capable.

I took the opportunity whilst at the Darwin Hospital to look at further samples of work coming from Dr Whitlocke's rooms. Again, I found work of quite acceptable standard, not only from a technical viewpoint but also from the aspect of film interpretation'.

There is a difference between clinical skills in private practice and in hospitals. There was considerable criticism, both in this Assembly and in Dr Schieb's discussions with various people, concerning the standard and quality of Dr Whitlocke's rooms, although he does go on to say that, generally, they compare favourably with other private radiology services with private CAT scanners.

I think it is important to read into Hansard Dr Schieb's actual recommendations:

'1. The CAT scanner at the Royal Darwin Hospital has reached the end of its useful life. The images that are currently produced are of acceptable quality but the time taken in their acquisition and the considerable down-time of the apparatus necessitates its replacement. It should be replaced with a modern, state-of-the-art, whole-body CAT scanner. Because of these problems and the impending shortage of spare parts, acquisition of a new scanner should be programmed for 1986-87. All such equipment is imported and a lead-time of 6 to

8 months from the time of placing an order is to be expected. The preparation of specifications and the tendering process should take this into account.

2. The quality of radiology in Darwin is high. The range of services provided is not comparable with what may be present in a large southern city. It is comparable with that which is provided in southern rural cities of comparable size to Darwin. Whatever steps are finally decided upon regarding CAT services in Darwin, consideration should be given to the borderline economic viability of the private radiological practice so that radiological personnel are not depleted.

3. There is a great need for a second staff radiologist at the Royal Darwin Hospital. Renewed efforts to secure such a person either from within or without this country should be made.

4. On the evidence provided by current data, there is work for only one modern whole-body CAT scanner in Darwin. There is security, however, in having 2 scanners in place, and this would presumably need to be located on the Darwin Hospital campus. There should be acknowledgement by the hospital administration of the workload difficulties being experienced in the radiology department and the department actively supported'.

I have certainly addressed that last point, as have other people.

The member for Arnhem has indicated to me that, in his view, it would not be appropriate under any circumstances to relocate the equipment owned by Dr Whitlocke. I am currently considering 3 options. I have certainly investigated the possibility of relocating Dr Whitlocke's whole-body scanner at the Royal Darwin Hospital. There are some problems with this. His scanner would not require any modification of the air-conditioning system for successful operation at the hospital but, during the shift, Darwin could be without scanning services for 4 weeks. One of the other options is to move Dr Whitlocke's machine into the Royal Darwin Hospital at minimal expense, whilst retaining the existing head scanner for a short period. I will outline my reasons for considering these options, with a view to delaying the purchase of a state-of-the-art, whole-body scanner.

The private hospital, which I will deal with in a moment, will play an integral part in the future of the radiology department, and specifically private practice. One advantage of moving Dr Whitlocke's equipment is that it will help rationalise current CAT equipment in Darwin. This is a serious matter which needs to be addressed. Improved access to later generation technology for hospital patients will occur within 3 years at the most. Locating Dr Whitlocke's equipment at the hospital would give improved access and would avoid the unfortunate and at times dangerous transfer of very ill patients from Royal Darwin Hospital to Dr Whitlocke's private rooms. Transfers can take up to 3 hours, tying up many staff. In addition, there would be sizeable savings on current maintenance and operational costs, together with a very significant reduction in scanner down-time at the hospital.

I have discussed the proposal to shift Dr Whitlocke's scanner into Royal Darwin Hospital with Dr Schieb and Dr Peter Riley, a consultant neurosurgeon who regularly visits Royal Darwin Hospital from Adelaide, and the Secretary of

the Department of Health. They have suggested that we take 3 considerations into account if that is the option that we finally prefer. One is to explore the possibility of installing Dr Whitlocke's scanner in addition to keeping the Royal Darwin Hospital scanner going. The second is to explore the possibility of connecting Dr Whitlocke's scanner's computer to the CAT computer at Royal Adelaide Hospital. This would allow Dr Riley to offer clinical advice on head injury scans, thus providing a second opinion. The third is to insist that the manufacturers of the equipment located in Dr Whitlocke's surgery undertake the removal, refurbishment and installation in the new location. In recent weeks, there has been some urgency involved because deterioration occurs from time to time with the head scanner located at Royal Darwin Hospital.

I certainly value and respect the advice of Dr Bateson who is due to retire soon. He has been a radiologist with the Department of Health for many years. We have one problem only that I am able to identify in relation to clinical diagnosis from films from Dr Whitlocke's machine. Dr Bateson has stated that the machine produces good head, chest and abdomen images, but has a little trouble in taking clear pictures of soft tissue problems in the spine such as prolapsed intervertebral discs.

An important issue that I have addressed was raised by the honourable member for Arnhem. Any relocation of equipment at the Royal Darwin Hospital would need to be available to radiologists employed in the hospital. If there is no CAT scanner in the radiology department, the department would have greater difficulty in attracting appropriate staff.

I mentioned the private hospital. Contrary to general gossip, the private hospital is proceeding at a rapid pace. A site has been identified at the Royal Darwin Hospital. At the moment, I have 9 written expressions of interest before me. Recently, I advertised Australia-wide for expressions of interest and there is no shortage of people willing to build and operate a private hospital in Darwin. The feasibility report that was submitted to the government identifies a need for a 60-bed private hospital initially with a maximum of 100-beds in 1990-91.

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

Mr FINCH (Wagaman): Mr Speaker, I move that the honourable minister be granted an extension of time.

Motion agreed to.

Mr HANRAHAN: As I have stated, when the facts are before me, I will determine whether the machine will be purchased in advance of the estimated time frame of 1986-87.

An integral part of the whole scenario of options proposed by the member for Arnhem is the availability of radiologists. I am awaiting the final outcome of applications from people who have expressed interest from within Australia and overseas. However, there is a fully-qualified radiologist in Darwin and another fully-qualified person is coming from the United States.

I expect that, within the next 2 weeks, I will decide what option I will take. The member for Arnhem was quite correct that the lead-time for installing a state of the art CAT scanner at the Royal Darwin Hospital is about 8 months. On the basis of expert advice from Dr Riley and

Dr Max Schieb, I am of the opinion that much of what was said in this Assembly last year about the quality and standard of Dr Whitlocke's film and equipment was largely false. I would suggest that the opposition pay heed to the fact that everything possible has been done by the Department of Health to employ radiologists. In relation to Dr Whitlocke's equipment, I do not believe that there is anybody in Darwin who has sufficient experience or expertise to challenge the judgments made by Dr Riley and Dr Schieb.

Mr B. COLLINS (Opposition Leader): Mr Speaker, I am sure all honourable members would agree that radiology is one of the basic diagnostic tools which are accepted as essential in any modern health system. One cannot expect heart or liver transplant facilities to be available in Darwin but one can expect radiology services of a very high standard to be available in the health system of the Northern Territory. After reading the Schieb report, I understand why the Minister for Health does not want to release it publicly. In many ways, it is a disturbing document which catalogues problems that we have known about for some time and indeed the opposition has raised in the Assembly as a matter of public importance. My opinion is based on Dr Schieb's report when I say that the government should install a state-of-the-art CAT scanner at the earliest possible opportunity at the Royal Darwin Hospital.

When researching available machines that provide the best possible results in all aspects of radiological examinations, we discovered there are a number of very high-quality machines available at a comparable price. Members will not be surprised to hear that such machines, which are reliant upon extremely sophisticated computer technology, are improving with every month that passes. In terms of present standards, the machine in the Royal Darwin Hospital is in the ark. After this year, the model will no longer be manufactured and no parts will be available. That is all in the Schieb report.

Machines that are currently on the market are superior to machines that are 4 or 5 years old. At least one of the companies that we spoke to was perfectly prepared to supply a machine immediately to the Northern Territory government. It simply requires a letter of intent from the government indicating that money will be available in the next budget. We put that proposition to the company because of the debate in the Assembly last August. Under questioning from the opposition, the Minister for Health reiterated a dismal list of breakdowns and failures. From memory, there were 69 occasions when the headscan machine at the hospital had broken down. I might add that it is still continuing to break down regularly. He indicated that, because of budget constraints, it would be difficult to install a new machine immediately. He said that the government would be looking at the possibility of providing funds in the next budget.

On the basis of that information, we made our inquiries. The manufacturer of an extremely sophisticated, state-of-the-art machine indicated that it would be prepared to provide a machine to the Northern Territory's Department of Health immediately on receipt of a letter of intent from the government indicating that funds would be available in the following budget. In fact, we made that information available to the government during the August sittings.

There are 2 very important reasons why the radiology services of the Northern Territory's Department of Health must be improved as a matter of urgency. I acknowledge the problems that the Minister for Health has in attracting skilled staff. There are 2 areas of specialist medicine which attract extremely high salaries: radiology and pathology. It is perfectly true that a top radiologist - and, in my view, they are worth it - can attract

an annual salary in the \$100 000 to \$150 000 range. Medical practitioners often refer to it as the science of shadows in shadowland. When one hears stories from extremely experienced theatre sisters about situations that can occur as a result of inaccurate radiological diagnoses, one realises that expert radiologists are worth every cent they are paid.

There are 2 pressing reasons why we must improve dramatically both the services provided and the equipment. One must remember that services and equipment go hand in glove. One cannot expect to attract top radiologists simply by offering them higher salaries. They must be provided with the best possible equipment to enable them to teach others and to sharpen their own skills. The Northern Territory's population has a right to expect the best possible services. However, another serious reason why such services are necessary is that the Northern Territory attracts a large number of tourists.

A number of very large hotels have opened recently or are about to open and the government tells us that there is the prospect of many more. According to government statements, a 600-room hotel should have opened its doors on Myilly Point. Obviously, it was an extremely quiet opening. But we live in hope. Nevertheless, a number of medical practitioners provide a very good service and make a very good living from making themselves available to the hotel population of this city. As I understand it, at least 2 practices provide an essential after-hours service and hotel service for our tourist population. I have used that service and have been extremely satisfied with it.

The other problem is that many of our tourists are people of quite advanced years who are more likely to experience the kinds of complaints for which CAT scanners are used. I refer to cerebral haemorrhages, strokes and so on. Health care is a great concern to those people. For example, the Americans have a preoccupation with 2 things: the plumbing and the comfort of knowing that a very high standard of health care exists in the places they visit. We have all heard stories, many of them accurate, about tourists undergoing horrendous experiences in terms of obtaining basic health care. The Northern Territory is a modern, affluent community which is determined to attract a very large slice of a sophisticated and affluent tourist market. I can assure members that the Beaufort Hotel will be catering for the kinds of tourists who would not be satisfied with anything less than the best. These are the people whom the Northern Territory needs to attract.

One cannot read the Schieb report without appreciating that the standard of radiological services provided currently in Darwin is much less than par. The Minister for Health acknowledged in August last year that a serious problem existed with matters such as the loss of film. The reason is that the radiologists at the hospital were making radiological diagnoses at the rate of 1 every 4 minutes. One cannot expect radiologists working under that kind of pressure not to have problems such as losing some of the films. We know that radiologists at the hospital are performing 3 times the maximum number of diagnoses recommended by the Royal Australian College of Radiologists. I know that the Minister for Health accepts that that is far from satisfactory in a modern, sophisticated community such as ours.

I appreciate the concern of the current Minister for Health. I was appalled at some of the things that were said about CAT scanners by the former Minister for Health, the Deputy Chief Minister. They have been profoundly contradicted by the minister who has taken his place. Despite the assurances of the former Minister for Health, the full-body CAT scanner in its present

location is not acceptable for an unconscious patient who may require resuscitation. It is not simply a question of the rooms themselves. Considerable trauma could be associated with transferring the patient into town with the possibility that a medical emergency could occur at any point in transit. As a person experienced in transport nursing, I can assure members that the back of an ambulance is not a convenient place to operate on a person who has no heartbeat and no respiration. I am pleased that the Minister for Health has acknowledged that that is a problem.

I agree with the minister that it is not appropriate to release the Schieb report publicly because it may be misunderstood. However, I believe that Dr Schieb's initial recommendation should be implemented for the sake both of our domestic population and our visitors. A state-of-the-art, full-body CAT scanner should be purchased and the appropriate place to locate it is the Royal Darwin Hospital where the most sophisticated backup facilities exist.

The opposition will follow in a supportive and constructive way the problems attached to the radiological services at the hospital and the need to provide sophisticated equipment to cope with them. If it has a problem with its budget, perhaps the government can talk to the same companies that we have talked to. I do not think that a community as wealthy as ours and which wishes to attract tourists should be satisfied with anything less than the best equipment available. It is not something that will cripple the Northern Territory's budget. It is far less than the funds that the Northern Territory's Chief Minister recently made available to television services in central Australia, not that I am criticising him for that.

It is a question of priorities. Before we spend large sums in setting up necessary tourist infrastructure, we must ensure that we can provide the whole package all along the line. The 5-star tourists at the Sheraton and the Beaufort will require the sorts of medical services that we know are not available in Darwin at the moment. We have an obligation to make them available. In terms of radiological services, Dr Schieb has recommended the purchase by the Northern Territory government and installation at Royal Darwin Hospital of a state-of-the-art CAT scanner. I urge the government to support the motion. If that is not possible, I suggest that it amend it rather than reject it.

Mr Hanrahan: I would be prepared to accept it if the word 'inadequate' were omitted.

Mr B. COLLINS (by leave): Mr Deputy Speaker, I move that the motion be amended by deleting the word 'inadequate'.

Amendment agreed to.

Motion, as amended, agreed to.

MOTION

Noting Communications Technology Select Committee Report

Mr EDE (Stuart): Mr Deputy Speaker, I do not intend to take up a great deal of the Assembly's time on this debate. After all, it was so long ago. I vaguely recall that the committee was established in the full flush of enthusiasm of the previous Chief Minister to find something to do with his backbench at the time. We actually did report on the implications of the satellite a couple of days before the satellite was launched. The committee

served the purpose of keeping the honourable members busy and out of the machinations of politics.

The deliberations of the committee were very long. We argued from daylight till dawn over the information provided to us. At one stage, I piled up the information and it reached up to my waist. Having attempted to take in all the information, I came to the conclusion that the information at the bottom of the pile was so far out of date that probably we would have to start again. My major aim was to speed up the proliferation of telephones throughout the rural areas of the Northern Territory. When I came into this Assembly, there were 4 telephones in my electorate. We now have about a dozen - so that is progress.

It has been a long battle. If members examine the report, they will see that it was carefully written so that we would not have to submit any minority reports. We attempted to reach a position whereby we could all feel that we had not been trampled upon unduly but which still gave the Northern Territory government ample leeway to negotiate our recommendations. I felt that the Northern Territory government would be able to find a method - through leasing or through an arrangement with Telecom - of procuring a number of groundstations for installation in the larger communities. In the shorter term, these would provide a dozen telephone lines to those communities and could be linked through the Iterra system. Those groundstations would have operated until the DRCS arrived. Then they would have been gradually moved further out to provide a service for the more remote outstations, some of which I am not convinced will come onto the current DRCS program. Others could have been leased or sold to mining exploration groups. I believe this could have been done in conjunction with Telecom, but I did recognise the need to put pressure on Telecom.

Since then, I have heard some rather disturbing news about the direction the Northern Territory government has taken on this issue. We have heard references to the mythical Vanderstar report which seems to be taking up a position somewhere on the other side of the satellite. It has something to do with holy writ. Halley's Comet might be a fairly good analogy: it has come with a flash in the night, will disappear just as fast and while it is here, it is creating a lot of fuss and bother. We have not seen this report as yet in this Assembly; we are still waiting with bated breath. We have heard the various rumours about it recommending some grandiose program which would involve us in enormous expenditure. In fact, the extent of that expenditure apparently has yet to be determined. Apparently, there is significant disagreement about the costing involved in it. Various statements have been made about the report.

