

## PART II

### THE QUESTION PAPER

An index to questions appears at the end of Part II.

Numerical references are to Question Paper page numbers.

An asterisk preceding an entry in the index indicates that an answer has not yet been received.

**23 February 1988**

**24. Helicopter Charters - Minister for Tourism**

Mr SMITH to MINISTER for TOURISM

1. What is the total cost of helicopter charters undertaken by the Minister for Tourism in 1987.
2. What was the take-off point and the destination for each journey.
3. Who were the passengers, if any, on each of these trips.

**20 February 1990**

**114. Liquor Licence Applications**

Mr EDE to MINISTER for RACING and GAMING

1. For each year from 1985 to 1988 how many applications for new liquor licences have been -
  - (a) approved; and
  - (b) rejected,by the Liquor Commission.
2. For each year from 1985 to 1988 how many applications for renewals of liquor licences have been rejected by the Liquor Commission.
3. For each year from 1985 to 1988, how many applications to have liquor licence conditions changed to provide for takeaway sales have been -
  - (a) approved; and
  - (b) rejected,by the Liquor Commission.
4. For each year 1985 to 1988 how many applications for -
  - (a) new;
  - (b) renewal; and
  - (c) changes,to licence conditions were opposed by commercial or community interests.
5. Of the opposed proposals, how many were ultimately granted.

**115. Publicly-Funded Consultancies**

Mr SMITH to CHIEF MINISTER

1. How many consultancies were engaged and paid for out of public funds within your portfolio areas for the financial year 1988-89.
2. What was the total cost of those consultancies.
3. How many consultancies have been engaged at public expense within your portfolio areas for the current financial year.
4. What is the total cost so far, and the projected costs at the end of this financial year of those consultancies.

**116. Publicly-Funded Consultancies**

Mr SMITH to MINISTER for PRIMARY INDUSTRY and FISHERIES

1. How many consultancies were engaged and paid for out of public funds within your portfolio areas for the financial year 1988-89.
2. What was the total cost of those consultancies.
3. How many consultancies have been engaged at public expense within your portfolio areas for the current financial year.
4. What is the total cost so far, and the projected costs at the end of this financial year of those consultancies.

**117. Publicly-Funded Consultancies**

Mr SMITH to MINISTER for EDUCATION

1. How many consultancies were engaged and paid for out of public funds within your portfolio areas for the financial year 1988-89.
2. What was the total cost of those consultancies.
3. How many consultancies have been engaged at public expense within your portfolio areas for the current financial year.
4. What is the total cost so far, and the projected costs at the end of this financial year of those consultancies.

**118. Publicly-Funded Consultancies**

Mr SMITH to MINISTER for TOURISM

1. How many consultancies were engaged and paid for out of public funds within your portfolio areas for the financial year 1988-89.

2. What was the total cost of those consultancies.
3. How many consultancies have been engaged at public expense within your portfolio areas for the current financial year.
4. What is the total cost so far, and the projected costs at the end of this financial year of those consultancies.

**119. Publicly-Funded Consultancies**

Mr SMITH to MINISTER for TRANSPORT and WORKS

1. How many consultancies were engaged and paid for out of public funds within your portfolio areas for the financial year 1988-89.
2. What was the total cost of those consultancies.
3. How many consultancies have been engaged at public expense within your portfolio areas for the current financial year.
4. What is the total cost so far, and the projected costs at the end of this financial year of those consultancies.

**120. Publicly-Funded Consultancies**

Mr SMITH to MINISTER for LABOUR, ADMINISTRATIVE SERVICES and LOCAL GOVERNMENT

1. How many consultancies were engaged and paid for out of public funds within your portfolio areas for the financial year 1988-89.
2. What was the total cost of those consultancies.
3. How many consultancies have been engaged at public expense within your portfolio areas for the current financial year.
4. What is the total cost so far, and the projected costs at the end of this financial year of those consultancies.

**121. Publicly-Funded Consultancies**

Mr SMITH to MINISTER for HEALTH and COMMUNITY SERVICES

1. How many consultancies were engaged and paid for out of public funds within your portfolio areas for the financial year 1988-89.
2. What was the total cost of those consultancies.
3. How many consultancies have been engaged at public expense within your portfolio areas for the current financial year.
4. What is the total cost so far, and the projected costs at the end of this financial year of those consultancies.

**122. Publicly-Funded Consultancies**

Mr SMITH to ATTORNEY-GENERAL

1. How many consultancies were engaged and paid for out of public funds within your portfolio areas for the financial year 1988-89.
2. What was the total cost of those consultancies.
3. How many consultancies have been engaged at public expense within your portfolio areas for the current financial year.
4. What is the total cost so far, and the projected costs at the end of this financial year of those consultancies.

**123. Publicly-Funded Consultancies**

Mr SMITH to DEPUTY CHIEF MINISTER

1. How many consultancies were engaged and paid for out of public funds within your portfolio areas for the financial year 1988-89.
2. What was the total cost of those consultancies.
3. How many consultancies have been engaged at public expense within your portfolio areas for the current financial year.
4. What is the total cost so far, and the projected costs at the end of this financial year of those consultancies.

**1 May 1990**

**127. Tourist Commission's Advertising Budget**

Mr BELL to MINISTER for TOURISM

1. What was the Tourist Commission's budget for -
  - (a) television advertising;
  - (b) print advertising;
  - (c) international marketing; and
  - (d) trade shows, during -
    - (i) 1987-88;
    - (ii) 1988-89; and
    - (iii) 1989-90.
2. Which advertising agency(ies) is/are retained or have been retained.
3. On what basis is/are the agency(ies) chosen.

4. Is there a tendering process.
5. If there is no tendering process, why not.
6. What is the nature of the tendering process.
7. Are tender documents public.
8. If there is a tendering process and that tender documents are prepared, is the amount of air time thus prescribed.
9. What amount of air time was prescribed during each of the years listed above.
10. If air time was not prescribed during these years, why not.
11. What was the value of that air time.

**128. Registration of Aboriginal Health Workers**

Mr BELL to MINISTER for HEALTH and COMMUNITY SERVICES

With reference to your answer to Written Question No.102, relating to Aboriginal Health Workers employed in certain Aboriginal communities, how many of those health workers were -

- (a) registered under the Health Practitioners and Allied Professionals Registration Act; and
- (b) not registered under that act.

16 May 1989

87. **BTEC Payments to Mr Dunbar**

Mr EDE to MINISTER for PRIMARY INDUSTRY and FISHERIES

In the 'Letters to the Editor' section of the Sunday Territorian dated 23 April 1989 you stated that Mr B. Dunbar 'has received more than \$500 000 of BTEC funds to assist him in fulfilling the scope of his agreed program, as well as \$130 000 in low-interest BTEC loans'.

What were the -

- (a) various purposes under which these amounts were provided;
- (b) exact amounts involved;
- (c) works required from Mr Dunbar in respect of each of (a) and (b) above;
- (d) full details of the extent of the works carried out in respect of each of the above by Mr Dunbar as at 23 April 1989; and
- (e) details of outstanding works or moneys on behalf of Mr Dunbar or the Northern Territory government.

ANSWER

The letter referred to by the honourable member was written in the context that Mr Dunbar had benefited from assistance available under BTEC and that, at that time, he had not met his obligations under the campaign. Indicative figures were quoted to illustrate a point, in response to certain allegations made against me by Mr Dunbar.

The fine detail of any assistance provided to Mr Dunbar is a confidential matter, between the government and Mr Dunbar.

I would make the point that since this issue was first raised Mr Dunbar has entered into a legal agreement relating to the BTEC program and is meeting his obligations under that agreement.

22 August 1989

90. **Loans Converted to Grants**

Mr SMITH to CHIEF MINISTER

Which organisations have, in the past 12 months, had loans from the Northern Territory government changed to grants.

In each case, what was the amount.

ANSWERS TO WRITTEN QUESTIONS

ANSWER

The following loans have been converted to grants -

Anti-Cancer Foundation	\$ 10 000
King Cobra Rod & Custom Club	\$ 235 000
Cyprus Community of the NT	\$ 100 000
Darwin Rugby League	\$ 8 528
Pioneer Football Club	\$ 30 800
NT Riders and Drivers Association	\$ 560 796 + interest.

20 February 1990

109. **Power and Water Consumption  
Communities in MacDonnell Electorate**

Mr BELL to MINISTER for MINES and ENERGY

1. How much -

(a) power; and

(b) water,

was consumed from 1 October 1987 to 30 June 1988 in the following communities -

Areyonga	Atitjere
Docker River	Finke
Hermannsburg	Ikuntji
Imanpa	Ipolera
Iwupataka	Kintore
Maryvale	Mt Liebig
Papunya	Santa Teresa
Wallace Rock Hole	Yulara.

2. Which authorities on these communities were charged.

3. How much did each of these pay.

4 How much, if any, was deducted from other government grants to those organisations in lieu of payment.

ANSWER

1. The following quantities of power and water were sent out/produced for the period 1 October 1987 to 10 June 1988 -

<u>Community</u>	<u>Generated (kWh)</u>	<u>Water Produced (kL)</u>
Areyonga	400 448	60 000
Docker River	338 944	62 000
Hermannsburg	788 966	100 000
Imanpa	Not Operational	20 000
Iwupataka	No Station	14 000
Maryvale	No Station	15 000
Papunya	833 038	72 600
Wallace Rockhole	75 272	21 000



## ANSWERS TO WRITTEN QUESTIONS

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Atitjere	No Station	30 000
Finke	252 219	44 300
Ikuntji	173 460	18 000
Ipolera	No Station	Not metered during period
Kintore	373 158	33 000
Mt Liebig	No Station	Not metered during period
Santa Teresa	828 800	108 600
Yulara	10 575 300	Not available. Records destroyed in 1988 fire.

Water production has been rounded to nearest 100 kL and it should be noted that production in most cases is likely higher due to vandalism of meters.

- For electricity, charges were levied to government departments and houses occupied by government employees, statutory authorities, and community council facilities. For water and sewerage, charges were levied to government departments and houses occupied by government employees, and statutory authorities. All charges are at normal gazetted tariffs.
- The authority is not at liberty to disclose billing information about specific customers.
- Nil.

**113.**

### **Mr L. Williams - Settlement**

Mr BELL to MINISTER for LANDS and HOUSING

From which budgetary allocations was an out-of-court settlement paid to Mr Les Williams, Assistant Secretary, Department of Lands and Housing.

ANSWER

An Instrument of Retirement for Mr Leslie Williams was issued by the Public Service Commissioner on 7 September 1988.

The settlement was paid out of the Department of Lands and Housing, Salaries and Allowances budget allocation within the Corporate Management Activity.

**124.**

### **Perpetual Leasehold Pastoral Leases**

Mr EDE to MINISTER for LANDS and HOUSING

- What are the names and respective areas of pastoral leases converted to perpetual leasehold since legislation was introduced.