Mr Tuxworth: Biggest mobs.

Mr EDE: I take on board the Chief Minister's statement about 'biggest mobs'. I know he does not think in anything less than biggest mobs. It is unfortunate that the people of the Northern Territory may end up copping both ends of the stick. They may end up paying biggest mobs for the system that he is proposing and still not receive the system which the DRCS is putting in.

I have explained what my plan was and I am disappointed that the government did not take that option and work out a way of implementing a simple system immediately with the DRCS to follow. I have nothing further to say on the report. I would like to thank the various members who worked with me. I thank the chairman for his erudite statements during the course of the

committee's deliberations and I congratulate the members of the committee who have gone on to bigger if not better things.

Mr FIRMIN (Ludmilla): Mr Speaker, from the comments he made in respect of the report, I wonder whether the honourable member for Stuart served on the same committee.

Mr Ede: It is ancient history.

Mr FIRMIN: Yes, it may be ancient history but, as he quite rightly points out, we still only have 6 telephones in his electorate.

Mr Ede: I said 12.

Mr FIRMIN: Twelve then. There were probably only 4 or 5 when we started on the inquiry nearly 2 years ago. For some reason or other, he seems to think that it is the Northern Territory government's fault that those telephones are not there. He seems to forget conveniently that Telecom, with its budget of \$28m for DRCS, has not managed to sort out the telephones in his area. In fact, there is only one DRCS link in place at the moment. It has been spoken about many times in this Assembly - the Daly River linkage.

Of course, the honourable member knows the reason for that. It has been spoken about in this Assembly and we even alluded to it in the report. We pointed out quite clearly to everybody, including Telecom at the time, that we believe it would be extremely difficult to negotiate with the land councils for terrestrial sites across the Northern Territory. It might be interesting to reread that section which the member agreed to as a member of the committee:

'As members of the Legislative Assembly, your committee members have a working knowledge of the procedures involved. Past experience suggests that, even when negotiations begin with the parties in broad agreement, as seems likely in this case, negotiations with the land councils may well be protracted and unpredictable'.

As has been the case since that date, not only have they been unpredictable but they have been totally unfruitful and will continue to be totally unfruitful in the northern sector because Telecom has stopped talking to the Northern Land Council. It has ceased its activity in the northern part of the Northern Territory. I know that for fact because I had the Northern Territory-South Australian General Manager of Telecom and the Darwin Telecom Manager in my office as recently as 5 days ago. They told me quite categorically that they have decided to try to negotiate with the Central Land Council and not with the Northern Land Council.

Mr Speaker, we agreed entirely that the best approach for providing telephone and other communications facilities for the Northern Territory was via a satellite-based system and, in particular, in the telephone area, by a mix and match of telephony and terrestrial-based systems. I am not in disagreement with the member over that. The problem is costs. We have spent a lot of time in this Assembly in the last 24 hours talking about government spending. Certainly, as the Chief Minister interjected just a short while ago, it will cost big heaps if we try to cover all of the things that are necessary to provide a proper communications profile for the Northern Territory by 1988. There needs to be negotiation with Telecom. We need other people involved. The Commonwealth has a responsibility to provide some of these services.

We would like to provide some services. We will probably provide moneys towards that service but the predominant money should come from the Commonwealth. It is part of its responsibility and it must kick in for it. Considerable negotiations will have to follow. We have had to fight Telecom engineers who have an incredibly long history of entrenched ideas of using terrestrial-based systems and an antagonistic approach towards satellite-based systems. As the member pointed out, the ground changes from underneath you as fast as you try to get ahead of it. That is one of the reasons why we employed one of the top consultants in the world, the Canadian specialist, Mr Jack Vanderstar, whose report no doubt, will be made public very shortly.

We have seen many other things happen during the course of this inquiry. We have spoken at length about the Remote Commercial Television Service Inquiry which should have been completed, and an announcement made on the central zone satellite transponder service some 12 months ago. The inquiry is still dragging on. As recently as last Friday in Alice Springs the Australian Broadcasting Tribunal rose again without having made its findings in respect of the central zone transponder. I suspect that it will probably be another 4 or 5 months before a decision is made about the timing of equipment installation to satisfy the response to the region. I would suspect that the target date of January 1987 for the central zone service will not be reached.

Mr Speaker, the member for Stuart alluded to the fact that, presumably, the Communications Technology Report was all about telephones. In fact, his memory is very short. I must admit it was a very long time ago that he sat on that committee. Certainly, the report was completed in February 1985 and tabled on 4 June 1985. However, since that time, we have been working very hard towards completing some of the proposals laid down in that report and I am pleased to announce that the government has been working towards implementing recommendations in that report. The report went a lot further than telephones and broadcasting. It provided extremely fine background material to help all departments to focus their attentions on the needs of Northern Territory residents in the remote areas with respect to all forms of government services, particularly in the areas of education, remote sensing telemetry, data transfer between departments and, of course, computer policies.

Many positive things have come out of this report. There are many positive things that government will address and there will be many positive spin-offs from this report for the people of the Northern Territory. I commend the report.

Motion agreed to.

ELECTORAL AMENDMENT BILL
(Serial 138)

Continued from 29 August 1985.

Mr TUXWORTH (Chief Minister): Mr Speaker, the bill that was introduced by the honourable Leader of the Opposition in August last year is identical to the one that was introduced by the member for MacDonnell on 14 June 1984. At that time, the proposed amendments were defeated. I advise the members of the opposition that we believe the flexibility that currently exists in the act ought to be maintained and we do not see any need to support the amendments proposed.

Mr BELL (MacDonnell): Mr Speaker, how astute it is of the Chief Minister to detect that the 2 bills are the same. I suppose that at least the opposition can be thankful that, on this occasion, a frontbencher on the government side decided to speak to it, albeit in an extraordinarily dismissive fashion. I do not intend to pass up the opportunity once again to say what I said in the context of this debate the last time it was held.

The fact of the matter is that this bill provides the capacity for all Territorians to exercise their franchise equally. Frequently, we have the Chief Minister and other government members railing against heaven and against the Commonwealth government because of our isolation, the vast distances involved and the problems of isolation in the Northern Territory.

Mr Coulter: Hear, hear!

Mr BELL: Well, I have a 'hear, hear' from the Minister for Community Development. How encouraging. Perhaps he might get up and support me.

I think it is quite outrageous for the Chief Minister to dismiss this bill in this particular way. I would at least expect some other government members to contribute to this debate.

Let us put the facts on the record again. The facts of the matter are that elections currently in the Northern Territory can be conducted in a period of 14 days from the issue of writs to polling day. From recollection, that is very close to the shortest possible minimum in any state in the Commonwealth. I would have thought that, unless the Chief Minister had some malign intent in refusing to accept this quite reasonable amendment, he would accept it. Therefore, I am inductibly drawn to the conclusion that he did have some malign intent in opposing this particular bill.

Quite clearly, it will provide voters in the more isolated parts of the Northern Territory with some greater advantage - not a greater advantage than those in the urban and town centres in the Northern Territory but perhaps with an equal opportunity to be enrolled. I see the Chief Minister disappearing out of the Chamber. How terribly sad that is because I intend fighting this out to the bitter end. It is of considerable importance.

As I have said, the Chief Minister is opposing this because he sees it as somehow undesirable that people in remote parts of the Northern Territory should be able to enrol when they hear of an election. I suppose he imagines that this is of advantage to people who hold rural seats. He himself holds a rural seat. I really find it very difficult to understand, for example, why he cannot agree to the proposition put forward in clause 4 of this bill that the rolls should close 7 days after the issue of writs instead of at 6 pm on the day of the issue of writs.

Frequently, when elections are called, people in my electorate in remote locations think they had better check their enrolment. When they do so and submit an electoral claim form, they find that, for logistical reasons, they cannot submit their claim form in time. If they live at Kintore, for example, and hear at 10 am that writs have been issued, they have absolutely no chance of getting a claim form to Darwin by 6 pm. It has been Darwin since the electoral office was closed in Alice Springs. People are unable to lodge claim forms there. Perhaps it is true that there is a malign interest in the Chief Minister's opposition to this bill in that he wants to make it more difficult for people in the remote corners of the Territory to enrol. Perhaps

the CLP will gain some minor advantage from it. I find it fairly difficult to believe that it will.

Certainly, I believe it is apposite in this particular context that many Aboriginal people have difficulty in retaining their enrolment. There are several reasons for this. One reason is that they may not vote at the same place from one election to the next. Because they do not speak English as a first language, they may have difficulty in explaining to a polling clerk how their name is written on the roll. They may not use the same name from one election to another for various reasons to do with traditions of naming in Aboriginal communities. Of course, names in Aboriginal languages tend to be very difficult for polling officials to understand. Quite clearly, the Chief Minister is attempting to disenfranchise Aboriginal voters in that regard. I think that is to be deplored.

However, I return to clause 6 of the bill which stipulates the minimum time between the issue of writs, the close of nominations and the polling day, the 3 crucial aspects of an election. Let us look at the times involved. As I said initially and as was corroborated by the Leader of the Opposition, this is the shortest time for an electoral act in this country. Given the isolated nature of the Territory, one would expect legislation in this Assembly to reflect that fact and not to reflect a desperate effort by a desperate man to make votes for the opposition more difficult to register because that is without a doubt the effect of it.

Let us compare it with the Commonwealth legislation. I know that this is likely to encourage government members to start weeping, wailing, gnashing their teeth and tearing their hair out. At the risk of extreme reactions, I will refer to the Commonwealth Electoral Act. The fact of the matter is that the Commonwealth Electoral Act which applies to the whole of this country...

Mr Dale: Except the Northern Territory.

Mr BELL: For the benefit of the mug from Wanguri, who has been interjecting all night...

Mr SPEAKER: The honourable member for MacDonnell...

Mr BELL: To save you the trouble, Mr Speaker, I will withdraw the reference. The honourable member for Wanguri is not a mug.

The Commonwealth Electoral Act does in fact apply to the Northern Territory, contrary to the beliefs of the member for Wanguri and perhaps some of the other government members of this Assembly. Given the fact that, under the Commonwealth Electoral Act, it is necessary to collect votes all around the country, perhaps including the isolated places of this country, and given that the Northern Territory is one of the most isolated places, Territory legislation should reflect Commonwealth legislation in respect of the periods from the issue of writs to close of nominations. The period of the close of nominations to polling day should reflect exactly that.

Clause 7 envisages some amendments with respect to mobile polling which, of course, has been effective. I think it has worked successfully. I believe it is desirable that only communities of less than 250 people be used for mobile polling places. Mobile polling was an innovation designed to collect votes from small pockets of people living in small isolated places. It was not designed for voting in major centres, whether they are major communities

of Aboriginal people or whether they are major communities of Callithumpians. I really do not see that it matters all that much. Evidently, the Chief Minister sees some distinction in that regard. I would be very interested to hear how he justifies that.

There are various other aspects of that particular amendment. I think it is disturbing to find the government so trenchant in its opposition. I think that, if this is not considered by government members, frontbenchers and backbenchers, it will be a massive indictment of the lack of capacity of this government to take into consideration the diversity of the Territory. On the one hand, it wants to scream to Canberra at every turn and say that we are different, and demand concessions and funding, and yet, when it actually comes to a costless reform that would improve the quality of government and the number of people voting, it rejects it out of hand. The opposition has made a very good case for saying why these amendments should be adopted. The government rejection of them is reprehensible in the extreme.

Mr EDE (Stuart): Mr Deputy Speaker, I would just like to ask what the government objects to. Is it all of these amendments or just a couple of them? If it is the whole lot, I would like to ask what it is frightened of.

Clause 8 concerns changes to polling times or locations. It proposes to change 'necessary and convenient' to 'necessary'. I can understand that it is sometimes necessary to change the time and location of a polling booth but, in one instance during the last Territory elections, the polling day was changed from Thursday to Wednesday. Nobody told the community about it, which is quite acceptable under the current legislation. It is indefensible. How can any government member defend it? It is patently indefensible. Yet, when we propose amendments to rectify the problem, the government does not want to know about it.

Clause 6 concerns the times allowed for the various stages of the election process. Under present legislation, the election could be called today, nominations closed next Thursday, and the election held on the Friday morning. This is the current situation with mobile polling booths. The government may not plan it that way. The government may decide to have the election 3 weeks after the close of the nominations, but the officer in charge of the mobile polling booth, for reasons of his own, may decide that that is not good enough. He has the power to change the date and the location of voting in that booth. He can arrange for voting to take place the day after nominations close, in some out-of-the-way little place accessible to 1% of the electorate. That election would be legal under current legislation.

Electoral acts should be written in such a way that they guarantee democracy. Everything should be done to ensure that rorts cannot be perpetrated. It is too late afterwards to say: 'Sorry. There was a loophole in the act. We never meant the election to happen like that'. Now is the time to fix up the loopholes in the current act and get it into some sort of shape. I commend the bill.

Mr B. COLLINS (Opposition Leader): Mr Deputy Speaker, the Chief Minister was very quick to pick up that this is a duplicate of a bill that the opposition introduced into the Assembly previously. I stated as much in my second-reading speech.

The deficiencies of the Electoral Act in respect of those people who vote in mobile polling booths have been pointed out by the 2 previous speakers. It

is a travesty of democracy. It does not even make a pretence at it. The last Legislative Assembly elections demonstrated just what a travesty it is. The proper approach to all electoral legislation, and the interpretation of that legislation...

Mr Perron: There were no complaints that I know of.

Mr Bell: There were.

Mr Perron: Lodged with the Electoral Office?

Mr B. COLLINS: Mr Deputy Speaker, the complaints were many. They were numerous, and I remember them. A number of members of this Assembly are doing what they are elected to do: they are representing the views of constituents. They are attempting to change the law for the third time. Obviously, that is something that does not even impinge on the consciousness of the member opposite. It never does.

The current act is a travesty. All electoral laws and the interpretation of those laws and attached regulations should be based on one very simple premise. The premise should underlie all laws governing elections in this country, whether they be state or federal, and it should determine the way in which regulations are interpreted by returning officers and officials of the Electoral Office. The premise is that the laws should be as simple as possible in order to encourage the greatest possible number of eligible voters to cast votes in an election. It is that simple. We are in the fortunate position in the Northern Territory of having an extremely efficient and fair Chief Electoral Officer. His only error of judgment ever, in my recollection, has been to hang around these premises for 16 hours waiting for the Chief Minister's contribution to this debate.

The 2 previous speakers have pointed out the effects of current legislation in terms of the operation of mobile polling booths in the bush. The government knows there are problems. In some places serviced by mobile polling booths, voting can start the week before the polling day set down for everyone else. As the member for Stuart pointed out, in situations where communications are difficult, the election can be over almost before people realise it is on. This effectively disenfranchises many people. We constantly hear justified complaints in the Legislative Assembly from the member for Victoria River and other members on both sides about the difficulties of communication in the Territory's isolated communities. Any government with any integrity at all - which counts this one out - would construct its laws to provide for that problem. However, the legislation concerning mobile polling booths in extremely isolated communities of the Northern Territory not only fails to do that, but does exactly the reverse.

Members opposite know that many people who use mobile polling booths are not Aboriginal, so perhaps the government can be prepared to follow its much-repeated philosophy and make a special exception for them if they live in the bush. All isolated Territorians who vote in mobile polling booths are severely disadvantaged compared with voters who live in the major urban communities of the Northern Territory. In terms of sheer equity, no fair-minded government could allow the present situation to continue. But it has been perpetuated since day one by members opposite.

We have one of the most insane systems of voting among civilised countries. To the best of my knowledge, the only other place with compulsory

preferential voting is Ireland. It is a system of voting that makes no sense whatever because it precludes many people from casting formal votes, particularly in elections where there are many names on the ballot paper, as is usual in Australia. It forces people to place a vote beside the name of a candidate they would not vote for in a fit if they had a free choice in the matter. People must do that in order to have their vote counted for the candidate of their choice. Unfortunately, this happens in election after election. The current member for Koolpinyah took her original seat as member for Tiwi purely as a result of that system. In terms of first preference votes, she came in fourth. An ALP candidate came first, an ALP candidate came second, a CLP Aboriginal candidate by the name of Cyril Rioli came third, and Mrs Padgham-Purich came fourth and won the election. She did so on seventh and eighth preferences. That is the absurdity of compulsory preferential voting.

In commending the Labor Party, I remind members that the Northern Territory was granted the fairest system of voting in the world for one brief election. I do not believe that the first-past-the-post system properly assesses community wants. Optional preferential voting is the fairest system because you vote for exactly whom you want and your vote is counted only for those candidates. We had this system for one brief election in the Northern Territory. It was given to us by the Whitlam Labor government. I have never forgotten that one of the very first acts of the Fraser government, at the behest of the then Chief Secretary of the Northern Territory, was to revert immediately to the old system. It was done within 24 hours of Fraser coming to power, or near enough to that. Without any publicity at all, a special Government Gazette was published in Canberra. I think 20 copies were printed, the minimum number required by the regulations. I think it was a week before anyone found out that it had been done. The CLP in the Northern Territory was very quick to get its conservative colleagues in Canberra to remove the fairest system of voting that exists because it was seen as disadvantaging its own particular style of politics.

The CLP government has continued with that attitude. The ignorance of members opposite in these matters is, of course, profound. Earlier this morning or late last night, or whenever it was in this travesty of a sittings - now in its nineteenth or twentieth hour - the member for Fannie Bay flashed around figures from the electorate of Arafura. They were supposed to prove some vital point. What he did not realise - if he had another brain it would be lonely - was that the Jabiru booth was a composite booth, as often happens in my electorate. In fact, votes were gathered into the Jabiru polling booth from the whole 22 000 square miles of the Kakadu National Park. If he would like to see the scrutineer's returns from the township of Jabiru, I still have them in my office. I am afraid he is profoundly wrong in his claim. But that is only a minor issue. Government members from urban seats do not know what happens in the bush, and they are demonstrating their ignorance during this debate.

Every member in this Assembly knows how inequitable the Northern Territory's Electoral Act is in respect of mobile polling booths. One need only compare our system to that which operates in Commonwealth elections to see how inequitable it is. As I have said before, above the snores of the Minister for Community Development, the basic premise of any electoral legislation, and the interpretation of that legislation, should be that it should prevent the abuse of the system. It should ensure that, in an election, the maximum number of eligible voters will be able to cast an eligible vote. The current legislation clearly does not do that. For the

benefit of the Chief Minister, the opposition will continue to introduce bills like this one, on the infrequent opportunities arising on general business days - if we can manage to get past the Chief Minister's gags. The Northern Territory's Electoral Act cries out for this kind of amendment.

Members opposite have demonstrated, during the whole course of these proceedings, that they are not interested in things like equity and integrity and standards of behaviour. It is not surprising that they will conclude this debate in the same way they have concluded previous debates on this subject. That will not intimidate or prevent this opposition from continuing to introduce this legislation at future sittings of the Northern Territory's Legislative Assembly. I will now conclude this debate, having braved the snores of the Minister for Community Development and the member for Arnhem.

The Assembly divided:

Ayes 5

Mr Bell
Mr B. Collins
Mr Ede
Mr Lanhupuy
Mr Smith

Noes 15

Mr D.W. Collins
Mr Coulter
Mr Dale
Mr Dondas
Mr Finch
Mr Firmin
Mr Hanrahan
Mr Harris
Mr Hatton
Mr McCarthy
Mr Manzie
Mr Perron
Mr Setter
Mr Tuxworth
Mr Vale

Motion negatived.

MINE-WORKERS HEALTH PROTECTION BILL 1985
(Serial 149)

Continued from 29 August 1985.

Mr PERRON (Mines and Energy): Mr Deputy Speaker, the member for Stuart has introduced a bill aimed at providing some protection for the health of the mine-worker. At first sight, this appears to be a very commendable piece of concerned legislation. However, looking at the provisions of the bill in greater detail, we see that its requirements have been drawn largely from legislation already in place, in particular, from the Mines Safety Control Act and its regulations and, to a lesser extent, from the Silicosis and Tuberculosis (Mine-workers and Prospectors) Act. This is a classic example of the reinvention of the wheel.

I now take up each section referred to in the member's bill and relate it to the particular section of the Mines Safety Control Act and its regulations, and other legislation in place dealing with the health and safety of mine-workers.

Clauses 5 and 6 of the bill deal with medical examinations. These provisions are catered for under regulation 42 of the Mines Safety Control Regulations which require mine-workers to be medically examined on direction by the Chief Government Mining Engineer by a direction served on the mine manager. The medical practitioner who carries out the medical examination is required to provide the mine manager with a written report on the fitness of the person examined to work or continue to work at the mine. In the case of an underground miner, it is mandatory under regulation 37 of the act that the mine manager ensure that a worker is medically examined every 12 months. Under the provisions of the Silicosis and Tuberculosis (Mine-workers and Prospectors) Act, the Chief Medical Officer provides facilities for mine-workers to be examined and this service, which includes radiological and clinical examination, does not involve any imposition of fees.

Clauses 7 and 8 of the bill deal with access to medical records by mine-workers and others. I believe it is proper that mine-workers have access to their medical records. Once a worker has a copy of his medical examination report, then it is open to that worker to pass it on to others if he should so choose. To cover this in legislation, I have instructed the Department of Mines and Energy to prepare amendments to regulation 42 of the Mines Safety Control Act. It will then provide mine-workers the opportunity of access to those medical records required under statute, and to any other medical examinations connected with their employment.

Clauses 9 and 10 of the bill refer to atmospheric tests. I would like to draw honourable members' attention to part V of the Mines Safety Control Regulations. This regulation deals exclusively with ventilation in mines, and does so in very great detail. I would be happy to supply honourable members with a copy if they wish. In particular, I would refer honourable members to regulation 93. This provides for the appointment of a ventilation officer at the direction of the Mines Inspector. Regulation 96 covers the standards, codes and practices for the provision of clean air and the control of a wide range of noxious gases. One of the major duties of the ventilation officer, upon examination of a mine, is to record his findings on ventilation conditions in the mine's record book or a book specially kept for this purpose. The record book is available to the mines inspector where appropriate action is taken of the findings of the ventilation officer. The record book is also available to any person employed on the mine, under section 17(7) of the Mines Safety Control Act. Provisions are also available to me under the act to authorise the examination of the record book by any other person.

With the proposed changes to regulations giving miners access to the medical records, the provisions contained in the honourable member's bill will have been fully catered for. A piece of legislation that provides for procedures already in place would only cause confusion in administration and needless overlap and duplication of effort. Bearing in mind the foregoing, I ask honourable members to oppose the bill.

Mr BELL (MacDonnell): Mr Deputy Speaker, we find progressive attempts by the opposition being thwarted by mindless government opposition, and I think that that sort of mindless opposition to such proposals is to be condemned.

The member for Stuart, the shadow minister for mines and energy, has put a great deal of thought and effort into the preparation and presentation of this bill to this Assembly, and he has put a great deal of effort into researching the issues involved. It is quite clear that this legislation ought to be

accepted by this Assembly. It is quite possible that there are areas where there may be overlapping legislation. Quite clearly, the Minister for Mines and Energy's suggestion that this legislation is somehow reinventing the wheel is, to say the least, incorrect. He said that, under certain circumstances, there is a discretion for workers to obtain these tests or for some people in authority to give these tests. The whole thrust of the bill put forward by my colleague is that such tests should be mandatory.

The other area that the honourable Minister for Mines and Energy mentioned clearly applied only to underground mining. It did not consider as well mining in quarries, for example, which is also included in the bill before the Assembly. For the benefit of the honourable minister, let me just point out that the system obviously has failed. If the system is as good as the minister said it is, why did it fail? Why did we have a Supreme Court judge finding that an employee at Warrego Mine - and I am quoting from a newspaper article - suffered brain damage, heart problems, kidney failure, loss of vision, defective memory and troubled breathing during his 18 months working in the gold room between January 1980 and July 1981? If the system is as good as the honourable minister says it is, I do not think it is good enough for him to say that we are reinventing the wheel. It is a fairly extraordinary suggestion that this legislation has to be thrown out because the minister has found related legislation. Quite clearly, my colleague has found an area where there is a loophole and, as a conscientious member of this Assembly, and as a conscientious shadow minister for mines and energy, he has moved to fill that particular gap.

I believe that this particular bill is to be commended and should be supported by all members. I would like to hear a few other members contribute to this debate, particularly on the government side. Perhaps the honourable Chief Minister will contribute too because it directly involves his constituents.

I mentioned before that this particular bill will apply also to mines. The definition of 'mines' in this bill is the definition of 'mines' that applies in the Mines Safety Control Act. It includes quarries as well. I am reminded of cases of silicosis that have been drawn to my attention by constituents. The quarry to the south of Alice Springs, along Emily Gap Road, used to be in the electorate of MacDonnell but, unfortunately for those people who live in that vicinity, it is no longer in my electorate and now falls within the electorate of Flynn. In that particular quarry, there were unfortunate cases of silicosis that may indeed have been averted if people had been told when they went to work in these places that they had to have a check at such and such a time and that there was some sort of statutory requirement for them to do so. There would have been a few people wandering around with lungs in slightly better shape than they are now. I think it scarcely does the minister any credit to oppose this particular bill. I have no hesitation in placing on record my hearty support for it.

Mr EDE (Stuart): Mr Deputy Speaker, I will go over briefly what was stated by the minister and point out where I believe he has it totally wrong. Regarding the medical tests, the current provisions place certain requirements on people other than the worker. What we have attempted to do through this amendment is to make it both a right and a duty of the worker to have those tests.

With regard to the worker's rights to get that information, I believe that we should be grateful for small mercies. The minister has signalled that he

will find a means of providing workers with the rights to those medical records. I certainly look forward to seeing that come into fruition in the near future.

With regard to ventilation, I understand that the provisions he discussed actually refer to the underground area of that type of mine and not to the works forming part of the mine. Often that can be as big a problem or a bigger problem than the actual mine itself. I would like to go back to the debate that sparked my initial interest in this area - the Warrego dispute, and advise that I am extremely disappointed. I was advised by the workers at Warrego that, when the honourable minister visited them, he in fact promised them that legislation would be introduced into this Assembly at the next sittings that would overcome the various problems that they had. On that basis, they went back to work. That was the advice that was provided to me and yet we have seen no legislation. We have not even seen a statement on progress towards overcoming that problem. I must admit that certain papers have been going backwards and forwards between his office and the unions. The last word that I received, and I stand to be corrected, was that the last reply from the unions occurred before Christmas but they have yet to receive anything back from him.

There are other issues which I have not yet canvassed. For starters, our mining acts seem to relate mainly to underground mining but we are getting more and more into the area of open-cut mining. I am still trying to find if there is a reference somewhere to bench widths and batter slope in the construction of underground mines. In fact, at this stage, it is up to the mining operators themselves. There is considerable worry in one of the mines that, as it is getting larger and deeper, the benches are becoming narrower and the slopes are becoming steeper. People are extremely worried about that particular area.

Mr Perron: Your bill does not cover that, does it?

Mr EDE: I have not been able to find the reference. My bill does not cover that. I am currently going through the provisions and I am just letting the minister know that he can expect an amendment at some stage.

Mr Perron: I thought there was a whole section on batters.

Mr EDE: If he can find the provision before I do, I would be grateful if he could save me looking further.

Since we are talking within the context of a bill, the matter of privilege under the committee does not apply. I resigned from the committee after a great deal of thought. I was very mindful of the type of information...

Mr DALE: A point of order, Mr Deputy Speaker! Under standing order 67, the member is digressing from the subject before us at the moment.

Mr EDE: It's my bill.

Mr Dale: Your resignation has nothing to do with the debate before the Assembly at the moment.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: There is no point of order.

Mr EDE: For the benefit of members, I will be brief. The member was eager to cut me off. I attempted to debate a motion on the safety aspects of mining before that committee. The member who just interjected attempted to say that the people were not part of the environment. To his credit, the chairman rejected that particular narrow definition of the terms of reference of the committee and we debated the motion.

Mr DALE: A point of order, Mr Deputy Speaker. The honourable member has definitely now digressed from the subject that is before the Assembly at the moment.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: The honourable member may allude to and link his remarks with the question before the Assembly but he is not to stray outside those constraints.

Mr EDE: Mr Deputy Speaker, talking always within the context of safety, which is the essential element of this bill, and the desire to find ways and means of widening the scope of our legislation until such time as it is able to provide an adequate safety net for workers in the Northern Territory, I will provide the Assembly with information about the ways and means that I utilised to get information together which illustrates the need for legislation. I will illustrate some of the other methods that are available to members and how it finally becomes necessary to have this type of legislation because of the frustration one finds in trying to utilise other methods.

In my attempts to convince the committee to utilise methods other than legislation to protect the safety of miners, I proposed that it conduct formal inquiries into the health and safety of miners in the uranium province in the Alligator Rivers region. As I said, I lost that debate. One of the members decided that there were a dozen other regulatory committees out there and we had no business interfering.

Mr DALE: A point of order, Mr Deputy Speaker! My understanding is that it is a matter of privilege. The honourable member is discussing what transpired at the committee meeting. In fact, the member himself moved certain motions to relieve himself of the privilege before that committee. After having lost the matter in the committee, he is now debating exactly those points. I believe that it is a matter of privilege.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: There is a point of order under standing order 274 wherein proceedings of a committee may not be debated unless it is with the authority either of the Assembly or the committee.

Mr EDE: Mr Deputy Speaker, I was under the mistaken belief that bills before the Legislative Assembly ranked higher than committees.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! Will the honourable member for Stuart contain his remarks within the confines of the bill?

Mr EDE: Mr Deputy Speaker, all I will say is that it is particularly difficult in some of those other forums, and indeed it is sometimes difficult within this forum, to protect the health and safety of workers within the mines. Nevertheless, I battle on.

The Assembly divided:

Ayes 5

Mr Bell
Mr B. Collins
Mr Ede
Mr Lanhupuy
Mr Smith

Noes 14

Mr D.W. Collins
Mr Coulter
Mr Dale
Mr Dondas
Mr Finch
Mr Firmin
Mr Hanrahan
Mr Harris
Mr Hatton
Mr McCarthy
Mr Manzie
Mr Perron
Mr Setter
Mr Tuxworth

Motion negatived.

PUBLIC SERVICE AMENDMENT BILL
(Serial 142)

Continued from 29 August 1985.

Mr TUXWORTH (Chief Minister): Mr Deputy Speaker, the Deputy Leader of the Opposition has already presented this bill on a previous occasion.

Mr Smith: No.

Mr TUXWORTH: If it was not moved as a separate bill, it was moved as an amendment.

Mr Smith: It was moved as an amendment. Anyway, go on and tell us again that you oppose it.

Mr TUXWORTH: I intend to oppose it, but not simply to be difficult or funny.