ANSWERS TO WRITTEN QUESTIONS

2. Which of the above properties had recommendations by the Director of Conservation under section 48A(1) of the Crown Lands Act recommending the reservation of areas for public interest.
3. Which of these properties had reservations of part of the lands for the public interest advised under section 48(5) of the Crown Lands Act.
4. What was the size of each of the reservations.
5. Since 1983, how many lessees of pastoral properties have had notices served under section 24A(1) of the Crown Lands Act and how many of these notices have resulted in forfeiture under subsection (4) of section 24(a) of that act.

ANSWER

1. The names and areas of pastoral leases converted to perpetual leasehold, as at 31 January 1990, since the introduction of legislation are -

<u>Names</u>	<u>Areas (km<sup>2</sup>)</u>	<u>Names</u>	<u>Areas (km<sup>2</sup>)</u>
Burrumurra	2205	Yambah	2315
Undoolya	1473	Alexandria	8391
Alroy Downs	4332	West Ranken	2852
Dalmore Downs	4776	East Ranken	1430
Jervois	2750	Soudan	2244
Tanami Downs	4206	Adder Block	1199
Owen Springs	3646	Ooratippra	4190
Deep Well	1640	Austral Downs	2009
Mt Keppler	270	Brunette Downs	12254
Riveren	1855	Avon Downs	3939
Umbeara	3444	Rockhampton Downs	5085
Wave Hill	5493	Banka Banka	3315
Cattle Creek	7085	Brunchilly	3235
Mount Wedge	3230	Phillip Creek	3756
Mt Riddock	2503	Newcastle Waters	3409
Huckitta	1830	Powell Creek	4195
Helen Springs	5062	Tandyidgee	2749
Lake Nash	8487	Georgina Downs	3477
Neutral Junction	4632	Bond Springs	2595
Love Creek	3670	Benmara	4511
Elkedra	5446	Rocklands	3594
Hamilton Downs	1595	Atartinga	2235
Lucy Creek	4057	Ringwood	2280
Tipperary	2098	Rosewood	2770
Elizabeth Downs	2055	Narwietooma	2725
Litchfield	1470	Singleton	2949
Marqua	4410	Hodgon River	1110
Tarlton	3034	Balbarini	1460
Orange Creek	2377	Camfield	2772

Total

198 176

2. Of the properties listed in response to part 1 of the question, the following had recommendations by the Director of Conservation under section 48A(1) of the Crown Lands Act -

Owen Springs  
Mt Riddock  
Huckitta  
Hamilton Downs  
Tipperary  
Litchfield  
Orange Creek  
Narwietooma  
Singleton  
Camfield

3. Of the properties listed in response to part 2 of the question, the following had areas excised at time of conversion -

Huckitta  
Hamilton Downs  
Tipperary  
Litchfield  
Orange Creek

4. The size of each area taken out at conversion is as follows -

Huckitta	-	190 km <sup>2</sup> approximately
Hamilton Downs	-	100 km <sup>2</sup> approximately
Tipperary	-	470 km <sup>2</sup> approximately
Litchfield	-	134 km <sup>2</sup> approximately
Orange Creek	-	25 km <sup>2</sup> approximately

5. Since 1983, 44 notices have been served on lessees of pastoral properties under section 24A(1) of the Crown Lands Act.

None of these notices have yet resulted in forfeiture under subsection (4) of section 24A of the Crown Lands Act.

However, one forfeiture action is in process as a result of default action commenced under section 24A(1).

## 125. Northern Territory Supreme Court Appeals

Mr BELL to ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Against which verdicts of the Northern Territory Supreme Court did the Crown appeal in -

- (a) 1987;  
(b) 1988; and  
(c) 1989.

ANSWER

Criminal Appeals

- |     |      |                                                                                  |     |
|-----|------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----|
| (a) | 1987 | R v Ireland<br>R v Anzac<br>R v Allison<br>R v Scanlon<br>R v Hogon<br>R v Towns | = 6 |
| (b) | 1988 | R v Lintern                                                                      | = 1 |
| (c) | 1989 | R v Jabaltjari                                                                   | = 1 |

Civil Appeals

- |     |      |                                                                                                                                                         |       |
|-----|------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------|
| (a) | 1987 | NT of Australia v Skywest Airlines<br>Secretary Department of the Chief<br>Minister & Public Service Commissioner<br>for NT & Nicholas Dondas v Boswell | = 2   |
| (b) | 1988 |                                                                                                                                                         | = Nil |
| (c) | 1989 | Commissioner of Taxes v Liveris                                                                                                                         | = 1   |

**1 May 1990**

**126. Funding of Electricity Supplies in  
1989-90 Budget**

Mr BELL to MINISTER for MINES and ENERGY

In respect of the Minister's letter of 19 January 1990 regarding the electricity supply to Mt Liebig -

- (a) which communities or projects were given 'the priority of more urgent community needs within confines of funds available'; and
- (b) which other communities or projects were considered by Cabinet in respect of the provision of electricity supplies but were not given priority.

ANSWER

1. SOUTHERN REGION

- (a) Power station and reticulation system construction was approved in 1988-89 budget to 6 communities being -
  - . Maryvale (Titjikala)
  - . Nyirripi
  - . Napperby (Laramba)
  - . Alcoota (Engawala)
  - . Stirling (Willowra)
  - . Ammaroo (Ampalatwatja)

These stations were all commissioned during the current financial year.

Total Project cost of \$1 425 075.

In addition the following augmentation works were approved in 1989-90 to existing community power stations to ensure appropriate level of service reliability -

- . Willowra
- . Areyonga
- . Haasts Bluff (Ikuntji)
- . Santa Teresa (Lytyentye Purte)

Total Project cost of \$487 000.

(b) Other communities considered for electricity supply or major projects but unfunded in 1989-90 were -

- . Mt Liebig - power generation and distribution -  
value \$450 000
- . Finke (Aputula) - replace existing power station -  
value \$400 000
- . Docker River (Kaltukatjara) - generation  
augmentation -  
value \$140 000
- . Hermannsburg (Ntarria) - generation augmentation -  
value \$250 000

## 2. TENNANT CREEK REGION

(a) Power station and reticulation construction was approved in 1989-90 to 1 community being -

- . Canteen Creek (Orwaitilla)

Total Budget Provision \$150 000

This installation will not be commissioned until the 1990-91 financial year.

(b) Another community considered for electricity supply or major project but unfunded in 1989-90 was -

- . Lake Nash (Alpurrurrulam) - Sewerage System

Total Budget Provision \$430 000

Allegations Relating to Police Corruption

Mr SMITH to CHIEF MINISTER

I preface my question by pointing out to the Chief Minister a fact that somebody else in this Territory has been able to ignore: at present, a storm of corruption allegations is gathering over the Northern Territory. I point out to the Chief Minister that it has the force to blow away the reputations and the integrity of both innocent and, if there are any, guilty people, and that the half measures taken so far have not reduced but have increased the potential for damage to individuals and institutions. I give 2 examples. Last night, the most senior and one of the most respected police officers in Australia, let alone the Territory, found his name on the line. Last night, one of the most senior members of the Country Liberal Party found his name on the line as well. In that context, I ask the Chief Minister if he will do his duty and establish a formal and open judicial inquiry so that the allegations that are circulating can be put to a public and open test?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, I am pleased to respond to the Leader of the Opposition on this matter and I seek his indulgence, as we gave to his question, and commence with a brief preamble. Firstly, I would like to address the question of whether or not the Territory fits the pattern which existed in Queensland when a Royal Commission was held there. The Leader of the Opposition has made a number of references in the media to the situation in the Territory being very much like that in Queensland. That is not the case. However, it is certainly relevant to the points that he is raising here today. The point that he is making is that, in his view, a full and open public inquiry, which is the term being used, would be a more sensible course of action in the interests of everyone concerned than the course that the government has proposed in regard to allegations that have been made.

The chorus of calls by some sections of the media and some political figures for a wide-ranging public inquiry into police corruption in the Northern Territory reflects poorly on those making the calls. These are little better than opportunistic attempts to use the Queensland post-Fitzgerald environment for selfish political objectives rather than a genuine effort to promote the interests of the community at large.

In the statement which I made to this Assembly last August, I pointed out that the Fitzgerald Inquiry was set up in the light of particular circumstances in Queensland and its revelations and ultimate recommendations were generated by those circumstances. I emphasised that it would be a grave mistake to apply those results to the Northern Territory in an unthinking and uncritical way. Other members of this Assembly did not take a contrary view during debate on that statement. In particular, I pointed out that Fitzgerald's central theme was that corruption in Queensland was a consequence of an electoral system which permitted a government to remain in office even when it had lost the support of the majority of constituents and which appeared to permit and protect the improper conduct in public administration, including the administration of law and order. It cannot be said that the Northern Territory fits this mould in any way.

In that same statement last August, I said that the Northern Territory is generally acknowledged to have the best police force in Australia, and I am proud to make that claim again today. Nothing has changed which would alter that view. Those who believe that they shape public opinion, such as

the Leader of the Opposition, need to beware. The greatest disservice that they can do is to erode the high degree of confidence which the community has in our police force merely in order to make cheap political capital or to boost readership or the viewing audience, when the events in question simply do not justify the calls that they make.

It would be useful to reiterate a few points which I made in my statement on the Fitzgerald Inquiry. In the Northern Territory, we do not have a huge, inappropriately-structured police force. Our police force comprises some 700 officers as compared to the Queensland force of about 5300. Clearly, it is much easier for responsible officers to be aware of what is going on in a force the size of ours. It is also particularly significant that we have already a force which is structured and organised in a way that is similar to that recommended by Fitzgerald for Queensland. Our force operates under a geographically-based regional system. We have taken significant steps to implement a community-based policing strategy and a number of issues relating to the civilianisation of the force are under discussion. We give a very high priority to recruitment and training issues within the police force. The most up-to-date techniques are used. A great deal of attention is given to the screening of new recruits and professionally-designed aptitude and psychological testing is used in recruitment and selection processes. We have education-based induction and in-service programs, and encouragement is given to members of the force seeking relevant tertiary qualifications or requiring supervisory or management development. We have a merit-based promotion system in line with the recommendations made by Fitzgerald in Queensland. Similarly, our policy in relation to transfers of police is in line with Fitzgerald's recommendations.

We do not have entrenched crime in the Northern Territory, hidden within a large population. It is significant that our population is a mere 156 000-odd as compared with Queensland's population of 2.8 million. The social framework is fundamentally different. In Queensland, prostitution is illegal, yet it was permitted and practised openly by criminal elements. Prostitution is not illegal in the Northern Territory. The existing joint investigative procedures which are in place between the Ombudsman and the Commissioner of Police offer very satisfactory and objective testing of internal investigations by the police force and are acknowledged as the best Ombudsman police arrangements within Australia.

I could go on, Mr Speaker, but I think the point has been amply demonstrated. The structure of the Northern Territory Police Force and the various operational and administrative procedures which are in place guarantee an effective, responsible police force. There is absolutely nothing in the recent allegations which casts any doubt on the suitability and adequacy of the arrangements or on the integrity and standing of the Northern Territory Police Force as a whole.

Circumstances do arise when internal police investigations of individual police need to be carried out. We have securely in place an effective and proven system for such investigations. Most recently, the government decided to introduce the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions along the lines of those in most other jurisdictions in Australia. This further strengthens the general area of law and order and establishes an independent and adequately resourced unit to undertake such action by way of review and prosecution as it sees fit.

I believe the police force is to be commended for the way in which it is dealing with the various matters which have been the subject of recent

comment. Certainly, the force has the total support and the confidence of the Northern Territory government because it deserves that support. I urge the Leader of the Opposition to take the right and proper course on this matter and to accept the offer of a full briefing made by the Commissioner of Police. His call for a Fitzgerald-type inquiry is shabby grandstanding which does him no credit. He has used the argument that he is trying to protect rank and file, honest police officers, and indeed that is exactly what I am doing.

Mr Smith: Sure.

Mr PERRON: I am trying to protect the high-standing and reputation of our police force. That will not be done by the imposition of an atmosphere that suggests the entire 700 members of our police force ought to be the subject of investigation. There is no allegation against those people.

What I ask the Leader of the Opposition to do - and, as Leader of the Opposition, he has a responsibility to do it - is to accept the briefing that has been offered to him by the Commissioner of Police. He has a responsibility to look into the matters which are the subject of the allegations in order to decide for himself whether our proposal to engage Mr Mulholland is appropriate. I am happy to discuss his terms of reference because the Leader of the Opposition is clearly unaware of what they contain and, until such time as he knows what the allegations are, what the police are doing about them and what the Territory government has done by way of a brief for external oversight, he is in no position to say that, irrespective of the facts, he wants a full and open public inquiry. That is an irresponsible course of action.

Mr Smith interjecting.

Mr PERRON: If you do it after you have studied the facts, that is okay. However, your statements today in the media show clearly that you do not understand the brief that has been given to Mr Mulholland.

Mr Smith: Why don't you tell the public of the Northern Territory what it is?

Mr PERRON: Do you want me to go on and give the brief?

Mr Smith: Sure.

Mr PERRON: Mr Speaker, with the concurrence of the Assembly, I would be pleased to talk about the matter of Mr Mulholland's brief.

Mrs Padgham-Purich: Why don't you make a statement?

Mr PERRON: I cannot do that at the moment. It is question time.

Mr Speaker, I am pleased that the Leader of the Opposition wants to know the details of Mr Mulholland's commission and I will provide them to him. However, the amazing thing is that he has been nailing his colours to the wall and grandstanding for about 4 days with his calls for an open public inquiry.

Mr Smith: Yes. The public wants to know.

Mr PERRON: He does not really know what has been done and he should surely start from a position of knowledge.



Mr Smith: Yes. So should the public of the Northern Territory.

Mr PERRON: Even worse, he has refused to accept the information that is being offered to him on the basis that he should not know any more than the rest of the public knows. Mr Speaker, really he should consider his position as Leader of the Opposition, which is an important position in the administrative and governmental structure of this country.

Mr Smith: Yes. It is so important that you offered me a briefing after you had made the whole thing public. That is really statesman-like.

Mr PERRON: Mr Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition has said that he wants a full and open public inquiry to 'get to the bottom of these matters'. Those are his words. Not only does he not know what the matters are, he does not want to find out. If ever there was a clear demonstration that his interest in headlines is really greater than his interest in justice, then I am sure that is it. It is true. Although he admitted that he did not know what Mr Mulholland's brief was and refused to be told, the Leader of the Opposition assumed that the brief was, and I quote him from a recent press release ...

Mr Smith: From your press release.

Mr PERRON: A quote from a radio item.

Mr Smith: Your press release tells us what the brief was.

Mr PERRON: 'The brief was simply to analyse the files as they exist at present and to see if the investigations that have been done so far have been appropriate'. He is very wrong if he assumes that that is what the brief is.

Why did the Leader of the Opposition leap into print after rejecting the offer of a full briefing? I guess we can each draw our own conclusions about that but, perhaps after I read Mr Mulholland's terms of reference, which I have right here, and the Leader of the Opposition has had a chance to ponder them, he might rethink his refusal to accept a briefing and base his judgment on whether or not a public inquiry is called for on the facts, not on assumptions.

Mr Mulholland has been briefed to advise in relation to the manner, direction and effectiveness of investigations by Northern Territory police in relation to:

- (a) the investigation and prosecution of certain former police officers charged with drug-related offences;
- (b) the investigation of a complaint concerning possible criminal offences against a certain police officer by another officer; and
- (c) the investigation of an alleged incident involving a police officer and a member of the public.

Mr Mulholland has been further briefed that, if he considers that any advice that he may give in relation to this matter has not been accepted for good or apparent reasons, or if he is satisfied that there has been any impropriety in regard to the handling of this matter by either the Police Commissioner or police officers, or any government minister, including the

Chief Minister and Attorney-General, or the Secretary of the Department of Law, he is authorised to make public his concerns.

Mr Speaker, I table a copy of that for distribution to honourable members who may care to have it for their reference. All those who have commented on this matter to date - the member for Barkly, the Leader of the Opposition and others - have indicated complete support for and confidence in Mr Mulholland QC from Queensland and, indeed, the Leader of the Opposition said that the Premier of Queensland supports Mr Mulholland as a man totally beyond reproach. We have a situation where he has been given a very wide brief, not simply to examine investigations as they are at present but also to oversight those investigations. He can seek that the police follow up other leads, other avenues, talk to other people or whatever. Under the terms of reference which I have indicated, if he is dissatisfied or he believes there might be any person obstructing the course of investigations, or that any authority from the Chief Minister down is in any way interfering or perhaps involved in these matters, he has complete authority to make his concerns public.

I give an undertaking to the Assembly that the final report of Mr Mulholland will be made public. The only material which will be withheld will be that which could prejudice the fair trial of any person or information which is highly sensitive criminal intelligence which relates to ongoing serious police investigations. However, all material provided by Mr Mulholland, including that qualified material that I just mentioned, will be made available to the Leader of the Opposition. Nothing will be withheld. Full briefings will be made available to the Leader of the Opposition as Mr Mulholland's work progresses.

Mr Smith: By whom?

Mr PERRON: I give a commitment that the government will implement any recommendations made by Mr Mulholland whatever they may be. If he advises that a course of action cannot be pursued as a result of any party having inadequate powers, I give an undertaking to the Assembly that I will address that matter in an appropriate way. Of course, that matter will be public at the time and, therefore, there will be no possibility of a cover-up.

I conclude my comments about the Leader of the Opposition's role by again urging him to take a responsible attitude. In a section of his report, entitled 'Political Neutrality', Mr Fitzgerald commented on the need to maintain public confidence. Referring to the Queensland situation, he said: 'Encouraging the provision of information to the leaders of the opposition parties was a part of the vital maintenance of independence and integrity'.

Mr Smith: That is right. Mr Fitzgerald had a full and open inquiry, established by parliament.

Mr PERRON: Mr Speaker, Mr Fitzgerald was talking about the provision of information to opposition parties by the government, information which was not necessarily available in the public arena.

Mr Smith: I would be quite happy if Mr Mulholland was given the same terms of reference.

Mr PERRON: If the Leader of the Opposition is saying that he intends to do his job without making available to himself information which is not generally available to the public, he is doing the public a great

disservice. He cannot expect to do his job when he has only that information which is available to the broad community. Surely the man can be trusted. Surely he has some integrity!

Mr Smith: It is not a private club that we are operating in the Northern Territory. It is not you and I operating a private club. There are people in the community who want to know what is going on.

Mr PERRON: Mr Speaker, I look forward to the Leader of the Opposition's response to my appeal to him. In the light of the information that he now has on Mr Mulholland's wide terms of reference and the knowledge that he will be offered briefings during the course of what Mr Mulholland is doing, the Leader of the Opposition should be prepared to accept those briefings. I am not trying to bind him in any way. Obviously, I cannot do so. He can say whatever he likes inside or outside of this House. However, I ask him at least to base his comments on some facts. What possible grounds does he have for not doing that? He should not stand there and say that the only thing the public will be satisfied with is a full and open public inquiry. You do not take such dramatic steps when you are investigating matters which are normally handled routinely by the police in-house. I point out that the Northern Territory Police Force has an excellent record of in-house policing.

#### Official Telephone Taps

Mr BELL to CHIEF MINISTER

I preface my question by drawing to the Chief Minister's attention the stringent requirements on the official tapping of telephones, the framework of federal legislation that operates in that regard and the concomitant Listening Devices Bill that is before this Assembly at the moment. Have official phone taps been placed on the private telephones of at least 2 journalists investigating corruption allegations?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, I have to confess that I am not familiar at the moment with the procedures of implementing phone taps in the Territory to the extent that it might involve my approval as Minister for Police.

Mr Smith: All we want to know is whether there are any phone taps.

Mr PERRON: Are you talking about federal ...

Mr Speaker, let me say this categorically. I have no information whatsoever, nor have I ever authorised or had sought from me any authorisation that I might have the power to give for the tapping of the phone of any person.

#### Alleged Ministerial Interference in Running of Schools

Mr FIRMIN to MINISTER for EDUCATION

There was an item in the media recently regarding a press release issued by Mr Col Young, the General Secretary of the Northern Territory Teachers Federation, accusing the minister of interference in the normal running of schools. Is there any truth in Mr Young's statement, and is the minister guilty of interference in the running of schools?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, I apologise to honourable members for having, once again, to raise the subject of the performance of the General Secretary of the Northern Territory Teachers Federation, Col Young. Unfortunately, he has transgressed once again and has misinformed the public and teachers on an issue relating to the staffing of schools. It is a very serious matter, and the record needs to be corrected.

On Friday 27 April, the General Secretary of the Teachers Federation issued a media release stating that the minister had interfered in the running of the schools at 'the whim of a powerful individual'. Mr Young referred to a situation where the wife of a Newcastle Waters Station manager had demanded, in his words, of myself as Minister for Education, that a teacher be placed at the Newcastle Waters School while the regular teacher from that school was attending a conference in Tennant Creek. I make it quite clear to honourable members that I had given no direction whatsoever in relation to this particular matter. In fact, I did not become aware of the situation until 27 April. Sally Warriner, whom I know, wrote a letter to me. That was faxed to my office and, for honourable members' information, I will table the transmission report in relation to that particular letter because there was only the cover sheet. It has the times, the number of pages sent and whom it went to. There was no instruction from my office or from me whatsoever in relation to the positioning of a teacher at Newcastle Waters. Once again, the General Secretary of the Teachers Federation has misinformed the public totally.