Mr Deputy Speaker, the bill proposes that section 16A of the Public Service Act be repealed. That section provides that the minister may direct the public service to take any action that the Public Service Commissioner is empowered to take pursuant to sections 14(2) or 14(3). Section 14(2) imposes a duty on the Public Service Commissioner to ensure that all departments and authorities fully account for all transactions involving public money. Section 14(3) imposes a duty on the Public Service Commissioner to ensure that there is no discrimination in the employment of public servants.

With respect to the employee under ministerial directions, section 16A further provides that he has all necessary powers of the Public Service Commissioner to carry out the directions. A ministerial direction has been given to the Secretary of the Department of the Chief Minister giving him all of the duties of the Public Service Commissioner under sections 14(2) and 14(3). Pursuant to this direction, the Office of Equal Opportunity and the Internal Audit Bureau have been transferred from the office of the Public Service Commissioner to the Department of the Chief Minister. The transfers

were effected in the normal way; that is, pursuant to section 26. The Administrator has made appropriate establishment variations after receiving a report from the commissioner recommending the transfer. Under the circumstances, the proposal put forward by the Deputy Leader of the Opposition would be inappropriate in terms of management and direction of the department. On those grounds, the government rejects it.

Mr SMITH (Millner): Mr Deputy Speaker, because of the lateness of the hour, I will not reply at length. The issues have been canvassed. We disagree essentially with the government over the responsibilities that the Public Service Commissioner should have. It is our view - and we have stated them on a number of occasions - that the powers that the government has given away to the Secretary of the Department of the Chief Minister are more appropriate powers for the Public Service Commissioner. That is why we have moved this amendment.

Motion negatived.

MOTOR VEHICLES AMENDMENT BILL
(Serial 184)

Bill presented and read a first time.

Mr MANZIE (Transport and Works): Mr Deputy Speaker, I move that the bill be now read a second time.

Mr Deputy Speaker, the purpose of this bill is to introduce into the Motor Vehicles Act specific provisions to allow vehicles on pastoral or agricultural leases, which would not normally be registered or insured, to be issued with a permit providing them with an insurance cover for limited purposes. Specifically, the new provisions would allow the Registrar of Motor Vehicles to provide a 12-month renewable permit to enable unregistered vehicles to be used for work purposes on public roads within a given pastoral or agricultural property or a road connecting parts of the same property provided the vehicles also meet minimum safety standards. Further, the same permit will enable unregistered vehicles to be used for bushfire control purposes on roads outside their own property. For many years, there have been representations from the Northern Territory Cattlemen's Association and the Katherine Bushfire Brigade, amongst others, for this type of scheme. The difficulty has always been in identifying how to best do so while meeting insurance requirements without compromising safety or creating unwieldy administrative requirements.

The pastoral permits scheme is designed to overcome the practical and equity difficulties caused by the legal requirements for a vehicle to be registered or hold a permit to use or even, for that matter, to cross a public road. A legal requirement is there mainly to protect other road users. The land owners have had no option, apart from 50% primary producers registration possession, in some cases but to pay the full registration and insurance premium. The end result has been that many properties are operating unregistered vehicles on public roads. Coverage under the proposed scheme does not extend to the higher risk, social or off-road use, as would be the case if the vehicle were registered.

In conjunction, the bill provides for a fire control permit scheme to apply to vehicles covered by the pastoral permits scheme or, for that matter, other unregistered vehicles on pastoral or agricultural leases elected by the applicant. The operation is similar to the pastoral permits scheme in that

the vehicles can use a public road on or connecting to the property for the purpose of bushfire control. Why have a permit for bushfire control in the first place? It is the intention of the bill that the permit cover more than just the emergency bushfire situation when, in all practicality, arranging for permits would be the last priority. Under the proposed scheme, the vehicle would be utilised also for fire control purposes early in the dry to minimise bushfire risks. Guidelines for this situation will be developed in consultation with the Bushfires Council.

Finally, it is intended that administration be kept to a minimum. Permits will be issued on request and the onus will be on the user to justify the use of the vehicle on the road. The government sees the bill as being a practical step in bridging the gap between the legal requirements of vehicle registration and insurance, and the temptation to take the risk and operate unregistered, uninsured vehicles on public roads simply because of the high cost involved with permanent registration and insurance of vehicles rarely used on public roads. I commend the bill.

Debate adjourned.

SUSPENSION OF STANDING ORDERS

Mr PERRON (Attorney-General): Mr Speaker, I move that so much of standing orders be suspended as would prevent 7 bills, namely the National Companies and Securities Commission (Northern Territory Provisions) Bill (Serial 176), the Companies (Application of Laws) Bill (Serial 181), the Securities Industry (Application of Laws) Bill (Serial 177), the Companies (Acquisition of Shares) (Application of Laws) Bill (Serial 174), the Companies and Securities (Interpretation and Miscellaneous Provisions) (Application of Laws) Bill (Serial 175), the Companies (Administration) Bill (Serial 173), and the Companies and Securities Legislation (Consequential Amendments) Bill (Serial 180) - (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 readings of the bills together; and (b) the consideration of the bills separately in the committee of the whole.

Motion agreed to.

NATIONAL COMPANIES AND SECURITIES COMMISSION
(NORTHERN TERRITORY PROVISIONS) BILL
(Serial 176)
COMPANIES (APPLICATION OF LAWS) BILL
(Serial 181)
SECURITIES INDUSTRY (APPLICATION OF LAWS) BILL
(Serial 177)
COMPANIES (ACQUISITION OF SHARES) (APPLICATION OF LAWS) BILL
(Serial 174)
COMPANIES AND SECURITIES (INTERPRETATION AND MISCELLANEOUS PROVISIONS)
(APPLICATION OF LAWS) BILL
(Serial 175)
COMPANIES (ADMINISTRATION) BILL
(Serial 173)
COMPANIES AND SECURITIES (CONSEQUENTIAL AMENDMENTS) BILL
(Serial 180)

Bills presented and read a first time.

Mr PERRON (Attorney-General): Mr Deputy Speaker, the purpose of these bills is to implement the Northern Territory's legislative obligations as a party to the Formal Agreement which established the national companies and securities scheme. The object of the Formal Agreement is to secure uniformity of laws and administration with respect to companies and securities throughout Australia in order to promote confidence among investors, a more efficient capital market, commercial certainty and a reduction in business costs. It is essentially a politically non-partisan matter, with the Commonwealth and all states continuing to be parties to it notwithstanding changes in government in 5 of the 7 jurisdictions since the scheme was established.

The report in 1974 of the Senate Select Committee on Securities and Exchange found that the system of regulation of the securities markets in Australia was fragmented and uncoordinated. That was equally true of the other areas of company law that may not impinge directly on the securities market. The senate committee accordingly proposed a national system of regulation. The Commonwealth government of the day gave consideration to the introduction of uniform national companies and securities legislation based on unilateral action by the Commonwealth and relying solely on the Commonwealth's legislative powers.

I am pleased to say that such a scheme did not come to fruition. Instead, the present cooperative scheme was negotiated between the Commonwealth and the states as a fine example of cooperative federalism - a cooperative scheme which recognises the importance not only of the Commonwealth but also state and Territory interests and expertise in this area.

When the Formal Agreement was executed in 1978, the Northern Territory government chose not to become a party, as the terms on which the Territory was invited to join were unacceptable. At that time, the Territory was invited to join the scheme on the basis of undertaking to implement all the obligations of parties to the agreement but without having the right to vote on the Ministerial Council. If the Territory had joined without the right to vote, it would have been obliged to implement decisions made by the Ministerial Council under the scheme without having any effective input into those decisions. I am sure that honourable members would agree that, having been granted self-government from 1 July 1978, acquiescence with such discriminatory conditions would have been deeply offensive to Territorians.

I am happy to say, however, that the Territory government has now successfully negotiated entry into the scheme on the basis of equality with all other parties to the scheme. With the signing of the Formal Agreement by the Chief Minister on 28 January 1986, the Territory became entitled to have a representative on the Ministerial Council with the same voting rights as the representatives of the Commonwealth and states.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I would like to say a few words about the reasons why the government has decided that it is appropriate for the Territory to join the national companies and securities scheme at this time. It is now nearly 8 years since the Territory was granted self-government. The commencement of self-government heralded an unprecedented period of growth, economic development and increasing sophistication in the Territory. The results of progress are all around us.

By joining, as the Territory now has, as an equal partner with the Commonwealth and the states in the important area of corporate law and administration, the Territory has reached another milestone as it moves

towards statehood. The Commonwealth and all states have now recognised something that has been obvious to the Territory government since the inception of the cooperative companies and securities scheme; namely, that the scheme could never be truly 'national' as long as the Territory remained outside it.

The Formal Agreement was executed by the Commonwealth and all states on 22 December 1978. A copy of the agreement, setting out the obligations of the parties, is a schedule to the National Companies and Securities (Northern Territory Provisions) Bill. The Northern Territory became a party to the Formal Agreement on 28 January 1986. On becoming a party, the Territory became obliged to legislate to apply the companies and securities legislation enacted by the Commonwealth under the scheme to the Territory within 6 months. While the period of 6 months runs from 28 January 1986, the bills have been expressed to come into operation on 1 July 1986 so that the rights and obligations provided under the legislation will refer to a full financial year.

The 4 basic elements of the cooperative scheme are set out in the Formal Agreement. The first is the establishment of a Ministerial Council for Companies and Securities comprising one minister from each party to the agreement. The functions of the Ministerial Council are to consider and keep under review the formulation and operation of the legislation and regulations provided for by the agreement, and to exercise general oversight and control over the implementation and operation of the scheme.

The second is the establishment of a full-time National Companies and Securities Commission, NCSC, to have responsibility in the entire area, subject to directions from the Ministerial Council. The NCSC has such functions and powers as are conferred on it by the various pieces of Commonwealth, state and territory legislation that are required to give effect to the cooperative companies and securities scheme.

The third is the continuation of existing state and territory corporate affairs administrations. Under the Formal Agreement, the NCSC is required to work through the local corporate affairs administrations to the maximum extent practicable and with due regard to the maximum development of a decentralised administrative capacity. In recognition of these requirements, all documents that are required to be lodged with the NCSC under the law of a particular jurisdiction must be lodged with the local corporate affairs office in that jurisdiction.

The fourth is the adoption of a proposal for legislative uniformity which recognises that the states are not required to surrender any constitutional power. The basic features of the proposal for legislative uniformity are as follows. When the Ministerial Council agrees on the content of the substantive laws to be enacted under the cooperative scheme, those laws are enacted as Commonwealth legislation that applies to the Australian Capital Territory. Each other jurisdiction that is covered by the Formal Agreement has legislation which applies the relevant Commonwealth law, subject to any necessary local modifications, as the law of that jurisdiction to the exclusion of its previous legislation, as from the date of commencement of the relevant Commonwealth law. Any amendments of the Commonwealth acts must be approved by the Ministerial Council, and then submitted to the Commonwealth parliament. Once enacted, those amendments, subject to the making of regulations for each jurisdiction - other than the Australian Capital Territory - to effect any necessary local modifications, will have automatic

effect in each jurisdiction without the necessity for each jurisdiction to enact separate substantive legislation.

In the event of the Commonwealth parliament not enacting, within 6 months, an amendment approved by the Ministerial Council, each state or the Northern Territory has the right to take action separately to implement the decision of the Ministerial Council. Under this 'legislative device', each of the application bills provides that the relevant Commonwealth act and regulations applying in the Australian Capital Territory will apply in the Northern Territory. The bills further provide for variations and translations consequent upon applying the Commonwealth law in the Northern Territory. In addition, the bills provide for the printing of codes which will consist of the Commonwealth laws adapted for Northern Territory conditions. This is to ensure that interested persons in the Territory will need to consult only one document to ascertain what the substantive law is on any particular area of the scheme.

One of the advantages of the cooperative scheme is its one-stop shopping concept which reduces red tape for companies that wish to carry on business in jurisdictions outside the jurisdiction of their incorporation. A company incorporated in any participating jurisdiction, on payment of appropriate fees, can lodge all necessary documents in its place of incorporation regardless of the number of jurisdictions in which it carries on business, and is a 'recognised company' in all other participating jurisdictions, although in order to carry on business in any other jurisdiction it will need to register its name there. Similarly, under the scheme's system of registering charges, a creditor of a company will need to register a charge only in the jurisdiction in which the company is incorporated.

The Territory's present companies and securities legislation comprises its Companies Act, which is based on the uniform companies legislation prepared in 1961 following conferences in which the Attorneys-General, the Registrars of Companies and the Parliamentary Draftsmen of the Commonwealth and the states cooperated, and its Marketable Securities Act which is based on similar legislation enacted in all states in the 1960s and 1970s. Developments in the marketplace have been such that all states and the Commonwealth agreed that their equivalent legislation needed to be superseded by the cooperative scheme legislation. By adopting the cooperative scheme legislation, the Territory could benefit from the experience and research of other jurisdictions and avoid the enormous task of unilaterally reviewing and overhauling its companies and securities legislation.

The policies and legislation implemented under the scheme are the result of negotiations between ministers and advisers from each participating jurisdiction. If the Territory remained aloof from those processes, its corporate law would become fossilised. The developing body of judicial decisions, academic writings and practice manuals which are attuned to the cooperative scheme would have less and less relevance to corporate law in the Territory. Practitioners and companies coming to the Territory would have to step into a corporate law time machine.

The scheme also facilitates cooperation and exchange of information to combat interstate corporate fraud and malpractices. No one genuinely concerned for the interests of Territorians would wish to see the Territory become a haven for fugitive companies engaging in fraud and sharp practices.

At a seminar in 1984, organised by the Northern Territory Development Corporation, a number of speakers claimed that joining the scheme would lead to excessive regulation and that it would be inappropriate to the Territory's small business corporate environment. Since then, however, the federal government has announced a review of business regulations as a step in its new policy of business deregulation and a new chairman of the NCSG who is in favour of deregulation has been appointed by the Ministerial Council. Before a new law can be introduced under the scheme, it has to well and truly run the gauntlet of ministers and advisers from each participating jurisdiction and be approved by a majority vote. The Territory, like all other parties, would forgo its right to legislate separately on companies and securities but, as a voting member of the Ministerial Council, would be on a basis of equality with the Commonwealth and the states in determining the content of future legislation.

I now propose to deal with each bill in detail but, before I do so, I should say something about the preparation of the bills and the codes which will result from passage of the bills. The codes are: the Companies (Northern Territory) Code (the Companies Code); the Securities Industry (Northern Territory) Code (the Securities Industry Code); the Companies (Acquisition of Shares) (Northern Territory) Code (the Acquisition of Shares Code or the Takeovers Code); and the Companies and Securities (Interpretation and Miscellaneous Provisions) (Northern Territory) Code (the Interpretation Code).

I am sure that honourable members will agree that the preparation of the 8 bills and 4 codes, which are very complex, by Parliamentary Counsel in a period of 3 months is a considerable achievement. The bills have been modelled on the equivalent legislation enacted by the states but, because of the need for local modifications - along the lines of local modifications in all other jurisdictions - which are appropriate to the Territory, drafting of the bills is a complex task. The experience of other jurisdictions, despite having had a number of years to develop their legislation, was that some subsequent fine tuning on technical aspects was necessary even years after enactment of their legislation. The Territory's bills are therefore continuing to be checked and re-checked by Parliamentary Counsel and my officers in the light of that experience, and any necessary adjustments will be advised in amendment schedules. In addition, the bills introduced in the present sittings will need technical amendments between now and the next sittings to apply amendments to the Commonwealth legislation under the scheme that are expected to be brought into force between now and 1 July 1986.