In relation to the so-called demands that were made by Sally Warriner of me, I will read the letter for the record and so that the public listening can understand what we are talking about. I quote the letter:

Dear Tom,

We are again in the situation here at Newcastle Waters where our school is closing down for 2 days this week while our teacher attends a head teachers' conference. I refer to your letter addressed to our P and C, dated 22 January, where you state that it is not possible for the aide to take charge of the school in the absence of the teacher. You suggest that the Elliott School relief teacher may be able to relieve at Newcastle Waters if necessary. Unfortunately, there is usually not a relief teacher available in Elliott. However, the Elliott School has 1 head, 5 teachers and 6 teacher aides with a better teacher/aide to student ratio than ours. We feel that, rather than allowing our school to close down on these not infrequent occasions, we may warrant a relief teacher from the Elliott School who are in the position where their aides can and do take charge of a classroom and the children do not miss valuable school time. I would appreciate your consideration of this matter.

Regards,  
Sally Warriner.

So much for the demands of a person in relation to a concern that has been raised on the matter of the school.

Mr Young added that no other teachers from small schools who attended the conference were replaced but, in contrast to Newcastle Waters, the other teachers came from Aboriginal schools. Again, he is trying to introduce a

racial aspect and suggest that we are looking after only the interests of non-Aboriginal people. That is a load of nonsense, and he knows it. Assistant teachers are different from teacher aides and he knows that. Most of the other schools do have assistant teachers to take over the classroom when the teacher is away for some reason.

I made it very clear at the last sittings of the Assembly that I would not interfere in respect of the staffing of schools. Procedures are in place for that. The action of Col Young in saying that the minister 'has been found out' and that the minister has done this, when the minister had not even been notified personally about it, is a disgrace. His action has caused a great deal of concern in the Newcastle Waters community. He had them believing that I had directed the Regional Superintendent to take the action that he took. I deny that categorically. Naturally, the teacher was upset. Anyone would be upset if the minister was seen to be interfering in this very sensitive area of the staffing of schools. I remind all those people involved that anyone has a right, where they have a concern about the education of their children, to contact my office or indeed to contact any member of this Legislative Assembly on those particular matters.

Mr Speaker, I table the letter. The transmission report of that letter went from my office to the Regional Superintendent for consideration. No direction was given by myself or my staff in relation to the action to be taken. Once again, I apologise for having to raise the issue of Col Young, but again he has transgressed in a matter of very grave concern to the people of the Northern Territory.

#### Neighbourhood Watch Scheme for Rural Areas

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH to CHIEF MINISTER

In view of the Chief Minister's stated views that he and his government support law and order in the Northern Territory community, why has he not considered adequate budgetary provisions to the police force to make more positions available to administer an extension of Neighbourhood Watch to the rural areas? I refer in particular to the Darwin rural area where I have tried to start such a scheme but, to the detriment of that community, cannot proceed much further because of lack of resources allowing adequate police staffing and equipment for this scheme.

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, I thought the preamble to the honourable member's question was a little barbed. That is a little uncharacteristic of the member for Koolpinyah. However, in regard to the expansion of the Neighbourhood Watch Scheme ...

Mrs Padgham-Purich: I have not joined the CLP, don't forget.

Mr PERRON: I see.

The Neighbourhood Watch Scheme is very successful in those areas in which it is operating. It is being implemented progressively in various areas throughout the Territory in a careful and planned way in order not to get ahead of resources. I do not think it is simply a matter of redeploying a few more police officers or whatever would be required and saturating the whole of the Northern Territory. The police have a strategy in respect of the expansion of the scheme. Usually, it is expanded from areas where it exists to adjacent areas. However, in a couple of cases, we have jumped a

couple of suburbs and started in another area. We have commenced this scheme in Alice Springs recently.

I am not sure whether the crime statistics as reported would indicate that the rural area of Darwin has the same problem with break-ins and similar criminal activities. I would be surprised if they are at a similar level to those in the suburbs. The people in town live on much smaller blocks than do people in the rural area. However, I do not detract from the honourable member's wish to have a Neighbourhood Watch Scheme in the rural area. I will have a look at her bid in that regard. However, I think that the priority locations to date have certainly been the more densely-populated areas of the Northern Territory.

#### Charges Against Police Officers

Mr EDE to CHIEF MINISTER

I draw the minister's attention to statements made by the Commissioner of Police at his media conference yesterday. The commissioner indicated that it was an accepted practice to allow officers under investigation for illegal activities to resign rather than be pursued and charged. Does the Chief Minister accept that this practice, which does not apply to the community in general, establishes the principle that there is one law for the police and another for the rest of the community?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, I do not accept that that is what it does. I have a couple of notes here that I might read to honourable members in order to put into context the comments the Commissioner of Police made on television. In regard to a police officer whose suitability to remain as a policeman is suspect, there have been occasions where police who may have had charges laid against them have resigned, and a decision taken not to proceed with those charges. I am advised that this is not an unusual practice in police forces elsewhere as well. Indeed, I do not make the allegation, but it may be a practice that happens occasionally in private enterprise where an employer accepts a resignation rather than proceeding against a person for some misdemeanour. The prime concern of the Commissioner of Police, as it should be of every member in this Assembly and the community, is the removal from the police force of any unsatisfactory personnel.

Mr Ede: I thought his primary concern is to uphold the laws of the Northern Territory.

Mr PERRON: Mr Speaker, if honourable members care to listen to the rest of my remarks ...

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The Chief Minister will be heard in silence.

Mr PERRON: Mr Speaker, I am advised that the situation applies only where minor offences are involved and there is a possibility that a conviction will not be secured. It is not a case of people being allowed to get away with anything. In some cases, the option of resignation, which is entirely in the hands of the police officer, could be considered at times to be a harsh penalty compared to prosecution.

Mr Smith: Do you give that option to public servants?

Mr PERRON: In cases outside the police force, an employee might be fined \$50 for an offence yet go back to work the next day. The cost to a member of the police force who resigns is his career. I point out that resignation is voluntary. It is hardly bringing upon yourself a situation where no penalty applies. I point out to honourable members that, as the community would expect, any officer of the police force who is convicted of an offence of dishonesty or assault of any magnitude is dismissed forthwith. Such people are unsuitable to be members of the police force. Yesterday, in the media, the Commissioner of Police referred to a situation in which the offence is minor and may not be proven in a court. Honourable members will be aware that, on many occasions, charges are dismissed for various reasons or cannot be sustained. If a police officer offers to resign in such circumstances, that resignation is accepted.

Stella Maris Seafarers Centre

Mr SETTER to MINISTER for LANDS and HOUSING

There has been quite a lot of media hype about the Stella Maris Seafarers Centre in recent times. Is it a fact that the government is trying to force Stella Maris to relocate?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, unfortunately, some incorrect information has been conveyed by the media in relation on this matter. The Stella Maris hostel is on land leased from the government. Originally, the land belonged to Australian National Railways and, subsequently, it was passed to the Northern Territory government with a suggestion that it be leased to the Stella Maris organisation. When the lease was given to the Stella Maris organisation, it was made very clear that there was no intention of ever providing ownership of that particular land. There is no suggestion at all that the Stella Maris people should move. There is no suggestion that a tourist development will be built on the site, nor is there any suggestion that members of the CLP will gain any benefit from the relocation of Stella Maris.

These suggestions have been broadcast openly to the community and they are totally untrue. The facts are that Stella Maris was offered a 10-year lease in 1988. It refused that because it wanted permanent ownership of the land. It was told that that particular piece of land was not available, but that other land could be made available on a permanent basis. That offer was accepted and a number of blocks of land were looked at. Originally, one was accepted but, subsequently, that acceptance was withdrawn because of developments occurring around that block, and quite rightly so.

At present, we are looking for other blocks that may be suitable. At the same time, an ongoing 10-year lease is available to Stella Maris. It still has not been accepted. There is nothing on the horizon. The fact is that it is a valuable piece of land, and it was made very clear to Stella Maris at the outset that it would never be able to own it. However, we are encouraging Stella Maris and offering financial assistance, through the Department of Health and Community Services and, I believe, the Department of Industries and Development, in relation to redevelopment on another site.

The inferences that were made and, unfortunately, the uninformed calls from the member for Koolpinyah gave an incorrect picture ...

Mrs Padgham-Purich: They are not uninformed.

Mr MANZIE: Mr Speaker, it was very unfortunate that nobody made contact with me to ask what the situation was.

I would like to assure the community that there is no move to remove Stella Maris, and it is very clear that the executive of Stella Maris is fully aware of the situation and could have explained the facts to its members and to the member for Koolpinyah.

#### Lawlessness in Alice Springs

Mr FLOREANI to ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Last weekend, the Gap Motel in Alice Springs was vandalised, bus windows were smashed, shade cloth was slashed and the damage is estimated to cost \$10 000. This case is typical of many in Alice Springs and other centres throughout the Northern Territory. Has the government any long-term plans to combat the lawlessness which appears to be on the increase and which is affecting the lives of many Alice Springs citizens?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, I do not know what the honourable member is suggesting that we should do. The government must ensure that we have legislation in place, an effective police force and an effective and efficient court system. Apart from that, there is very little that can be done unless the honourable member is suggesting that we form vigilante groups in the community.

A number of other matters are being examined. The honourable member is aware of proposals relating to liquor sales, policing, provision of lighting in various areas around town and the formation of community groups to participate in attempts to solve the problem at the community level. However, there is no magic panacea. To suggest that, somehow or other, the government can conjure something up is indeed foolhardy. I urge the member for Flynn to stop trying to look for magic solutions that can be pulled out of a hat and to involve himself in attempts to find a community solution to this community problem.

#### Sewage Treatment Plant in Alice Springs

Mr POOLE to MINISTER for MINES and ENERGY

About 18 months ago, Cabinet approved the construction of a new sewage treatment plant in Alice Springs and the upgrading of the treatment system generally. Can the minister give us any details about the progress of this major capital works program which is extremely important to the people of Alice Springs?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, I thank the honourable member for his question. It concerns a matter of great importance for the people of Alice Springs. Some honourable members opposite will agree because they have made it a big issue. In fact, in the Flynn by-election, the opposition claimed that upgrading work would never be done and that virtually the entire population would perish as a result of contracting terrible diseases. Some 18 months down the track, construction work has been proceeding quietly and efficiently and those who shamefully sensationalised the issue have egg on their faces.



A capital works expenditure of \$2.7m was approved by Cabinet in September 1988. It was for construction of a new treatment pond at the Commonage, a new pumping station and rising main at the Commonage, rehabilitation of the old lagoons and improved local disposal of effluent. Construction of the rising main has been completed and the contract for construction of the ponds was let early last month to a local contractor, Bernie & Rhodes, for \$1.4m. Completion is expected at the end of the year. Design work on the pump station has just been completed. Tenders are being advertised about now and construction is scheduled to finish by January 1991. Contracts for the supply of associated mechanical equipment and pumps have already been let. A monitoring program is in place to determine the effects of the revised effluent disposal strategy on the soils and ground water of the Commonage. The funds have been allocated and contracts are in place. The work will be completed in the very near future. I assure the people of Alice Springs that the new system will utilise the very latest technology and will be of great benefit to the town.

#### Mulholland Investigation

Mr BAILEY to CHIEF MINISTER

When is Mr Mulholland due to arrive in the Northern Territory, in the course of his investigations?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, I cannot provide that information to the honourable member. I understand that work is certainly proceeding on the information that has been transmitted to Mr Mulholland. I do not know ...

Mr Smith: You do not know whether he is coming or not?

Mr PERRON: I do not know when he is coming to the Northern Territory.

Mr Smith: Is he coming to the Northern Territory?

Mr PERRON: I will let you know.

Mr Speaker, let me obtain some information for the honourable member on the expected modus operandi of Mr Mulholland who, at this stage, as honourable members are probably aware, has other very important matters on his plate. Like other men of his standing, Mr Mullholland does not operate alone either. I understand that work is proceeding on the brief at this time, and has been for some time, and I can provide honourable members with further details in this regard during the course of the day.

#### Freight Charges

Mr PALMER to MINISTER for TRANSPORT and WORKS

What impact are the dramatically-increased truck registration charges that are being proposed elsewhere likely to have on the cost of freight to the Northern Territory?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, certainly the short answer is that they will lead to a dramatic increase in prices to all consumers in the Northern Territory, particularly those who are remote from the source of supply. The impact in

Alice Springs will be a little less but in Darwin, for example, I would forecast that an increase in registration fees of some \$12 000 or \$13 000 per vehicle, as proposed to the federal government, and a foreshadowed increase in fuel tax, will add in the order of 2.5¢ per kilogram to the price of every product that the housewife takes off the shelf. Of course, that will come on top of some extreme charges that we raised in the House last year. For example, the average total cost of freight from Brisbane to Darwin is about \$325 per tonne, or around 33¢ per kilogram, of which already \$121 is made up of taxes and charges. Of course, residents of Nhulunbuy will pay additional freight charges on top of that. Of that one-third in taxes and charges, 92% goes to the federal government through import duty, sales tax on vehicles, sales tax on parts and tyres, stamp duty, fuel tax, company taxes, personal taxes, royalties, crude oil excise, registration fees and, of course, the old hobbyhorse of this federal government, sales tax on freight.

A couple of days ago, in front of Hon Warren Snowdon's office in Darwin, the National Consumer Affairs Advisory Council Chairman, Mr Justice Stein, raised, among other matters, that very same sales tax question. The honourable member for the Northern Territory has had long enough to raise the matter of that most iniquitous taxation - tax on tax - on behalf of all Territorians.

The problem for the Northern Territory is that we rely so heavily on road freight. We do not have the options of downtown Victoria or New South Wales of being able to move freight to and from other areas by rail or regular shipping services. We rely entirely on road transport. To suggest that the road transport industry pays less than its fair share towards road maintenance is nothing but a scam. Of those combined taxes that the federal government receives, amounting to \$121 per tonne - and, just weeks after the election, it is flagging another \$25 per tonne - only 6% goes back into the road network.

Mr Leo interjecting.

Mr FINCH: The member for Nhulunbuy can shake his head about it, but I call on him and on the honourable member for the Northern Territory, in his newly-found influential role as secretary to the Minister for Land Transport, to resist the move from a \$3500 federal registration fee. In the Northern Territory, we deliberately keep registration fees down and, currently, for those same semi-trailers, the fee is about \$900. There is to be a move from \$3500 to \$16 000 a year and an increase in fuel excise which is already 24¢ per litre. We cannot stand any more. I call on honourable members opposite and the new secretary to the Minister for Land Transport to resist such a move and to further review the sales tax on freight as an issue of concern to all Territorians.

#### Elcho Island Shooting

Mr LEO to ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Will a coronial inquiry be conducted on Elcho Island into the recent shooting and killing by police of an Elcho Island resident?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, that is a matter for the Coroner, but I assure the honourable member that there will be a full coronial inquiry.

Elcho Island Shooting

Mr TIPILOURA to CHIEF MINISTER

Many people in the Aboriginal communities are very worried about what has happened on Elcho Island. They are saying that the Tactical Response Group should be better trained to understand how to handle trouble in the communities.

Mr MANZIE: A point of order, Mr Speaker! The fact that there is to be a coronial inquiry into the matters that are being referred to by the member for Arafura really means that comments such as he is ...

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The member for Arafura is able to ask any question he wishes to and it is up to the responding minister to give him that information. There is no point of order.

Mr TIPILOURA: Thank you, Mr Speaker. I will repeat my question.

Many people in the Aboriginal communities are very worried about what has happened on Elcho Island. They are saying that the Tactical Response Group should be better trained to understand how to handle trouble in the communities. Will the Chief Minister ensure that the training of the Tactical Response Group is looked into and that the suggestion by the member for Arnhem and the member for Nhulunbuy, that the coronial inquiry be held on the island, be taken up?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, I undertake to pass on the views expressed by the member for Arafura to the appropriate people.

Charges Against Police Officers

Mr TUXWORTH to CHIEF MINISTER

My question relates to an answer given earlier. Working from the premise that a policeman would be charged only if there were a good probability that the charges would succeed in the first place, can the Chief Minister advise whether charges that have been laid formally against a Northern Territory policeman have been withdrawn subsequently by Crown Law or the police in return for the resignation of the officer so charged? Could the Chief Minister advise how many times such an arrangement could have been entered into and the circumstances of the charges that were involved? I understand it is unlikely that the Chief Minister will have the answer to the latter part of the question at his fingertips, but would he be prepared to provide it later in these sittings?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, the same applies to the former part of the question. I cannot advise the honourable member on either aspect of his question. However, I will seek the necessary information and provide it during the course of these sittings.

Public Servants - Comments by Opposition Leader

Mr SETTER to MINISTER for LABOUR, ADMINISTRATIVE SERVICES and LOCAL GOVERNMENT

On television last week, the Leader of the Opposition said that, if he won government, any public servant with a philosophy different from his own would - I think his words were - 'move on'. That greatly concerns me, Mr Speaker. I know what happened in Queensland and Tasmania when there was a change of government. There was a reshuffle in the public service and so many people lost their jobs that you would not believe it. Can the honourable minister, who has responsibility for the public service, comment on that?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, I must say that I was very shocked to find that, in his words, the Leader of the Opposition had a hit list of public servants who would be ousted if a Labor government took office in the Northern Territory. I think that many public servants would be shocked to know that such a hit list exists. I was further amazed to hear him to say that anyone who was currently in the public service, and who had a philosophy different from his own, would move on. I make it very clear right now that this government has never resorted, and will never resort, to such tactics. It is very clear that, within the public service, there are many people with different philosophical viewpoints. Within my own department, I have many people who are and profess to be Labor supporters. I have never sought from them, nor would I seek from them, their moving on, as the Leader of the Opposition would do. He made it very clear that people would move on when he gets into government.

That is a shameful admission for a parliamentary leader to make, but it is not unusual for Labor governments to act in that way. We have seen it happen within the federal system, where mates have been put into public service and other jobs. I can assure public servants in the Northern Territory that this government will not resort to such tactics and will certainly endeavour always to protect the right of anyone to profess any philosophical viewpoint that he or she wishes to. It is outrageous. I believe it will be condemned by public servants and Territorians generally and I call on all honourable members to reject it also.

United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child

Mr COLLINS to ATTORNEY-GENERAL

In the last sittings, I asked him whether he would bring on debate regarding the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. That did not happen. Is he prepared to give an undertaking to debate that matter, and maybe to send a resolution to Canberra, during these sittings.

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, I will examine that matter and see if I can do that during the course of these sittings.

Commonwealth Grants Commission Funding Proposals

Mr SMITH to CHIEF MINISTER

Mr Speaker, my question relates to today's announcement of funding proposals put forward by the Commonwealth Grants Commission. Like the Chief Minister, I recognise the announcement as being the predicted first phase of extensive negotiations between the Commonwealth and the states and territories over funding arrangements for the next financial year. Obviously, on this side of the House, we intend to do everything we can to protect the Northern Territory's interest. I ask the Chief Minister whether he will provide me with a full briefing by senior Treasury officials to ensure that our efforts in this area are effective.

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, I will be pleased to arrange such a briefing. Also, I will be approaching each of our federal representatives with a view to providing them with information through senior Treasury officers. In fact, work is presently under way to collate briefing information in a suitable form. I am pleased to accept the Leader of the Opposition's offer in this regard because it appears that the Northern Territory will be in a precarious financial position next year if one simply extrapolates the information that we have to hand today on the Grants Commission's findings in the context of the federal government's announcements about its attitude towards the states.

The Northern Territory still finds itself in the difficult situation of having been brought into the states' tax-sharing pool and being under the purview of the Grants Commission and its relativities exercises. This leaves us somewhat out in the cold because the Grants Commission's charter relates to what is called a 'standard budget'. Selected items are assessed. These are all recurrent items which are extracted from state budgets and assessed against each other. Each state's revenue-raising capacity is taken into consideration together with other factors. The commission then brings down a finding that the amount of money in the pool should be distributed among the states and the Territory under a particular formula.

What the Grants Commission cannot look at is where we get into trouble. It cannot look at capital expenditure or some other recurrent expenditures such as, in our situation, the funding for the university. Of course, the states do not fund universities, yet we are at least partially funding the University of the Northern Territory. Those sorts of considerations are totally outside the Grants Commission's field of deliberation. That is not making any criticism of the Grants Commission itself. It is simply not permitted to look at that. It is not permitted to feed it into its black box computer that does these very complicated calculations.

To give an example, the Grants Commission looks at the costs of providing teachers in our education system, the costs of bringing them to the Territory, of training them and of sending them to remote areas. It takes into account historical factors like the turnover of teachers in remote areas, which is very high, and it gives us a factor allowance for those heavy expenditures necessary to provide teachers in our education system which clearly is a much more expensive process than that involved in doing it in New South Wales. However, what the Grants Commission cannot look at is the cost of the facilities that are built for those teachers. It cannot look at the schools. The entire area of capital expenditure is outside the purview of the Grants Commission. We argue constantly with the

Commonwealth that treating the Northern Territory like a state as far the Commonwealth states funding arrangements are concerned is inappropriate. We have always argued that the Territory should have a separate financial arrangement with the Commonwealth as we once had.

Darwin Joinery

Mr SMITH to MINISTER for INDUSTRIES and DEVELOPMENT

I refer the honourable minister to the recent acquisition by the Territory government, through its shelf company Dalloway Pty Ltd, of Darwin Joinery. Can he confirm that the takeover has exposed Territory taxpayers to an \$8.25m liability consisting of the \$2m invested to take over the company, a \$2.5m TIO loan and a \$3.75m ANZ mortgage?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, in order to be precise on the details that the Leader of the Opposition has provided to me this morning, I will answer that question during the course of this morning, if that is acceptable to him.

I take the opportunity to give honourable members an update on the joinery. We are dealing with 2 potential buyers of the joinery at the moment. We can sell up to a controlling interest at any time, and there is a great deal of interest in the sale of that portion of the joinery at present. At that time, we have a moral obligation to sell up to a controlling interest back to the Pastrokos family.

Mr Smith: Until 1992, you will sell it back?

Mr COULTER: Or such other time as it may be convenient for them to do that.