Because of the size of the Companies Code in particular, it has not been possible to print copies of the Northern Territory's codes at this stage, but they will be available to honourable members by the time debate is resumed on the bills at the next sittings. The provisions of the codes, however, are described in the explanatory materials which have been incorporated in loose-leaf services and guides prepared by various publishing companies which I have asked my officers to make available to honourable members.

I add that, under the Formal Agreement, the first 5 of the bills need to be approved by the parties to the scheme prior to enactment. The opportunity has been taken to consult all parties prior to their introduction, which is the usual practice before any party introduces legislation under the scheme. I am advised that all parties have telexed their agreement that the bills are in a suitable form for introduction, subject to technical amendments of the kind referred to above. Approval of the final form of the bills will be sought prior to resumption of the debate at the next sittings.

The purpose of the National Companies and Securities Commission (Northern Territory Provisions) Bill is to give the commission power to operate in the Northern Territory. To that end, the bill duplicates the provisions of the National Companies and Securities Commission Act 1979 enacted by the Commonwealth. I propose to say a few words about the more significant aspects of the bill which mirror the provisions in the equivalent legislation enacted in the states.

Firstly, I refer to delegation powers. These are contained in clause 12 and enable the commission to delegate powers and functions either to a specified person or a person holding a specified office. In turn, the delegate may authorise a specified person or a person holding a specified office to perform the delegated function or exercise the delegated power. I remind honourable members that the Formal Agreement requires the commission to ensure that the performance of its functions and the exercise of its powers in the Territory are performed or exercised to the maximum extent practicable by the authorities in the Territory.

Secondly, I refer to staff controls. Clauses 15, 16 and 17 impose rigid controls on staff of the commission. Clause 15 prohibits an officer, except to the extent necessary to perform his official duties, from divulging or communicating to any person any information acquired by him in the performance of his official duties. The penalty for non-compliance is \$5000 or imprisonment for one year or both. Clause 16 prohibits an officer from dealing in any securities if, during the performance of his official duties, he has obtained any information in relation to those securities which may be considered to be price sensitive. The penalty for non-compliance is \$20 000 or imprisonment for 5 years. In addition, any officer in breach is also liable to compensate any person with whom he dealt if that person suffered any loss. Clause 17 obliges an officer to notify the commission of any conflict of interest which arises during the performance of his official duties. The penalty for non-compliance is \$5000 or 1 year or both.

Thirdly, I refer to hearings by the commission. Clauses 6 to 11 empower the commission to hold hearings for the purpose of performing functions or exercising powers conferred on it by the scheme legislation. Such hearings may be conducted in public or private, depending on the terms of the legislation or the wishes of the commission or a person entitled to appear before the commission. The commission will have power to summon witnesses to give evidence or produce documents, and it will be an offence for a person summoned not to attend or, if he attends, to refuse, without reasonable excuse, to be sworn or give evidence.

The purpose of the Companies (Application of Laws) Bill is to apply the Companies Act 1981 as enacted by the Commonwealth parliament as a code, the Companies (Northern Territory) Code, in the Territory. Prior to the introduction of the Companies Act into the Commonwealth parliament, the content of that act had been considered and unanimously approved by the Ministerial Council.

The code basically incorporates all the provisions of the existing legislation regulating companies in the Territory, the Companies Act, but significantly updates the law. The principal new features of the legislation are as follows: (a) a company incorporated in one jurisdiction but carrying on business in other jurisdictions can lodge all its documents in its local jurisdiction only; (b) powers of inspection of companies and their affairs have been strengthened; (c) the prohibition on a company financing and dealing

in its own shares has been strengthened; (d) comprehensive reforms have been made to the provisions relating to the registration of charges; (e) the provisions which impose duties of honesty and diligence on directors have been strengthened and extended to all officers; (f) the provisions prohibiting loans to directors have been strengthened; (g) new provisions will enable a company to obtain information as to the beneficial ownership of its shares; (h) significant amendments have been made to the provisions relating to the preparation and laying of accounts; (i) new powers have been given in relation to the supervision of liquidators; (j) the provisions relating to offences by officers have been strengthened; and (k) the scale of penalties for offences has been increased.

The bill mirrors the provisions in the equivalent legislation enacted by all states under the agreement and includes transitional provisions designed to facilitate the transition from the Territory's Companies Act to the provisions of the code.

The purpose of the Securities Industry (Application of Laws) Bill is to apply the provisions of the Securities Industry Act 1980 of the Commonwealth as a code, the Securities Industry (Northern Territory) Code, in the Northern Territory.

The code provides for the regulation of stock exchanges, licensing of stockbrokers and others giving investment advice, control of trading in securities and compensation for those who suffer loss through default by brokers. While the Territory does not yet have its own stock exchange, trading in securities is conducted by agents of stockbrokers and through investment advisers who are active in the Territory.

The purpose of the Companies (Acquisition of Shares) (Application of Laws) Bill is to apply the provisions of the Companies (Acquisition of Shares) Act 1980 of the Commonwealth as a code, the Companies (Acquisition of Shares) (Northern Territory) Code, in the Northern Territory.

The current law governing takeovers in the Territory is contained in Part VIB of and the tenth schedule to the Companies Act. The policy of the existing law is that a person is prohibited from dispatching a formal takeover or invitation unless that offer or invitation complies with the act. Experience in other jurisdictions showed that that law was inadequate in a number of respects. For example: it could not regulate market raids on a company's shares; it could not effectively prevent misuse of market sensitive information; it could not effectively prevent publication of certain types of misleading information; it could not prevent the use of selective offers or the misuse of conditional offers; and it did not provide sufficient time to enable shareholders properly to consider proposals put to them.

The policy of the code is aimed at controlling all acquisitions of voting shares in a company by a person who already holds more than the prescribed percentage - at present 20% - or would through acquisition be entitled to more than the prescribed percentage. Once a person acquires the prescribed percentage, then he can acquire more only by selecting one of the methods provided by the code. He may choose: to conduct a 'creeping' takeover by acquiring, in any way he chooses, no more than 3% of the voting shares in the target company each 6 months; to make a formal takeover which is similar to the existing law; or to make a takeover announcement on a stock exchange whereby he unconditionally undertakes to accept, at a specified price for 1 month, all shares of the target company offered to him.

The introduction of the scheme's comprehensive Securities Industry Code and Takeovers Code into the Territory is timely in view of the government's decision to examine the possibility of establishing a secondary stock exchange board in Darwin.

The purpose of the Companies and Securities (Interpretation and Miscellaneous Provisions) (Application of Laws) Bill is to apply the provisions of the Companies and Securities (Interpretation and Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1980 of the Commonwealth as a code, the Companies and Securities (Interpretation and Miscellaneous Provisions) (Northern Territory) Code or the Interpretation Code, in the Territory.

The Interpretation Code is designed to provide a means by which the scheme legislation can be interpreted consistently in each state and territory. Because Commonwealth, state and territory legislation relating to acts interpretation is not uniform, the objects of the Formal Agreement could be jeopardised if common interpretative provisions were not available.

Because of the technical nature of this bill, I do not propose to deal with it further other than to refer honourable members to the explanatory materials for the Interpretation Code in the looseleaf services and guides which I have asked my officers to make available to honourable members.

The main purposes of the Companies (Administration) Bill are to establish: (a) the office of Commissioner for Corporate Affairs and the Corporate Affairs Office in the Northern Territory; and (b) the Companies Auditors and Liquidators Disciplinary Board.

The provisions of this bill are similar to the equivalent legislation in the states and the Australian Capital Territory which established those bodies, although there are local modifications in each jurisdiction. The bill will convert the title of 'Registrar of Companies' to 'Commissioner for Corporate Affairs', bringing the title in the Territory in line with the title in all other jurisdictions which are party to the cooperative companies and securities scheme and will create a Corporate Affairs Office in place of the Companies Office. Like the equivalent legislation in the states and ACT, the bill also includes provisions concerning the functions and powers of the commissioner and controls on the commissioner and staff along the lines of similar provisions in the scheme legislation concerning the National Companies and Securities Commission and its delegates, officers and employees.

The bill will also establish the Companies Auditors and Liquidators Disciplinary Board, as in all other participating jurisdictions, as a local board to hear and determine complaints against the conduct of auditors and liquidators registered under the companies legislation. This function is to remain a Territory and state function rather than be exercised by the scheme's administrative arm, the National Companies and Securities Commission. The reason for this is that, as the National Companies and Securities Commission is the registering authority, it should not also be the disciplinary authority. The bill will ensure that complaints against auditors and liquidators are heard by an independent authority.

The purpose of the Companies and Securities (Consequential Amendments) Bill is simply to make consequential amendments to other Northern Territory legislation which include references to the Territory's present companies and securities legislation.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I commend the bills to honourable members.

Debate adjourned.

SUSPENSION OF STANDING ORDERS

Mr HATTON (Lands): Mr Speaker, I move that so much of standing orders be suspended as would prevent the Unit Titles Amendment Bill (Serial 169) and the Real Property (Unit Titles) Amendment Bill (Serial 170), (a) being presented and read a first time together and one motion being put in relation 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.

UNIT TITLES AMENDMENT BILL (Serial 169) REAL PROPERTY (UNIT TITLES) AMENDMENT BILL (Serial 170)

Bills presented and read a first time.

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

On 28 August 1985, the government tabled in this Assembly a draft bill to amend the Unit Titles Act. The proposed legislation was tabled to allow public comment to be made on the important and innovative amendments that are considered necessary to keep the Territory Unit Titles laws abreast of similar legislation elsewhere in Australia.

When tabling the draft amendments on 28 August, I described in some detail the nature of the proposed changes. Many of the amendments have been sought by unit owners for a number of years and their introduction will realise the efforts of these people to correct the Unit Titles Act. I know the Territory Ombudsman will be more than happy to observe the implementation of any of the recommendations put forward by persons who utilise his services. The government is confident that the unit titles amendments are acceptable to the public. The only area that might require change in the future would be that covered by the new concept of condominium or stage development. Only New South Wales has commenced specific legislation in this field and the passage of time will ultimately be a reliable test as to whether the proposed system can be improved.

Mr Speaker, I would like to turn now to the proposed amendments to the Real Property Unit Titles Act. This act is complementary to the Unit Titles Act. The function of the former act, generally speaking, is to prescribe the duties of the Registrar-General upon registration of unit plans as well as the effect of such registration. Accordingly, amendments are required to the Real Property Unit Titles Act to facilitate the amendment to the Unit Titles Act and, in particular, the various types of secondary subdivisions provided for in the proposed part IIIA of the Unit Titles Act. In this regard, clause 10 of the Real Property (Unit Titles) Amendment Bill provides for new parts IIA and IIB which deal with the registration of a units plan of subdivision and consolidation, notice of conversion, building alteration plans and disclosure statements and variations, the effect of such registration and the duties of the Registrar-General following such registration.

The new part IIA ensures that any registered interest in, for example, a unit that is being subdivided is protected upon registration of the units plan of subdivision and also provides for the cancellation of the existing certificate of title and the issue of a new certificate of title upon registration of the units plan of subdivision. The bill also provides for registration of condominium or stage development.

Section 9 of the act as amended will provide for the duties of the Registrar-General upon registration of a units plan where the units plan relates to a second or subsequent completed stage of a condominium development. The amendment provides for the cancellation of a certificate of title for the unit other than a unit in a previously completed stage held by the developer, the issue of a certificate of title with respect to the completed stage and the issue of a certificate of title for the balance of the parcel not affected by the completion at that stage of development and not being common property. I commend the bills to honourable members.

Debate adjourned.

REAL PROPERTY AMENDMENT BILL
(Serial 179)

Bill presented by leave and read a first time.

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

Mr Speaker, this bill amends the Real Property Act to provide that fees shall be prescribed by regulation and not in the schedule to the act as is presently the case. This will make it easier for fees to be amended from time to time as required. I commend the bill to honourable members.

Debate adjourned.

TABLED PAPER
Draft Work Health Bill

Mr TUXWORTH (Chief Minister)(by leave): Mr Deputy Speaker, I table the draft Work Health Bill, and I seek leave to have incorporated in Hansard my statement on the draft Work Health Bill.

Leave granted.

'Mr Speaker, today the government is tabling a draft bill of considerable public interest and significance - a bill which touches on the lives of all people working in the Northern Territory and on their families. This is the Occupational Health and Safety, Rehabilitation and Compensation Bill. The bill will usually be referred to by its short title, the Work Health Bill, and will replace the existing Workers' Compensation Act. The bill has been drafted after some 2 years of public inquiry and discussion. In tabling the draft bill, the government is both making public the detail of its intentions for a new scheme and keeping alive this process of public discussion.

In February 1984, the government established a board of inquiry into the system of workers' compensation in the Northern Territory. As

most honourable members will remember, the inquiry was established because of widespread dissatisfaction with the existing system - its lack of emphasis on safety and rehabilitation; the costs, the delays and the complexities of the system; the problems caused by the avoidance by some employers of proper premium payments - and, overall, the abysmal lack of information about the system, about the number and severity of industrial accidents, about rehabilitation efforts and outcomes, and about the costs of the various components of the system.

To reform a system such as this is a formidable task. The system represents a balancing of the interests of employers, workers and insurers. Our aim had to be to design a new system which would remedy the existing problems without upsetting this balancing of interests. The government has therefore taken a careful and consultative approach to reform.

We are indebted to the original board of inquiry for its efforts. The board worked long and hard throughout 1984 before presenting its report to the government. It received and considered dozens of written submissions and travelled around the Territory to hear dozens more. The report of the board of inquiry addressed, I believe, every significant problem and issue raised in these submissions. To Kevin Doody, the chairman of the inquiry, and to the members of the board - Merv Elliot of the Master Builders Association and Brian Manning of the Waterside Workers Federation - the government says a sincere thanks.

In 1985, the government established a committee of senior officers to evaluate the Doody Report. This committee sought public reaction to the report and received some 6 submissions. With the assistance of the evaluation committee, the government then formulated a coherent package of reforms which we put before you today.

The government has adopted the philosophy of the Doody Report and a large number of its recommendations. For instance, and I quote:

"That a new act be drafted which clearly reflects the following objectives -

- ° the promotion and practice of safety;
- ° effective planned rehabilitation;
- ° adequate compensation.

that umbrella occupational health and safety legislation be introduced to cover ALL work places;

"that greater emphasis be placed on the rehabilitation of injured workers;

that more emphasis be placed on the social, vocational, emotional, psychogenic, financial and legal aspects of rehabilitation;

that (A) commission be required to collect statistical information in relation to -

- A) the numbers, causes and types of accidents, injuries and diseases occurring;
- B) amounts of benefits paid and numbers referred to rehabilitation;
- C) the numbers of employers and employees, wages paid, contributions made and occupation classifications".

We have also adopted the thrust of the series of recommendations concerning mechanisms to ensure the full collection of premiums. Although we have not adopted the detail of all the other recommendations, we have accepted the need for change in many areas. We have accepted, for instance, that there is need for better coordination of safety and rehabilitation effort, that there is a need for pre-trial procedures prior to full court procedures and that Northern Territory government employees should be compensated under Northern Territory legislation.

The board of inquiry recommended that workers injured in motor vehicle accidents while travelling to and from work be covered in future under the Motor Accidents (Compensation) Act. To enable this, it recommended that benefits under the act be brought into line with workers' compensation benefits. We do not see this nexus of the benefits as an immediate possibility, but believe we can move some way to removing anomalies at the border of the 2 systems. There is a strong school of thought that journey accidents have no place in workers' compensation legislation. The idea behind such legislation is that employers are responsible for the safety of their employees and, as far as matters are within their control, should take steps to ensure this safety. Employers frequently ask: "What control do I have over journey accidents, particularly when someone stops at the pub on the way home?" The government believes there is a problem here - the dangers of drinking and driving are well known in our community.