However, there are people who are interested in buying the joinery. That is good because it has saved the joinery, the jobs, the technology and, in particular, the creditors. In fact, yesterday, 80¢ in the dollar was paid to the creditors. They received their first payment. Over \$600 000-worth of credit was involved. This government was concerned that there would be a knock-on effect because already in excess of \$1m has been lost from the Northern Territory economy to companies that have gone into receivership or have simply left the Northern Territory recently.

The government's move in providing assistance to and taking over the Darwin Joinery, through the shelf company Dalloway, has been a success. I am told that last month was a record month in terms of what the company has been able to achieve in sales to the Darwin-based companies Jape Furniture and Japara. 'NT Inc' was hailed as a great success story by the Leader of the Opposition in a full-page newspaper advertisement recently, but the company is in no way Western Australia Incorporated.

Members interjecting.

Mr SPEAKER: Order!

Mr COULTER: Members of the opposition do not want to hear the good news, but I will continue with this success story. Major sales have been achieved in Katherine and Alice Springs. Also, the coffin contract has been a success ...

Mr Smith: Very apt.

Mr COULTER: It is very apt because it is import replacement, and that is exactly what we were trying to effect. Extensive overtime is being worked. Staff are working flat out on weekends at present. Is it any wonder that people are interested in buying into the company? It has been a success story. We were criticised because we took the hard decision. However, within a couple of weeks of restructuring the company, we have achieved record sales. The \$4m-worth of work on State Square is being achieved. Tendering for both the Darwin Airport and the Second Cavalry Unit is well advanced and things are looking good in terms of picking up those contracts. The reasoning behind the government's decision to provide assistance is bearing fruit within weeks of its implementation by retaining that technology, eliminating the need to bring furniture and fittings etc from interstate, and saving the jobs of the 14 apprentices and the 70 employees ...

Mr Smith: What about the criticism that the government has received?

Mr COULTER: Whilst the government was criticised for making that move, and I understand why that happened, this government stands firmly behind the action that it took. Eventually, Northern Territorians will be the winners.

#### Heritage Legislation

Mr FIRMIN to MINISTER for CONSERVATION

What is the present situation with regard to legislation on heritage protection?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, honourable members will recall that, in November last year, I tabled in this Assembly draft heritage legislation for public discussion. That flowed from some 2 years of consultation arising from a discussion paper circulated by my predecessor in the portfolio, the honourable Attorney-General. As a result of tabling that draft bill, there has been an enormously successful process of consultation. We have received a considerable number of submissions from professional and industry bodies, from individuals and societies with particular interest in heritage issues, from local governments and from bodies representing Aboriginal interests. We have had some 45 submissions so far, comprising about 200 pages of critical comment.

Without doubt, many of the comments were quite critical of the draft bill. That is fine. The draft bill has brought out the clear views of organisations in the community which, for some reason, were reticent to put forward specific views in response to the discussion paper. They are now talking very specifically about what they believe should be included in heritage legislation. We are doing an analysis of those public submissions now and proceeding to draft a revised bill which should be finalised soon. Following that, as the next stage in the process of consultation, I propose to hold a workshop with key organisations and interested individuals to further review the draft bill. Whilst this process may have taken some time and may be continuing to take some time, I believe that the process is very worth while because, at the end of the day, we will have very effective legislation to deal with heritage matters in the Northern Territory, and legislation which quite clearly will have the strong support of the broad Northern Territory community.

Darwin Joinery

Mr SMITH to MINISTER for INDUSTRIES and DEVELOPMENT

My question seeks a clarification from the honourable minister. In answer to a previous question, did he say that there were people who were interested in buying the Darwin Joinery - and that would allow the government to retrieve its \$2m at a time when funds are scarce and remove the possibility of another \$5m or \$6m liability - but that the government does not have the flexibility to deal with such people because of an arrangement it has entered into with the previous owner to give him an option some time in 1992? Is that the actual situation?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, we can sell up to a controlling interest in the company at any time.

Mr Ede: That includes the controlling interest?

Mr COULTER: I am answering. It is not a controlling interest. It is up to a controlling interest. Okay?

There is an obligation. We have said to the Pastrokos family that it would have the right of first refusal to buy the company after that ...

Mr Smith: When?

Mr COULTER: At any time.

Mr Smith: Yes, but when is the limit?

Mr COULTER: We believe that, working on the basis of the business plan which has been put together, the company will turn cash-flow positive and be in a very good position by 1992. That is the time when the company is expected to have really turned around and to be going very well.

Mr Smith: If a company wants to buy it tomorrow, you won't sell?

Mr COULTER: No, that is not true. But the first refusal would go to the Pastrokos family. We would go to it and say: 'Do you want to buy it now? We have an offer for it'. If it had the money, the Pastrokos family would have the opportunity to buy into it. If it did not, whatever arrangements that it would want to enter into ...

Mr Smith: Thus, there is no 1992 constraint. You can sell it whenever you can get a buyer?

Mr COULTER: There is a 1992 factor in terms of not having to give a first refusal to the Pastrokos family.

Mr Smith: Come on, answer the question.

Mr COULTER: Mr Speaker, let us have a look at the Labor Party platform and what it would do. This is what its platform says: 'The Australian Labor Party stands for establishment and development of public enterprises based upon federal, state and other forms of social ownership in appropriate sectors of the economy'. I wonder whether that is the social ownership ...



Mr Smith: I will tell you what. We won't be owning joinery factories.

Mr COULTER: That is good. What will you be owning? That is what people in the community want to know.

Mr Smith: It won't be joinery factories or tourist resorts. We will get rid of them!

Mr COULTER: There is much more in the ALP platform which indicates exactly what it will be owning, Mr Speaker. There is a difference between that side of the House and this side of the House. That will become very clear during the next 11 months.

Mr Smith: Yes, very clear.

Mr COULTER: The fact is that, if we had not have moved in relation to the Darwin Joinery, the cost to the Northern Territory and to subcontractors and suppliers would have been enormous. Those people opposite would have sat there wringing their hands and they would have done absolutely nothing to save that enterprise and that investment. They would have sat there and let it fall and crumble. Today, weeks after we moved in to save this organisation, it has turned the corner and is trading very well. That is the difference between that side of the House and this side of this House and it is the choice that Northern Territorians will make this year. They can have the social ownership platform that members opposite stand for or they can judge us on our merits. When the time comes, we will see who is laughing about Darwin Joinery. We will be very proud of the action that this government took.

#### Article in 'Northern Territory Construction'

Mr SETTER to MINISTER for EDUCATION

In the April edition of the Master Builders Association magazine, 'Northern Territory Construction', reference was made to Palmerston College. I understand that some criticism was made in that article. Is the minister aware of this and is he concerned by the comments contained in that magazine?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, I am aware of the comments that have been made and I will be addressing the issue during the course of these sittings. To give members full details would take far too much time during question time. I am reminded repeatedly about the length of answers given to questions.

Can I just say that 2 main arguments were put forward in that article. The first was that Palmerston College had been conceived and executed in haste. I am sure honourable members would realise and acknowledge that that is not the case. In fact, Palmerston College was planned in 1983 when we were looking at the concept of secondary colleges. There is a problem in relation to providing the required number of places in our secondary colleges. Casuarina Secondary College has 1100 students. Darwin High School, a comprehensive high school, has over 1000 students. The government has been planning for a long time to establish a secondary college at Palmerston. The site itself changed at a later date.

The other aspect promoted in this document related to the inclusion of some TAFE elements. It said that it was a threat to the Northern Territory

University's Institute of TAFE. I will address that matter later, but I do not see that as being the case. I will be meeting with the Business Council to discuss a number of issues. I think it was inappropriate to make such comments without contacting my office to find out whether or not the college had been planned for some time. To say that it had been conceived in haste is wrong and needs to be corrected. There has always been a plan for a secondary college in the Palmerston area. It did not eventuate because of the decision to put the university campus at Casuarina. Unfortunately, it has confused that issue. The government needs to plan its institutions. That is done well ahead in order to avoid duplication. I will be addressing the other issues referred to in that article during the course of these sittings.

#### Water Supply at Brunette Downs

Mr TUXWORTH to MINISTER for MINES and ENERGY

The minister would be aware that the community at Brunette Downs has taken its water for consumption over the last 60 or 70 years from the lagoon next to the community. Recently, his department decided that the water was no longer fit for consumption. Could he advise whether the reticulation of the new water supply to the Aboriginal community will be available also to the European community? Could the minister advise the cost of providing the new water supply and reticulation system to the community?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, I am familiar with some of the the circumstances surrounding that water supply. However, I do not have all the details that the honourable member has asked for. I will supply him with that information during the course of these sittings.

On the basis of chemical analysis, the water was deemed unfit for drinking. The decision by PAWA was taken for health reasons. This is not peculiar to Brunette Downs. There are a number of other water supply areas, particularly in the member for Stuart's electorate, which are in a similar condition. We placed desalination plants in some of those areas but these have not been as successful as we had hoped. Some areas simply do not have sufficient water to service the communities. This is a problem, particularly in times of drought or poor wet seasons. The ground water is not replenished and, in effect, we are mining that resource. Such problems are occurring in communities throughout the Territory. PAWA is endeavouring to supply that water wherever possible. It is not easy. I have spoken in this Assembly on many occasions and at some length about some of those problems. I will supply the requested details to the member for Barkly during the course of these sittings.

#### TCHIP Program at Elliott

Mr POOLE to MINISTER for LABOUR, ADMINISTRATIVE SERVICES and LOCAL GOVERNMENT

Last week, the member for Arafura claimed that the minister had done everything in his power to exclude the release of Town Camp Housing and Infrastructure Program funds for town campers at Elliott. Can the minister confirm if indeed this is the case?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, could I say to begin with that the responsibility for Town Camp Housing and Infrastructure Program rests with the Minister for Lands and Housing. I do not have the authority to direct where the Minister for Lands and Housing puts TCHIP funds. However, I certainly support the fact that, in line with government policy, he has directed those funds to the Elliott Community Government Council. I was appalled to hear the words of the shadow spokesman for local government last week. His statements about TCHIP and Elliott indicated to me that he did not know what he was talking about.

TCHIP was established initially by agreement between the Commonwealth and the Northern Territory to provide town camp housing and infrastructure in the major urban centres such as Alice Springs, Tennant Creek, Katherine, Darwin etc. The majority of those funds are Territory funds - \$28m compared to \$12m over a period of years. Consideration was never given to the idea that they would be extended to Elliott and Borroloola until, during last year, the Territory government decided that funds would be sought to pick up the obvious need in those 2 communities. The Minister for Lands and Housing took that request to his federal colleagues and finally obtained approval for Commonwealth support only in December last year. Despite this, the member for Arafura, the shadow spokesman on local government, was saying that it had been available for 2 years and that I have been obstructing its distribution. Obviously, that is false.

The member for Arafura went on to refer to the Gurungu Council as being the local governing body for Elliott, which obviously it is not. The Elliott Community Council is the local governing body in Elliott as the Borroloola Community Government Council is the local governing body in Borroloola. He referred to the Borroloola Community Government Council and Gurungu as though they equated. They do not equate. Gurungu is an association of Aboriginal people established, I might say, with the sole intent of getting hold of TCHIP funds and to distribute or manage those funds within the township of Elliott.

Like many community government councils, one of the functions of the Elliott Community Government Council is its ability to provide housing. It is a body established under Territory law, one of those bodies that the shadow spokesman aspires to control under legislation. However, he does not believe that it has the capacity to do the job in Elliott. Obviously, that is false. If I were to tell the honourable member that the Nguju Town Council did not have that capacity, he would be very angry because he knows that it has that capacity. He knows that the controls on community government councils are such that there is a vastly reduced likelihood of a failure such as that which occurred in Elliott a few years ago when an association controlled by Commonwealth officers was entirely unsupervised and consequently went broke.

I am not prepared to fall over and die when it comes to supporting local government in the Northern Territory, as the member opposite obviously is. I will not fall over and say that local government does not have the capacity. Obviously, the Elliott Community Government Council is the appropriate body in this case. The Northern Territory government fought for extra funds for TCHIP in Elliott, as it did for Borroloola. The minister has made available initial funds to start the program in Elliott, as he has already done in Borroloola. Those funds have gone to the appropriate bodies in both communities. That is how things will be done in the future. Funds will be channelled to the appropriate body in the community, the body over

which we have some say and which we can control to some extent through financial accountability measures. We will ensure that those bodies are the bodies that receive funds from the Northern Territory government.

If anyone here believes that Gurungu is a more appropriate recipient of these funds than the Elliott Community Government Council, he is wrong. The Elliott Community Government Council is keen to have the input of Gurungu. It wants Gurungu to tell it what it wants. It wants the Gurungu association within the Aboriginal community to assist it in establishing appropriate housing in that community. If Gurungu is genuine and serious, it will assist the Elliott Community Government Council to do its job. I am appalled at the approach taken by the shadow spokesman on local government. I am sure that local governments around the Territory will condemn him for his words and his lack of support. Mr Speaker, I can assure you that this government will continue to support a very good local government system in the Northern Territory.

#### Darwin Joinery

Mr SMITH to MINISTER for INDUSTRIES and DEVELOPMENT

In the minister's answer to my first question on this subject, he said that the government was able to offer up to a controlling interest in Darwin Joinery under the terms of the arrangement which it had. In the same answer, he went on to say that in fact there had been record turnover. In the light of the turnaround which seems to have occurred in the fortunes of Darwin Joinery, is he able to accept an offer for a controlling interest in it, thus releasing \$2m to be put somewhere else, or is he bound until 1992 by an agreement with the previous owner of Darwin Joinery?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, in answer to this question, can I first say that we have to have a buyer who is willing to buy the whole joinery. We do not have one at the moment. That is my first point.

Mr Smith: You have not made it available to anyone, have you?

Mr COULTER: The Leader of the Opposition seems to have a renewed interest in the Darwin Joinery and now wants to save it. If he knows of anybody who would like to buy into the Darwin Joinery, I would be only too willing to sit down with him and the potential buyer to save the joinery. It is a shame that he did not have the same interest 6 or 8 weeks ago.

There is a moral obligation to give the previous owners of Darwin Joinery the right of first refusal at any time when somebody may wish to buy the joinery. When we went into the negotiations, we were mindful of the fact that a buyer might turn up and that Mr Pastrokos might be able to buy back the joinery. The business plan provided to us predicted that, in 1992, the business would be able to be resold to the Pastrokos family. That is all that I am saying. If a buyer does turn up tomorrow, we have a moral obligation to ask Mr Pastrokos whether he wishes to buy it back. If he answers affirmatively, but says that he does not have the money, that matter has to be addressed at that time.

Mr Ede: You will lend him the money.

Mr COULTER: You would lend him the money. The Smith Labor government ...

Mr Ede: You are out of date. That was 3 years ago.

Mr COULTER: Tell us what you are up to now.

Mr Ede: We keep learning and developing.

Mr COULTER: You spoke about Western Australian Incorporated. Would you do it through the bank? One of your recent documents says that you would have \$20m for back-up for business and \$5m for venture capital. That is what your current document says.

Mr Smith: That is less than you put into the Sheraton at Yulara.

Mr COULTER: But that is what your current transition-to-government document says. Am I right or wrong?

Mr Smith: No, you are not right.

Mr COULTER: I will ...

Mr Smith: There you go.

Mr COULTER: The figures might be wrong. However, that is what your current document says. I have a copy of it. I am prepared to table it so that you can refresh your memory. We have heard that you would not prop up the Darwin Joinery. You might like to tell the people of the Northern Territory what businesses you would prop up.

Mr Smith: I am not going to prop up any businesses.

Mr COULTER: That is not what it says in the document which apparently you have been circulating. Your document states that you have \$20m that will go towards backing up Northern Territory business and \$5m that will go to a venture capital company. That is what it says.

Mr Smith: You blokes are starting to behave like an opposition already.

Mr COULTER: Mr Speaker, if this is old, if the Labor Party is old and ...

Mr Smith: Why don't you start behaving like a government in the little time that is left to you?

Mr COULTER: We are now to step away from 'a Smith Labor government will draw on the expertise and success of the Western Australian model and establish the system in the Northern Territory' and turn to the document the Leader of the Opposition is circulating presently about the opposition's transition to government. We can read about this new-found visionary and this love of the Leader of the Opposition that seems to be permeating everybody. We understand from this document that \$20m will be spent to prop up Northern Territory business and that \$5m will be put into a venture capital company.

Mr Smith: And we would still be saving about \$15m on what you do currently.

Mr COULTER: We have been told today that you would not have touched Darwin Joinery. What would you have have touched?

Mr Speaker, those are the answers that members of the opposition have to provide. Territorians will judge them by their actions. It is true that this side of the House has been through a rough time lately, but we have taken decisions and we will be judged on those decisions. The opposition has yet to make any announcements at all. As a result of the confusion created this morning about the documents that the Labor Party has circulated, I suggest we wait for members of the opposition to stand up and be judged by their actions.

#### Legal Costs and Charges

Mr COLLINS to ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Is he aware that, in New South Wales, a study has been undertaken into making legal costs more relevant and cheaper so that middle-income Australians, who are not eligible for legal aid, can afford legal services? Further, is he aware of a claim made at the weekend in the Daily Telegraph that it has been calculated that, simply by permitting legal firms to advertise their services and fees, \$297m could be saved on conveyancing alone? Will the Attorney-General examine the possibility of moving away from the archaic principle of lawyers not being allowed to advertise and towards effecting similar changes in the Territory?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, that proposition has been put forward to the Law Society in New South Wales for a second time. It is not a government initiative as such. However, I will be raising those matters with the Northern Territory Law Society to see if they can be addressed by the profession itself. I think that most people in this House would agree that the ability for consumers to be able to make judgments regarding the costs involved in litigation is quite important. I will be taking the matter up with the Law Society and, hopefully, the government will not need to become involved in that matter. We will see what happens.

#### Department of Industries and Development Expenditure

Mr EDE to MINISTER for INDUSTRIES and DEVELOPMENT

I refer the minister to third-quarter government expenditure figures which indicate that expenditure by the Department of Industries and Development has blown out to \$36m. This figure is already \$7m beyond the department's total budget allocation for the entire year. Will the minister inform the House how much of that \$36m has been sunk into the government's Sheraton/Yulara deals and how much it is now estimated will be poured into the Yulara/Sheraton black holes for the whole of the financial year?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, I will provide detailed figures to the member for Stuart on those questions that he asks during the course of these sittings, but let us not forget why that blowout has occurred. That is the question that he never asks.

Mr Ede: Because you are involved in it.

Members interjecting.

Mr COULTER: Is it my incompetence? Is that why? No, it is not.

A member: You can blame anybody you like, Barry.

Members interjecting.

Mr COULTER: This year, we have spent \$6m on helping people in the Northern Territory who have lost almost everything they had. I admit that these are people who took commercial risks. The airline strike alone ...

Mr Ede: The Western Australians were blaming the 1987 stock market crash.

Mr SPEAKER: Order!

Mr COULTER: You do not think that the airline strike had an impact on the Northern Territory economy?

Mr Ede: Of course it did.

Mr COULTER: Right.

Mr Ede: But so did the crash of 1987 on Western Australia.

Mr COULTER: And you, with your besser-block or mud-brick heart, would not have helped any of those people, despite the fact that the document that you are circulating at present states that money will be used to prop up business and that \$5m will be put into a venture capital company. I suppose all those people would not have qualified.

The fact is that times are tough and they will become much tougher. It is not only the Darwin Sheraton; the small contractors are affected. \$1m has been lost to this economy through the collapse of businesses in the last 6 weeks.

Mr Ede: What are you going to do about it?

Mr COULTER: You are a great economic genius, aren't you? You talk of the great whizz-bang economic ...

Members interjecting.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! I remind honourable members that question time is being broadcast. Whilst I have allowed a tremendous amount of latitude on both sides, my patience is starting to wear a little thin. I remind honourable members that they are in parliament.

Mr COULTER: Mr Speaker, I am wasting my time trying to explain to the opposition benches how tough it is in the community and how much people are hurting. The Department of Industries and Development has spent a great deal of money to help those people to survive. Things will get much tougher. Under this current Labor government, the whole of Australia is in trouble. There is not one major project in Australia at the moment that creates wealth over \$500m. It has all stopped. The mining has stopped. The North-west Shelf was the last one - \$7000m. It is now over. The North Rankin field is going ahead, but that is a single project. Where is there a project over \$500m anywhere in Australia? We used to have many projects around this great country of ours that relies on mining and agriculture for 70% of its export income. We used to have 3 or 4 major projects in every state, but that has stopped. We are in trouble, and it is time members opposite started waking up to that fact.

Mr Speaker, I will provide ...

Mr Ede: There is \$5000m-worth of tourist investment at the moment.

Mr COULTER: Mr Speaker, we heard about that during the election campaign. Sit down and have a fireside chat with your father-in-law. He has been saying the same thing now for 2 years ...

Mr Ede: You should talk to him about the Sheratons and Yulara. You should hear what he thinks about that.

Mr COULTER: ... and your mob would not listen to him!

Mr Speaker, I will provide details for the honourable member in the very near future.

#### Harvesting of Lancewood and Gutta-percha

Mr PALMER to MINISTER for CONSERVATION

Can he advise the House on the proposed harvesting of lancewood and gutta-percha in the central areas of the Northern Territory, and the impact that that harvesting will have?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, I announced recently the commencement of a new business venture in the Northern Territory. That is a pleasing change from some of the difficulties that we have been experiencing. The Minister for Industries and Development has explained eloquently how much effort we are putting in to try to protect our existing industries despite the deprivations that are being foisted on the Australian economy.