The Motor Accidents (Compensation) Act excludes people from certain benefits where they are over the prescribed level of alcohol in the blood. The government, however, does not intend to remove workers' existing rights to journey claims, nor even to go as far as the Motor Accidents (Compensation) Act. However, the draft Work Health Bill moves towards the MACA position in that it makes a presumption that someone who exceeds the prescribed content of alcohol in the blood in a journey accident has materially contributed to the accident, and the onus is on the worker to prove otherwise. If he cannot, he would not be eligible for any benefits for journey accidents.

On 2 major issues, the board of inquiry was split. Two of the 3 members wanted a single insurer to deal with all workers' compensation business in the Northern Territory. Two of the 3 members favoured the abolition of common law negligence actions by employees against employers. The government has given these matters especially careful consideration. We do not favour the single insurer concept. We believe that a multi-insurer system enables healthy competition among insurers to pitch premiums at lower levels and to provide services at higher levels.

We are removing the requirement from general insurers in the Northern Territory to write workers' compensation business. We believe that this will mean that only those insurers who want to be involved seriously in workers' compensation will remain in this class of business. To do so, they will be licensed by the government, provided that they can meet criteria relating to their ability to provide a satisfactory, Territory-based service, their ability to provide information and their financial viability.

The second matter on which the Doody board of inquiry was split was the common law. The government agreed with the majority view that there are strong reasons for abolishing the common law negligence action between employees and employers. First, the common law acts as a complete disincentive to rehabilitation. Injured people are rewarded for maximising their incapacity during the time period, perhaps years, until their case is finalised in court. During this time, they may take on a role - a "disability" role - which is hard to shake off. Their return to work is delayed and, during the period they await finalisation of their claim, they are left in uncertainty as to what their financial future will be. In contrast, under the Work Health Bill, workers will receive weekly compensation benefits for the duration of their incapacity, rehabilitation efforts will be coordinated from an early stage and incapacity benefits will depend on the level of cooperation by the worker with these rehabilitation efforts.

Second, the common law is not, as some claim, a deterrent to negligent behaviour. This government would not be associated with any scheme which would remove constraints on unsafe behaviour by employers. The fact is that employers are insured against common law payments and do not pay the damages directly. In any case, the damages are not proportional to any negligence of the employer, but to the individual worker's needs. The work health system is designed to provide a framework for more direct disincentives. A consistently high injury rate should result in high premiums for an individual employer. Safety legislation and education should discourage negligently dangerous situations, with penalties for infringements which are proportional to the negligence involved.

Third, the common law discourages a cooperative approach to safety in the work place. An employer, for instance, cannot admit he was wrong - cannot even admit to the need for remedial action after an accident - lest he be sued for negligence. Under the work health arrangements, this adversarial situation will vanish and positive steps can be taken to promote cooperation in the work place.

Fourth, the common law negligence action is an inefficient, inaccurate and, if I may say, antiquated and unnecessary way of delivering incapacity benefits. It is inefficient because the costs of delivering benefits to the worker are high. A survey in 1973 in Australia found that it cost 3 to 4 times as much to deliver a dollar of benefits through the common law system as through a no-fault system. It is inaccurate because there are tremendous difficulties in making a once-and-for-all assessment of a person's future health and financial needs. It has been shown in a number of studies that the common law tends to over-compensate the smaller injuries and under-compensate the really serious, long-term cases. The common law

action is antiquated and unnecessary because, historically, it was the forerunner in early industrialised society of the later comprehensive no-fault systems of workers' compensation benefits needed in modern industrialised societies. In the USA and Canada, the common law negligence action vanished with the introduction of no-fault workers' compensation schemes. In jurisdictions in Australia, New Zealand and the United Kingdom, it is under attack and generally being whittled away.

The government proposes to bite the bullet on this issue, and to bid farewell to this common law action - an action which, useful in its time, is no longer needed to maintain the injured worker financially and which acts against the important aims of safety and rehabilitation. Common law negligence actions have already been abolished in the Northern Territory in respect of motor vehicle accidents. The Motor Accidents (Compensation) Act provides a system of no-fault compensation, giving fair and equitable benefits to injured people at a reasonable cost to motorists.

I would like to move on now to give honourable members a brief outline of the draft Work Health Bill. The bill has, as its basic and integrated philosophy: first, occupational health and safety, to prevent injury and disease and their associated costs; second, rehabilitation, to maximise recovery from injury and disease; and third, compensation, to protect individual workers from the financial costs of injury and disease.

A small statutory authority, the Work Health Authority, will be established to carry out the government's functions in safety, rehabilitation and compensation. I will elaborate on these functions in a moment. But, first, there are a couple of features of this proposed authority which I would like to emphasise. The authority will be small, comprising perhaps 25 people. It is our intention that no new positions in the public service be created to staff the authority. Positions and associated resources will come over to the authority from the various departments already involved in the area.

The second point to emphasise is that the authority will be consultative, advisory and conciliatory in style. The government believes this style is the appropriate one, generally, for a system which deals with safety, rehabilitation and compensation. We intend that the authority's major task will be to promote this cooperative approach among all parties. We are not foolishly optimistic, of course, and the draft bill contains mechanisms to deal with cases where a stand-off is reached between interested parties.

The authority will also play a major role in gathering, processing and publishing information about the system. The authority will process Territory-wide information from all claim forms, to enable us to know, for the first time, what is going on. The authority will be able to publish, as recommended by the Doody inquiry, Territory-wide data on: the numbers, causes and types of accidents, injuries and diseases occurring; amounts of benefits paid and the numbers referred to rehabilitation; and the numbers of employers and employees, wages paid, contributions made and occupational classifications.

Territory insurers acknowledge that there is a big information gap which must be bridged. I am grateful to them for the cooperation they have given us in accepting a certain level of standardisation of claim forms in order to enable this essential information to be more conveniently and cheaply gathered.

Let us look now at the major provisions of the draft bill and functions of the authority. The Work Health Bill is umbrella occupational health and safety legislation. It closes the existing legislative gaps by placing a duty on all employers to provide, as far as is practicable, a safe working environment for workers. To balance this requirement, there is a duty on workers to follow the employers' safety directions, and to use relevant safety equipment provided.

The authority's functions in occupational health and safety will be: to publish information on injury and disease and their causes from its data system; to provide advice on occupational health and safety to the government; to develop and recommend occupational health and safety standards for the Territory; to provide an advisory service to employers, employees and others on occupational health and safety; to represent the Territory on relevant national bodies such as the National Occupational Health and Safety Commission; and to promote consultation in the workplace on occupational health and safety.

The authority may, through its information system, become aware of quite serious incidents which fall under none of the existing safety legislation - legislation such as the Construction Safety Act or the Inspection of Machinery Act. The authority is therefore empowered, under the draft bill, to investigate these incidents. If it finds that there is a situation which requires remedial action, the authority can issue improvement or prohibition notices to employers, requesting that remedial action be taken. The government intends that these powers would be used sparingly. In keeping with its advisory, non-adversarial role, the authority will place emphasis on first attempting to reach agreement with the employer on the cost-effective remedial action necessary. The improvement and prohibition notices will be appealable.

In the area of rehabilitation, the primary emphasis will be on making much better use of existing services and facilities. A new medical certificate is included as a schedule to the draft bill and, on it, the doctor is asked to give an early opinion as to whether rehabilitation is likely to be required. This alerts both the person and the insurer to the need to prevent this particular person from languishing in that crucial post-acute-care phase before commencing on the necessary rehabilitative treatment.

Rehabilitation counsellors in the Work Health Authority will monitor the situation, and liaise with the various parties to promote early and appropriate rehabilitation treatment and, further down the track, the employment of workers with some residual incapacity. The rehabilitation counsellors will concentrate on making the best possible use of existing facilities in both the public and private sectors. It will be the task of rehabilitation counsellors to identify any unmet service needs and to bring them to the attention of the government.

The draft bill provides for a wider range of rehabilitative effort than previously. In addition to the existing benefits for medical and therapeutic treatment, for home and vehicle alterations, for constant help and for prosthetic devices, there will also be benefits for vocational retraining, work place modifications and for attendant care. Benefits will be paid at levels which are "reasonable and necessary" for the purpose of rehabilitation. In determining what is reasonable and necessary, regard would be had to the cost to the employer of the proposed treatment or other measure, as against the benefit to both the worker and the employer - the benefit to the worker being improved earning capacity and improved quality of life the benefit to the employer being the incapacity benefits saved by the worker's improved earning capacity.

Compensation for the workers' financial losses will be primarily in the form of weekly benefits. Benefits for the first 26 weeks of total incapacity will be equivalent to normal weekly earnings; that is, the same as under the present Workers Compensation Act. For partial incapacity or for total incapacity beyond 26 weeks, compensation will be at the rate of 80% of lost earning capacity. Lost earning capacity will, in most cases, simply be lost earnings. However, where either the worker is not cooperating with a reasonable rehabilitation program or the worker is not adequately pursuing employment opportunities, then earning capacity and hence benefits could be reviewed. Death benefits will be a lump sum of \$75 000 divided among dependants, in addition to weekly amounts for dependent children. The present schedule 3, setting out compensable permanent impairments, has been revised and the associated maximum lump sum increased to \$75 000. All benefits will be indexed by Northern Territory average weekly earnings. Benefits will cover all employees in the Northern Territory, including government employees. We are examining the possibility of also bringing members of the Legislative Assembly and ministers under the work health arrangements.

Compensation benefits will be administered by a multi-insurer system. The Work Health Authority will be responsible for the insurer licensing system I have already described. Employers will be obliged, as at present, to insure with a licensed insurer their liability to pay workers' compensation benefits. They will not be obliged to insure their liability for the first 5 days of incapacity or the first \$250 of medical and associated costs. Full self-insurance will remain an option for large employers who will, as under the existing legislation, have to demonstrate their financial viability and their ability to provide the service in order to be exempted from the usual compulsory insurance provisions.

The role of the authority in regard to compensation will be primarily to monitor the system, and to publish the data produced. The authority will provide a claims counselling service, to give information to the public about entitlements and the system generally.

There are a number of other provisions in the draft bill to which I would like to draw honourable members' attention. A work health court will be established to hear appeals and disputes under the act. There will be informal preliminary or summary hearings prior to court proceedings. These hearings will be conducted by either a magistrate

or a special registrar of the court. The purposes of these preliminary hearings are: to promote conciliation between the interested parties; to simplify and speed up the proceedings overall; and to finalise as many matters as possible without formal court hearings. The draft bill sets out the powers exercisable at these summary hearings to achieve these purposes.

The Nominal Insurer's Fund will continue much as at present. A new provision will enable the court to impose an additional penalty on an uninsured employer. This additional penalty would be up to double the amount of the premium which the employer had sought to avoid.

Other efforts will be made to gather in premiums from uninsured and under-insured employers in the Northern Territory. The Doody inquiry estimated this shortfall in premiums to be some \$14m or 50% of total premium income in 1981. Responsible employers are understandably bitter about being forced to subsidise those who to avoid proper workers' compensation premium payments and the government firmly intends to do something about this. We have worked out a series of improved and automated checks to be carried out by the Work Health Authority in cooperation with the Northern Territory Commissioner of Taxes.

The draft bill contains new definitions which attempt to minimise insurance avoidance through artificial subcontracting arrangements. In effect, natural persons will be deemed to be employees of people from whom they are receiving payments under contract of service or for service. Genuine subcontractors will be able to obtain certificates of exemption from this deeming provision by application to the Work Health Authority. Having made the choice and received the exemption, they will not be eligible for compensation if injured.

There will be a new stamp duty, pitched at 1% of premiums, to offset the government's efforts in the area of acting directly to bring increased revenue to the insurers, as well as to make a national contribution to the government's safety and rehabilitation efforts. The necessary amendments to the Northern Territory Tax Act will be made during the next sittings of the Legislative Assembly.

This brings me to the question of costs. A great deal is said and written about the costs of workers' compensation in the Northern Territory. What do we actually know about costs, Mr Deputy Speaker? We know that employers see their premiums rising and we know that total premiums collected in the Northern Territory have risen from some \$9.5m in 1980-81 to over \$24m in 1984-85. We know little more than this. We cannot split these cost trends into different industry groups. We cannot tell what proportion of the costs comes from short-term incapacity and what from long-term incapacity, and so on. No reasonable cost analysis of the current system can be done - as, indeed, the Doody inquiry found during 1984.

In formulating its new proposals in this information vacuum, the government has taken an approach generally similar to the Doody inquiry. I quote from the Doody report:

"The board has found it impossible to significantly reduce direct costs as represented by premiums paid. Rather it

has attempted to design a better system whilst containing costs at existing levels with the long-term aim of holding these cost levels for some years as a result of savings built into the new system".

The government's approach is as follows. First, the changes in the benefit structure have been designed to have as little effect as possible on costs but to distribute benefits away from the common law system and towards those most in need, i.e. the seriously and long-term incapacitated.

Second, a number of measures in the bill will have the effect of lowering costs in the immediate future or of keeping costs down in the longer term. These measures are: the provision by the government of rehabilitation counsellors to promote early and appropriate rehabilitation efforts aimed at getting injured people back to work; the widened scope of rehabilitation benefits; the new system for checking for non-insurance and under-insurance; the abolition of common law actions between employers and employees; the introduction of preliminary hearings to minimise legal costs; and, above all, the obligation on all parties to make serious efforts to avoid accidents and injuries in the first place.

Third, a "costs watchdog" will be set up. There will be a new premiums monitoring committee established comprising representatives of insurers, employers and unions, as well as officers of the authority and an actuary. The committee's task will be to monitor the costs of the system, on the basis of the new, detailed data to be collected and published by the authority. Particular concerns about costs or premiums can be brought to the committee and, if satisfactory answers cannot be found by the committee, the government will be informed.

The government's policy, then, is one of firm long-term cost containment. In the short term, the government does not anticipate significant changes to costs to employers. Insurers will, I am sure, be assessing the situation continually and making every attempt to keep premiums down. In view of the government's 3-pronged approach to cost containment and in view of the insurers' 1984-85 underwriting profits - some \$8.5m or 35% of net premiums - I imagine that insurers might well make an early announcement that there will be no premium increases in 1986-87 due to the proposed new scheme.

Consultation has played a major part in the development of the government's policy in this whole area. Throughout the Doody inquiry and right up to the present time, we have sought and have received views from the various parties interested in occupational health and safety, in rehabilitation and in compensation. This process of consultation is one we would like to continue after the new scheme comes into operation.

The bill therefore provides for the establishment of a Ministerial Advisory Council. Membership of the council will include people who represent the interests of employers, workers, insurers and professionals concerned with rehabilitation. The council's function will be to advise the minister on the operation of the act. It will also provide a forum where the interest groups may exchange views

among themselves. The tabling of this draft bill in the Assembly today is a milestone in the process of consultation and development which the government began 2 years ago.

We have now laid our cards on the table. Over a month ago, we released a public discussion paper, signalling our general intentions for change. We called at the time for public comment. In tabling this draft bill, we anticipate further comment and will welcome further constructive discussion. We will be establishing a process of consultation with the opposition to enable it to make its views known.

It is the government's expectation that the draft bill will undergo amendment prior to its introduction at the next sittings of the Assembly, on the basis of the intervening discussions and submissions. There are a number of matters yet to be included in the bill - for instance, more detail on independent contractors; rehabilitation counselling function of the authority; and the bringing of seamen under the cover of the legislation.

Members will also appreciate that there are matters of detail to be covered by regulations, which will be presented to the Assembly with the final bill. If the anticipated amendments add up to only relatively minor adjustments of policy or to what I might term legislative housekeeping, the government intends that the resulting bill would be introduced and passed in the June sittings of the Assembly and would come into operation on the first of July this year.

Together, I am sure the Northern Territory community can develop a fine work health system. We all share the common aim of remedying the problems with the current system. I believe we also share the fundamental philosophy of this bill: that safety is the first priority; to prevent injury and disease as far as possible; that, where injury and disease occur, the rehabilitation of the injured person must be the major aim; and that there must be a system to compensate injured workers with justice and support them with dignity during their period of incapacity.

I look forward to receiving comments on the draft bill from honourable members and from the Northern Territory community'.

Mr TUXWORTH: Mr Deputy Speaker, I move that the Assembly take note of the statement.

Debate adjourned.

SPECIAL ADJOURNMENT

Mr TUXWORTH (Chief Minister): Mr Deputy Speaker, I move that the Assembly, at its rising, adjourn until 27 May 1986 at 10 am or such other time and date as may be set by Mr Speaker pursuant to sessional orders.

Mr B. COLLINS (Opposition Leader): Mr Deputy Speaker, I will be brief. Late yesterday, I had intended to move an amendment to this motion - that this Assembly reconvene at 2 pm. Obviously, it would be inappropriate for that motion to be moved at this time. But I simply wish to go on the record, as I

have done on many occasions, and say that, if ever we have had proof positive that we need some additional sitting days in the Northern Territory, we have just had it. By the time we rise, we will have sat continuously for almost 22 hours. That is not a proper or desirable way for any legislature to conduct its business, particularly when you are talking about a legislature the size of ours.

Much reference is made, and for the life of me I cannot understand why, to the significance of the physical presence of members inside this Chamber from time to time. At any time before question time in the House of Representatives, one is lucky to find 2 men and their dogs in there. Indeed, ministers have a schedule of duty time in the Chamber. On a very bad day, they might have to spend half an hour in there because they are very busy people indeed. They conduct most of their business from their parliamentary offices. Only one small section of them at any time is concentrating on legislation and the attendant debate.

We are in a different position because we probably have more opportunity to speak and more obligation to consider legislation than members of any other parliament in Australia. There is no question about that. We cannot take it in turns; we have to be in here. That has been demonstrated tonight. Certainly, the ministers who have had carriage of bills and the shadow ministers who have had to respond to them or introduce their own legislation have not been able to take a break. Nobody can function properly after 22 continuous hours of pretty stringent concentration on numerous matters before the Assembly. It is not a desirable way for this Assembly to pass legislation. It is unnecessary.

There is one other aspect of this that I have to raise, and I raise it again in this Assembly because it always seems to go completely unnoticed. I refer to the people behind the scenes in this legislature. I know it is easy to take the attitude: 'They are there to be available. We only sit for a small number of days per year. So what?'. That does not wash with me. In the Hansard room this morning at about 2 o'clock, they were up to their knees in cassettes. By 6 o'clock they were up to something else which it would be unparliamentary for me to name. They are in a considerable amount of disarray in there because we have set a new record by a country mile - and one which I hope will never be beaten. We have sat until 2 or 3 o'clock in the morning, but we have never sat, and nor should we ever sit, 24 hours around the clock. It is uncalled for.

If we sat 200 days of the year, fair cop. We could say: 'We have a big legislative program and many things to discuss'. That is the reason we are here - not simply to talk about the government's business, but also to debate matters that, in the opposition's view, are of importance to the Northern Territory. It is a house of debate. The former Speaker, Mr MacFarlane, often used to say that this is a house of debate. Mr Deputy Speaker, I walked outside in the early hours of this morning, and happened to overhear 2 members of the staff of the Assembly having a conversation on their way back to the Clerk's office. One of them said to the other: 'You know, if that Bill of Rights they were talking about is ever passed, I hope it includes a right to go home'. That is not an unreasonable request.

Mr Deputy Speaker, we know we will sit for about 21 days this year. We have complained before that the frequency of sittings is not sufficient to allow this legislature to have proper scrutiny of the government's performance. This is the first time we have sat in 4 months. We will not be

sitting again until the last week in May. I have suggested to the government on previous occasions - and I know all the practical difficulties - that, at least on 1 occasion, it split the 2-week sittings into 2 weekly sittings to increase the frequency. It has been done before. Four months without sitting at all is simply not good enough; 21 days is not good enough.

The honourable members opposite know that, as distinct from some other people who express views on this side of the Assembly, I have never complained about a lack of sitting days for the sake of simply coming in here and talking. The reason is our size. It is not relevant to compare us with Western Australia, New South Wales or the federal parliament. They sit for 6 months of the year but backbenchers are lucky if they get on the Speaker's list once in every blue moon. We have plenty of opportunity to debate bills. I do not want any more sitting days than is required for the legislative processes of the government to continue and for the proper use by the opposition of this Assembly as a house of debate.

I protest strongly at sitting for 22 continuous hours. It is not a proper way to deal with legislation. It is not a proper way to treat this Assembly. It is not a proper way to treat the staff of this Assembly. There is absolutely no need for it. All of this could have been avoided by the addition of just 1 single sitting day to these sittings.

Mr TUXWORTH (Chief Minister): Mr Deputy Speaker, we did not set out to have a 22-hour marathon by any means. It has been known to us all for quite some time that this would be a 5-day sittings. Because it was a general business day, we felt it was important that we completed that business. Coming back 1 day next week was hardly a proposition.

I would like to close my remarks by reaffirming the Leader of the Opposition's comments about the staff. On behalf of the government members of the Assembly, I thank the Hansard staff, the Chamber staff and other people working in the precincts in the last 24 hours for all their efforts. They have done us proud and we thank them very much for it.

Members: Hear, hear!

Motion agreed to.

LAND AND BUSINESS AGENTS AMENDMENT BILL
(Serial 182)

Continued from 25 March 1986.

Mr B. COLLINS (Opposition Leader): Mr Deputy Speaker, the opposition supports the bill.

Motion agreed to; bill read a second time.

Mr PERRON (Attorney-General)(by leave): Mr Deputy Speaker, I move that the bill be now read a third time.

Motion agreed to; bill read a third time.

HOSPITAL MANAGEMENT BOARDS AMENDMENT BILL
(Serial 183)

Continued from 25 March 1986.

Mr LANHUPUY (Arnhem): Mr Deputy Speaker, the opposition supports this bill. The amendments are basically mechanical. By clause 4, the definitions of 'Chief Executive Officer' and 'hospital' are brought into line with the Medical Service Act which was introduced in 1982 to provide for the administration of medical services in the Territory.

Clause 5 provides for the replacement of the subsection providing that the Chief Executive Officer is a member of the hospital board. The new subsection provides that the person who has principal responsibilities for medical services in the hospital will be a member of the board - that is, the Senior Medical Officer rather than the Chief Executive Officer. This should ensure more involvement of the medical profession on the management side.

Clause 6 amends section 24(3) and sets out that a hospital management board must undertake an inspection in June each year accompanied by the head of the Department of Health. The amendment removes the requirement that the inspection be carried out in June while retaining the requirement that such inspection shall not be spaced more than 12 months apart. This aspect of the bill does not seem to be contentious and the opposition supports it.

Mr EDE (Stuart): Mr Deputy Speaker, while I am prepared to support the bill, I would like to point out that I see nothing in it which requires the unseemly haste with which I believe it has been moved through this Assembly. I believe that...

Mr TUXWORTH: A point of order, Mr Deputy Speaker! My understanding is that such comments are a reflection on the Chair. The government does not seek a certificate of urgency lightly.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: The point of order is accepted. The Speaker determined that the bill required urgency.

Motion agreed to; bill read a second time.

Mr HANRAHAN (Health)(by leave): Mr Deputy Speaker, I move that the bill be now read a third time.

Motion agreed to; bill read a third time.

ADJOURNMENT

Mr HANRAHAN (Health): Mr Deputy Speaker, I move that the Assembly do now adjourn.

Mr B. COLLINS (Opposition Leader): Mr Deputy Speaker, I do not take up the time of the Assembly lightly at this late hour but honourable members, in particular the Minister for Lands, will realise the importance of discussing this matter. We sought during these sittings to obtain from the Minister for Lands details surrounding the company, Joondana Investments. The response to that has been zero. I am therefore put in a position of seeking further information.

Joondana Investments was formed by changing the name of Interconstruction Development Company Pty Ltd on 14 September 1971. The directors were Pietro La Pira and Guiseppe Vogliotti and they remained as directors until 11 November 1975. On that date, Mr David Wynn Veal joined the directors. Between 11 November 1975 and 30 June 1976, Elizabeth Valley Pty Ltd had extracted a loan of \$55 567 from Joondana. By the end of the next financial year, that loan had grown to \$110 306 and, by 30 June 1978, that amount had grown to \$142 056.

This happy relationship came to an end on 30 April 1979 when David Wynn Veal resigned as director of Joondana. Only a month earlier, he resigned as director of Elizabeth Valley Pty Ltd to be replaced by an M. Veal. At this time, it would seem that, by 30 June 1979, these loans had been repaid. Certainly, they disappeared from the accounts of Elizabeth Valley Pty Ltd as a liability and from Joondana's accounts as an asset. Further, there is no indication in Joondana's accounts that the debt had been written off.

However, it is interesting to note that there is no indication in Joondana's accounts that any interest was ever charged on this loan to Elizabeth Valley Pty Ltd. It is educational to look at the accounts of Elizabeth Valley Pty Ltd during this period of hard-earned loans. At the time of these investments, Elizabeth Valley Pty Ltd had 4 shareholders: J.H. Veal (1 'A' class share); D.W. Veal (1 'A' class share); Ripon Investments Pty Ltd (4901 'A' class shares); and Joondana Investments (5000 'A' class shares). In 1975-76, Joondana Investments lent Elizabeth Valley \$55 567. In that same year, both D.W. Veal and P.E. Veal borrowed a total of \$32 000 from Elizabeth Valley Pty Ltd. These loans from Joondana to Elizabeth Valley Pty Ltd continued over the next 3 years. By 1976-77, the total was \$110 306 and, by 1977-78, the total was \$142 056. This relationship grew from the day David Wynn Veal joined Joondana Investments on 11 November 1975.

The matter does not end there. During this period we are talking about, Joondana Investments had a sister company known as Joondana Investments (NT) Pty Ltd. The strength of Joondana Investments, the benefactors of Elizabeth Valley, seems to have come from very significant loans made by a company named Tyrol Investments Pty Ltd.

The information I sought at question time from the Minister for Lands arose from a joint announcement from him and the Minister for Community Development. A telephone call to the Department of Lands from my office on this development was answered with a referral to the Director of Land Development, Mr David Veal. I am gravely concerned that, in the light of the details of the 2 companies, Joondana Investments and Elizabeth Valley, and the clear financial links between the companies, that we can find ourselves in a situation where a former director of Joondana is in a position - as would appear from verbal information my office has received - to have a major responsibility for providing government contracts and Crown land to the same company. No doubt, it will be argued that the relationship was some 7 years ago and all loan moneys have been repaid.

Further, I have no doubt that we will hear some sort of defence from the government that our questions and our statements set an unfair and unrealistic set of rules which would preclude any person with former business activities from joining the government service. By the very low standards of public morality we have seen set by this government during the last couple of weeks, I have no doubt we will receive this kind of response. It may even be that we will see both the member for Fannie Bay and the member for Barkly rise to enter this debate.

We are not setting unreasonable standards. This whole debate would be unnecessary if the minister had provided us with details this morning or yesterday. Let me set out a not unreasonable set of actions for the minister and his public service. Firstly, I imagine that the process of seeking a developer would have passed through the tender process in which some public servant would have received details on Joondana and noted the relationship with Elizabeth Valley.

Can the minister tell the Assembly if the development project went through the Tender Board? Can the minister inform the Assembly if any public servant reviewed the details of Joondana Investments with the help of the Registrar-General's Department? Can the minister tell us if any note was made during that review that identified the relationship between Joondana Investments and Elizabeth Valley Pty Ltd? If the answer to the third of these questions is yes or if the Minister for Lands or the Minister for Community Development was aware of Mr Veal's relationship with Joondana, did either of them raise it with him? From conversations I have had with the honourable minister, I believe he was not aware. This is an important question which the minister must answer in the Assembly now. I cannot see that the minister can respond in a positive way. Either this reasonable process was not carried out or it was carried out but it failed to recognise the full implications. Finally, there is the more worrying aspect that the process was carried out, that the Minister knew and did nothing.

Of course, there is a simple way in which the problem could have been resolved even if none of those procedures existed. As soon as the file involving Joondana Investments reached Mr Veal's desk, he should have declared his previous involvement to his superiors. Can the minister inform the Assembly if such a declaration occurred? If so, what was the subsequent decision of the department. I am led to believe that no declaration could have occurred since the issue of the type of title and its condition are still being handled by Mr Veal.

This leads us to some interesting questions on the nature of the whole project. The Minister for Community Development proudly announced that the swimming pool at Palmerston would run at a profit unlike similar public pools run by the Darwin City Council. Let us assume that Joondana Investments can build and run a pool more cheaply than the Darwin City Council and let us assume that the people in Palmerston will make greater use of such a pool. I doubt if all these features will guarantee a profit yet the minister spoke as if he could guarantee such a deal. I suggest that such a guarantee was made by Joondana Investments in anticipation of profits made from other aspects of the project and these details have been left in Mr David Veal's hands to develop.

In arranging such a project of giving title and setting prices, it is most important that the conditions and covenants of the development are set in a manner which ensure that the maximum public benefit is assured. You are aware, Mr Deputy Speaker, of the public statements by the honourable member for Leanyer who is concerned that certain shopping centre sites in Karama have not been fully developed. We are concerned also by the situation in Karama, but it is our understanding that developers had no legal obligation beyond the development of the sites for such a shopping centre. There is no legal obligation on them actually to build the shops. This reflects an unfortunate situation and it should lead us to question the conditions which were placed on the development. The problem in Karama seems to be a failure to set sufficiently strict conditions to ensure an adequate level of services to the people who live there.

The situation in Karama is illustrative of what could happen at Palmerston if the conditions are not adequate. My reference to the situation at Karama that has been raised by the member for Leanyer is not an idle comparison. Of the anticipated 1073 blocks at Karama, 650 were to be developed by Henry and Walker and 423 by a firm called Interconstruction Enterprises Pty Ltd. It is my understanding that Interconstruction Enterprises Pty Ltd is the company that was responsible for the development in which the shopping centre has not been developed.

Interconstruction Enterprises Pty Ltd is an interesting company. It began life as Jupiter Express Thirteen Pty Ltd changing to Sanderson Development in January 1980 and, finally, to Interconstruction Enterprises Pty Ltd. It is interesting to note that Jupiter Express Thirteen was established by one Alexander Henry Silvester known as Lex Silvester. But more than this, in 1981, Interconstruction Enterprises Pty Ltd received a loan of \$1m from a company named Joondana Investments Pty Ltd.

Throughout its life one of the directors of Interconstruction Enterprises has been Pietro La Pira. From 1980 until today, the significant shareholding in Interconstruction Enterprises has been held by Pietro La Pira and, since November 1982, he has been joined by Domenico La Pira. During that period, Joondana Investments Pty Ltd has held between 4000 and 9000 'B' class shares. Prior to the loan of \$1m from Joondana to Interconstruction Enterprises Pty Ltd, it had lent up to \$1.98m to Joondana in 1977-78. This amount was progressively run down to an identified level of \$1.3m in 1978-79 and to a level of no more than \$8000 in 1981-82 when the company chose not to identify such loans individually in its accounts.

If we wish to gain further insight into this morass of interconnecting directorships, million dollar loans and land developments, we need to deal with 2 more companies. These companies are Tyrol Pty Ltd and Interconstruction Enterprises (NT) Pty Ltd. Tyrol was founded by Pietro La Pira and Guiseppe Vogliotti as directors. A David Wynn Veal joined as a director on 11 November 1975 and remained as such until 30 April 1979 when he resigned. In that period, Interconstruction Enterprises Ltd loaned Tyrol up to \$3.6m and Tyrol loaned Joondana Pty Ltd up to \$2.5m.

Similarly, Mr David Wynn Veal was a director of Interconstruction Enterprises (NT) Pty Ltd, as an alternative director to Pietro La Pira, and he resigned on 30 April 1979 - the same date as he resigned from Tyrol and Joondana and, as I understand it, only shortly before he became employed by the Department of Lands in the Northern Territory government. Interconstruction Enterprises (NT) Pty Ltd held \$520 000 of shares in Joondana from 1976-78 the same amount as a loan it received from Tyrol over a similar period.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I have raised these details because it is obvious that the minister is either unaware of these facts or has chosen to withhold the information. I believe it may well be the former rather than the latter. What I have laid out here today is publicly available information. We came by it by using the normal channels. What it reveals, however, is a complex structure of related companies which have transferred large amounts of money between themselves and which have had common directors and shareholders, one of whom was Mr David Veal. Further, 2 of these companies have been involved in the development of 2 of the Territory's major residential developments - Karama and Palmerston. At least the first of these developments has been subjected to severe criticism by members of the government party in this Assembly.

In the light of these revelations and what seems to be the failure of the government to recognise the inherent conflict of interest, I have been forced to state these facts. I believe that the onus lies with the government to provide this Assembly with full details of the matter I have raised. I have already identified a number of questions which I supplied to the minister earlier. He should now be in a position to answer these questions as I know that his office contacted mine 24 hours ago about this.

This issue does present a very real test of the public morality of the government. The Chief Minister has already seriously damaged the credibility of the government and his own credibility. The onus is on the Minister for Lands to assure the public that the standard of the Chief Minister has not been extended to the Northern Territory's public service.

Mr HATTON (Lands): Mr Speaker, I make it very clear that I do not object to the Leader of the Opposition raising these issues because, if the allegations are true, they definitely deserve to be investigated. If the suggestions of impropriety or a conflict of interest are true, it would be essential for us to deal with them.

What I do object to is the imputation in the words of the Leader of the Opposition. Yesterday, the Leader of the Opposition asked me a question. I have a transcript of that question here because I had to try to deal with it:

'Can the Minister for Lands confirm to the Assembly that the company, Joondana Investments, has been selected to build community facilities, including a swimming pool at Palmerston, for which land is now being allocated? Can he confirm that, between 1976 and 1978, Joondana Investments lent \$142 056 to the company which had as its director, a person who subsequently held a senior position with the Palmerston Development Authority, and a senior position within the Department of Lands, and who is currently involved in setting conditions for land allocations to Joondana Investments?'

Mr Deputy Speaker, I answered by confirming the first part of the question. In respect of the second part, I said I was not aware of the answers. I asked the Leader of the Opposition to provide me with more details so that I could respond. He said that he would do that.

Yesterday morning, prior to the Assembly sitting, one of my staff rang the Leader of the Opposition's office and was told: 'Sorry. We are too busy. But the person's name is Mr Veal'. I came in yesterday morning with details to provide to the Assembly. I will provide them in a moment. I reject the imputation that I have been trying to avoid that. Every member of this Assembly knows the events that occurred yesterday morning.

Mr B. Collins: I did not say you were trying to avoid anything.

Mr HATTON: Mr Deputy Speaker, there was a clear imputation...

Mr B. Collins: There was not. I said you either know it or you do not know it.

Mr HATTON: I want to make it very clear, Mr Deputy Speaker, that I came into this Assembly with the intention at the commencement of question time to provide the information that I had available. I would not like anybody to assume that I was trying to avoid answering this question.

The information that I have refers to Mr Veal. It is a matter of public record at the office of the Registrar-General that Mr David Veal, head of the Development Division of the Department of Lands, was a director of Elizabeth Valley Pty Ltd until his employment by the NT government in 1978. It is also a matter of public record that Joondana Investments Pty Ltd lent Elizabeth Valley Pty Ltd an amount, identified in the question, of \$142 056, and that that loan was discharged in 1979. The loan, I am advised, was mainly the value of work and improvements to Mr Veal's property - that is, Elizabeth Valley - as part of an agreement to buy an interest in the company.

When Mr Veal joined the public service, he made a personal declaration to the Secretary of the Department of Lands and Housing. As these are personal details, I do not propose to table them but I will make them available for sighting by the Leader of the Opposition. They reveal Mr Veal's directorships, shareholdings and give other information. There are subsequent briefings from a number of people referring to Mr Veal's dealings. The letter from David Veal is dated 23 March 1979.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I am advised by the department that Mr Veal has been particularly scrupulous in his position in the department. Whenever there appeared to be potential for a conflict of interest, he has declared that to his superior. When he was working for the Palmerston Development Authority, he declared it to the Chairman of the Palmerston Development Authority. The Chairman of the Palmerston Development Authority was also the Secretary of the Department of Lands, Mr Don Darben.

I will give the chronology of events in respect of Joondana Investments. On 31 January 1985, as minister, I approved invitation documents setting out general terms and conditions for the particular contractual matter being referred to. On 14 February 1985, applications were invited. On 30 May 1985, an assessment panel recommended to the Palmerston Development Authority further negotiations in respect of short-listed tenderers. Mr Veal was not on that assessment panel and, in fact, had approached the Chairman of the Palmerston Development Authority and advised, not of previous interest, but of the fact that he had been approached by Joondana with a job offer. He advised Mr Darben of that offer and the potential conflict of interest, and asked that he have no dealings with the selection or matters directly relating to that particular contractual arrangement. Mr Darben accepted that and Mr Veal was kept out of that for that period.

On 13 June, there was a meeting with Joondana. I understand that meeting did include Mr Veal, as well as other officers of the Palmerston Development Authority and or the Department of Lands. On 30 June, the Palmerston Development Authority was no longer operative and the matter was referred to the Palmerston Town Council for consideration. The administration was through the Department of Lands but was dealt with by a different division to that of Mr Veal. Further negotiations from July 1985 to February of 1986 have been carried out by the Department of Lands. They have been dealt with by a different division to that of Mr Veal. I understand that Mr Veal was not involved in those.

On 21 March 1986, Cabinet approved the lease to Joondana Investments. I can advise that the matter went to Cabinet on a number of occasions before it was finally determined that Joondana Investments would receive the lease.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I have been advised by the department on answers to specific questions asked yesterday:

'1. Yes. Joondana Investments Pty Ltd has been selected and a lease is expected to be issued shortly.

2. An officer who was a director of a company entering into a loan arrangement with Joondana Investments Pty Ltd now works in a senior position in the Department of Lands. However, that officer is not currently involved with setting lease conditions for the development of the community facilities at Palmerston. These recommendations have been handled by a completely different division of the department. Nevertheless, the officer did attend one meeting on the matter in June 1985, at the direction of the Palmerston Development Authority, and after he had advised of a potential conflict of interest.

If the honourable Leader of the Opposition is inferring a conflict of interest by this officer, then he is wrong. Investigations have shown that this officer and his department have been scrupulous in their dealings, and the decision in favour of Joondana reflects a more acceptable proposal in the opinion of people not including the officer to whom Mr Collins is referring'.

Mr Deputy Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition has raised other information. I suspect that it is totally unrelated to this particular matter and does not constitute additional facts.

Mr B. Collins: I do not expect you to respond to that.

Mr HATTON: If the Leader of the Opposition would like me to carry out further investigations, I am quite prepared to do so. My advice from the Secretary of the Department of Lands and also from the Assistant Secretary and the Director of the Northern Division is that Mr Veal has been particularly scrupulous to ensure that he advised of areas where he felt there may be a conflict of interest. I am advised by the 2 senior people in the Department of Lands that departmental people are particularly conscious of this and go to great lengths to try to avoid any conflict of interest. I must say that, if any matter were brought to my attention, I would use all my endeavours to ensure that people could not misuse their position in the Department of Lands. On the information available to me, I do not believe that any such misuse could be alleged in this case.

Mr BELL (MacDonnell): Mr Deputy Speaker, there are several matters I wish to raise in the adjournment this morning. The first matter relates to the nursing service at Papunya. I thank the Minister for Health for passing across to me a briefing note, which I will not take the time of the Assembly to read into the record this morning.

There is considerable concern in the community of Papunya because there is no longer a resident nursing sister there. The community has made representations to me on that ground. The honourable Chief Minister will recall, if the honourable Minister for Health does not, that, in 1982 or 1983, the community there opted for a Northern Territory Department of Health service. It is a matter of some concern to them that there is no longer a resident health sister at Papunya. I appreciate, and the community appreciates, the difficulties that the department has had in recruiting a nursing sister for Papunya.

I have a couple of questions in relation to the difficulty of the shortage of nurses. I understand, for example, that the Department of Health has been forced to recruit nurses for hospitals in the Territory from agencies interstate, which, of course, would be a more expensive arrangement than what would normally apply under those circumstances. For the satisfaction of my constituents at Papunya, I would like to know how widespread the effects of the shortage of nurses are. Which hospitals are affected? Is it only Papunya? It sounds as though it is not only Papunya but other centres as well. Which other centres are so affected? Which hospitals in which towns are affected? I would appreciate some advice from the minister in that regard.

The second issue I wish to address briefly is the problem of a drought in my electorate. As honourable members will be aware, we have had particularly dry summers in central Australia. It is causing considerable concern in the pastoral community in my electorate. The government recently announced new guidelines in this regard. On the basis of the documentation that is available to me, it is a little bit difficult to obtain full information about how matters have changed. I see the honourable Minister for Primary Production putting his case together. I would just like to place on record my request for a briefing from his department on drought relief and the difficulties that are experienced by different properties.

I wish to draw a matter to the attention of the honourable Minister for Community Development who seems to have snuffed it. As they say, when the going gets tough, the tough get going. The Minister for Community Development will no doubt be able to read in Hansard my concerns in regard to the Kin hills Stearns Report. You will no doubt recall, Mr Deputy Speaker, that the honourable member referred to this particular report on remote communities throughout the Territory. My colleagues are a little reluctant to bear with me, but I will press on. I understand the Kin hills Stearns Report relates to developing benchmarks for community services that are provided or not provided, as the case may be, on various remote Aboriginal communities, and perhaps on not so remote Aboriginal communities. I very much look forward to seeing that report and hearing of the minister's response in that regard. Several matters in relation to it have been drawn to my attention and concern has been expressed about it in various communities in my electorate. As a conscientious local member, I will look forward to drawing the attention of my constituents to its contents.

I wish to place on record my concern that the Minister for Education failed to come to the party as far as information about the Anzac Hill junior high school is concerned. He had the opportunity during debate. After all, we have been here for 22 hours 20 minutes now. The Minister for Education beetled off out the door, briefcase in hand. I presume he has no intention of providing me with that information, but I would very much like to hear it at some stage.

A further matter for which the Minister for Education should provide some explanation to this Assembly is in relation to a copy of a memo sent to the Director of the Southern Region of the Department of Education from the Secretary of the Department of Education on 4 March 1986. It was in relation to the visit to Alice Springs secondary schools arranged by the scientists against nuclear arms. That may not of itself, Mr Deputy Speaker, give you much of a clue about the reason for that memo. The reason for that memo was to curtail seriously the free flow of information in a democratic society. The Secretary of the Department of Education received representations from a

small number of citizens of central Australia. The honourable member for Sadadeen, inter alia, proceeded to...

Mr D.W. COLLINS: A point of order, Mr Deputy Speaker! I claim that I have been misrepresented. I had nothing to do with it.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! The honourable member for MacDonnell will ensure that he does not misrepresent members.

Mr BELL (MacDonnell): I would draw to the honourable member's attention that he is most welcome to make a personal explanation after I have finished speaking, rather than eating into the scant time available to me.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I think that some explanation is required from the Minister for Education about how such a memo came to be sent from the Secretary to the Regional Director of the Department of Education. Large numbers of parents were interested in their children hearing what Dr Helen and Dr Bill Caldicott had to say on this issue. There was all manner of scaremongering by people, including various allegations about what was involved in this particular visit. We were greeted with the headline, 'School Ban on Peace Couple', in our local paper.

Regardless of the merits or otherwise of their case, they should have had a fair hearing. I was rather pleased to see that Dr Senadipathy of Alice Springs concurred with me. In a letter to the local paper, he said:

'I am a parent of a high school child in Alice Springs. I am not a member of the Medical Association for the Prevention of War, nor am I a believer or follower of Dr Helen Caldicott. Yet I am amazed to learn that our Secretary of Education took quick action to prevent Dr Caldicott addressing high school children of Alice Springs'.

That was the depth of feeling about that particular issue.

The final issue that I wanted to raise in the adjournment today refers to the comments made by the Chief Minister in answer to a question from the member for Ludmilla about the Australian Broadcasting Tribunal hearings on remote television licence applications. By way of a digression, against which I called a point of order, the Chief Minister made quite extraordinary allegations about the use of the Central Australian Aboriginal Media Association's facilities for broadcasting slander in relation to the sale of poisoned meat. It was really quite an extraordinarily pompous performance from the Chief Minister, done in question time for the benefit of the press. It is about time he was called to account for it. My recollection of his comments is that he said:

'Members would have heard reports in the central Australian community, particularly around Alice Springs, that accusations were made on the radio CAAMA signal that Peter Severin of Curtin Springs has been selling poisoned meat to Aboriginals in central Australia'.

He went on to say that he believed that, having received these documents - and I had a hand on my heart at that stage - he had a duty to forward them to the tribunal so they could be checked. He said:

'If they are true, and if there are any people in the Northern Territory transmitting, by means of any form of public medium,

accusations that people in the Territory are poisoning people or whatever, they ought to be investigated'.

Members: Hear, hear!

Mr BELL: Mr Deputy Speaker, unlike government members in this Assembly, the Australian Broadcasting Tribunal was not so enthusiastic. For a start, the broadcasting tribunal said it was not interested. Secondly, when the true story came out, the Chief Minister went awfully quiet about those extraordinary allegations. In fact, the Central Australian Aboriginal Media Association had nothing whatsoever to do with it. As far as I am concerned, the Chief Minister owes it an apology.

Mr DALE (Wanguri): Mr Deputy Speaker, next Saturday is 29 March, the first day of the Victorian Football League 1986 football season. I was absolutely stunned when, in last night's NT News, I read an article that was headed, 'Footie Fans Miss Out':

'The Territory football fans looking forward to a season of live telecasts of the VFL Match of the Day, think again. Telecasts of the football, which starts on Saturday, will not begin until 3 pm. This is because of a reduction in the number of hours of available coverage for telecast in Darwin. Channel 8 has announced it will install microwave links to gain access to AUSSAT, but this will not come into effect until after October'.

That is great news, because the finals happen to be in September. The season will be over and, once again, the citizens of the Northern Territory - and in this case, particularly the citizens of Darwin - will be second-class citizens.

I contacted the management of NTD Channel 8. It is simply a commercial decision on its part. The hook-up came from Mt Isa last year. Mt Isa has decided to drop off the telecast and only take the game from half time. Now the link-up must come from Townsville, and there is double the cost. I am led to believe that about \$1000 per week is the figure. For that sort of commercial decision, the people of Darwin will miss out on a much-looked-forward-to coverage of the best football code in Australia.

Motion agreed to; the Assembly adjourned.

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