A Darwin company, Central North Trading Pty Ltd, has been granted a forestry licence to harvest lancewood and gutta-percha from pastoral properties in the central districts of the Northern Territory stretching from Hayfield through to Urapunga. The company has also been issued an export licence under the federal Export Control Act. To achieve these licences, the company has had to satisfy Territory and federal authorities that the operation will not be destructive, that the export of natural resources from Australia will be at a price satisfactory to the federal government, and that the company will abide by stringent licensing conditions aimed at protection of the environment and the cultural and heritage values of the area.

Lancewood occurs in dense thickets in a band across the middle latitudes of the Territory and through into south-western Queensland. Under the conditions of the licence, specialist attention is required for the protection of species such as bulwaddy that occur in that area, fire protection, the protection of areas on the interim list for the Register of the National Estate, the location and construction of roads and tracks to avoid potential soil erosion problems and the protection of Aboriginal and heritage sites. As well, the company is required to report on any such sites that are found during the operation.

The operation involves selective logging through which individual trees are removed. There will be no clear felling and, in addition, a minimum cutting size has been set so that mature trees are left. The company has submitted samples for testing in the European marketplace and I am given to



understand that the species is very highly regarded for use as specialist veneers and for wood products such as tool handles, spinning shuttles and so on. This company will begin to establish facilities for its field operations in the next few weeks. I am looking forward to the establishment of a new industry in the Territory and one that is built around the establishment of an ecologically-sustainable, long-term export industry.

Mr Bailey: Why wasn't the PER made public?

Mr HATTON: There he goes again. He cannot help himself.

Mr Ede: How much money have you put into it?

Mr HATTON: Mr Speaker, that is an interesting question from the member for Stuart. We have not put a cent into this.

Mr Ede: Do you promise never to?

Mr HATTON: Mr Speaker, we have not put a cent into this. We have been able to develop an ecologically-sustainable industry for export. We have been able to do it in a way that is responsible and in cooperation with the federal government. It hurts members opposite to recognise that. The member for Stuart is already looking for a way to try to denigrate this. Have you put any money into it? What is the problem? Where are the issues? This is a new industry for the Territory that meets all the environmental and ecological rules and that has the approval of the federal government. It will earn money for Australia and create jobs in the Territory. It is a locally-owned company. Members opposite want to find problems with it. I am proud of this. This is the start of many ventures that will occur in the future as we build this Territory while this government stays in power.

#### New Parliament House

Mr FLOREANI to TREASURER

In the light of the precarious financial position that the Territory is facing next year, as was reported this morning, will the Treasurer consider stopping work on the new Parliament House which will cost \$60m and be totally funded by borrowing?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, I am surprised at the question from the member for Flynn. Whilst the member for Flynn is one of the newer members of this Legislative Assembly, he has been here for some time now and could have been expected to have picked up some of the principles involved in government financing. The honourable member has been told in this House on a number of occasions that State Square is being funded by a special addition to the Northern Territory's loan program. If we want to receive those funds, we are obliged to spend them on that program. He should understand also the principle that loan funds, not recurrent funds, are expended on projects such as State Square which will be used on behalf of the community for the next 50 years. The principle is that, if the community is to benefit for the next 50 years from the construction of a government facility, the community can be reasonably asked to pay for it over the next 50 years.

The impact of State Square on the Northern Territory government's budget in the next financial year will be virtually nil because we are simply

gathering the loan funds now to pay for the construction of the buildings as they are proceeding. We will not incur the total debt until the buildings are completed. From that point on, of course, we will be paying interest on those funds borrowed. I urge the honourable member to take some interest in the principles of government financing before asking such mundane questions.

#### Flood Mitigation in Alice Springs

Mr COLLINS to MINISTER for MINES and ENERGY

Can the minister give us an update on the flood mitigation works for Alice Springs?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, work is progressing on the flood mitigation dam at Alice Springs. I will be in a better position to provide the member with an update towards the end of this month. We will receive a number of reports in the next 2 or 3 weeks. Those reports will give the government the information that it requires on whether to proceed or not and the construction details that have been worked on now for a number of years. Expenditure has occurred on sites within the district. I will be in a better position to advise the honourable member by the end of this month as to the next course of action.

#### Development Strategy for Gulf Region

Mr FIRMIN to MINISTER for LANDS and HOUSING

I refer the honourable minister to work undertaken by his department over the past year in developing a land use and development strategy for the Gulf region. When will this document be released for public comment?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, considerable work has been involved in drafting a document for land use in the Gulf. A number of issues are involved, including: the land and infrastructure to support the growing tourist industry; the future of the pastoral industry; the development of mining potential; support for the fishing industry, including aquaculture; protection of conservation and heritage areas and areas of scientific significance; and alternative land uses which may have development potential such as lancewood. I expect to receive the draft Gulf Land Use and Development Strategy in the very near future. We are hoping to release it for public comment by the end of the month. The document has been drafted after pretty intensive consultation with people throughout the Gulf region. Following its release, it will be redrafted after the comment period of about 2 months. Then it will be presented to the government as a planning objective under section 66A of the Planning Act.

#### Assistance to Inventors

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH to MINISTER for INDUSTRIES and DEVELOPMENT

What help is extended by the Northern Territory government, through the Department of Industries and Development, to encourage inventors in the Northern Territory with regard to registering their patents, bearing in mind the value to the Northern Territory of the registration of these patents

through the industries they would generate and the people they would employ? I refer in particular to a situation of which the minister may be aware that involves the intention to register a patent to alter the making of a musical instrument which could lead to a multi-million dollar industry in the Northern Territory.

ANSWER

The Department of Industries and Development provides considerable help and assistance, not only through financial help but also in terms of advice and direction. It even assists in finding potential investors in relation to inventions within the Northern Territory. The Enterprise Awards and workshops also assist. The wheelchair program was designed and developed in the Northern Territory. The Department of Industries and Development provided assistance to that and a range of other inventions.

In regard to Mr Tony Caught's aluminium-framed piano, to which I believe the honourable member is referring, a great deal of assistance has been provided over a period. The big problem is to find markets or an end-user for the product. If the Department of Industries and Development put money into every invention submitted to it, that would be all it would do. It has to choose particular projects that it believes it can assist by means of advice or through finding joint venture partners. Also, it investigates the potential market for particular products. The aluminium-framed piano is believed to have some outstanding abilities that are not present in wooden pianos. The department has provided assistance to Mr Caught. I believe that he will be presented with a cheque for \$7280 for work that he has put into the piano so far. Indeed, the Leader of the Opposition wrote to me on this very subject.

Mr Smith: I received a very rude letter in return.

Mr COULTER: Mr Speaker, that is good. I will congratulate my staff on that letter.

Mr Smith: It was not rude to me. It was rude to Mr Caught.

Mr COULTER: Help has been provided to Mr Caught and a cheque will be provided to him for the expenses he has incurred so far in registering his piano. Unfortunately, the end-users and the market do not appear to be available. However, a group of people from Korea have shown interest in the piano. I wish Mr Caught success in those negotiations. He now has a joint-venture partner in Darwin although, as I understand that, the support to Mr Caught from that organisation has been in kind rather than in cash. I understand also that he has been involved with some of the major manufacturers such as Yamaha to try to find an end-user for his product but, to date, has been unsuccessful. To say that the Northern Territory government has not assisted and has not provided financial help ...

Mrs Padgham-Purich: I did not say that. I asked you what help had been given.

Mr COULTER: Have I provided that information now? We have helped him.

I wish all inventors in the Northern Territory great success in their imaginative enterprises. Of course, one such person is Bernie Ostemeyer from Tristar Engineering. He has come up with a product which I believe will revolutionise the road transportation industry in terms of bulk cargo. He has invented a tipping trailer which has a synthetic body made from

material similar to that used in pipes such as sewerage lines. We are currently working with Mr Ostemeyer on yet another adaptation of that product.

The Department of Industries and Development provides a great deal of assistance to inventors. The process of gaining patent rights and protecting patents worldwide is very expensive. The Chief Minister has reminded me that the wheelchair cost \$250 000 to patent worldwide. The member for Stuart criticises me because of the spending of my department, but the benefits are apparent. However, we have to weigh up each application on its merits. Financial support is provided ...

Mr Ede: The Sheraton at Yulara.

Mr COULTER: There we go again. That is the difference. The ladies and gentlemen who are listening to this can make up their own minds.

ANSWER TO QUESTION  
Darwin Joinery

Mr COULTER (Industries and Development): Mr Speaker, in response to a question from the Leader of the Opposition this morning, I advise that I am prepared to table some financial information on Dalloway's position. However, I am not prepared to divulge or discuss the detailed financial position of Darwin Joinery in terms of what amounts are owed to whom and what arrangements are being made in respect of any residual claims.

Mr Smith: I do not need to know that.

Mr COULTER: You asked a question about it. We will see in a moment.

Such matters are properly being addressed by the liquidator. The balance sheet of 16 March indicated that the current liabilities, including trade creditors, subcontractors, taxation etc., amounted to \$1.19m whilst non-current liabilities included \$2.6m to the TIO, \$300 000 to the Department of Industries and Development and a further \$200 000 to the TIO. I will provide the Leader of the Opposition with that information.

ANSWER TO QUESTION  
Charges against Police Officers  
Comments by Commissioner of Police

Mr PERRON (Chief Minister): Mr Speaker, yesterday, I was asked a question by the member for Stuart and a follow-up question by the member for Barkly concerning statements by the Police Commissioner recently to the effect that, in some instances, criminal charges against police were not proceeded with or commenced where resignation had been forthcoming. I would like to respond in some detail on these important matters as there is an extremely important point at issue.

I should indicate that, in response to the 2 questions, I have limited myself only to the period in which the current Commissioner of Police has been in office. During that period, approximately 130 police officers have resigned their office. As best as can be ascertained in the short time which has been available since yesterday to prepare this material, in 4 of the cases resignation, as opposed to dismissal, was associated with alleged police misconduct in which disciplinary or criminal charges were considered or were in progress. The term 'police misconduct' may describe actions ranging from minor discourtesy to serious offences such as alleged

complicity. The instances to which I am about to refer relate to the alleged improper registration of a pistol, an alleged attempt to gain unentitled employment benefits, use of cannabis and alleged theft of approximately \$15-worth of liquor.

I am advised that, as best as could be ascertained in the time frame available, there was 1 case in which criminal proceedings which had been activated were not continued. That case related to the alleged theft of liquor in addition to the matters mentioned. I can advise that, in at least 1 case, the criminal charge of a public officer not disclosing an interest in a departmental contract was proceeded with, notwithstanding a resignation. There is presently a further matter which may involve the extradition and charging of a former police officer in relation to theft-related offences, notwithstanding the officer's resignation. There are also instances in which officers have been dismissed after disciplinary hearings and after being convicted of offences. I do not intend to name in this Assembly the former police to whom these statistics relate although, if the matter continues to concern the Leader of the Opposition after I complete my answer, I can advise him that he will be offered a briefing in relation to these matters.

We are talking about the consideration of resignation versus proceeding with charges. This course of action is endorsed by Crown prosecution authorities and it is a course which I endorse on the basis that the Commissioner of Police is concerned with ridding the police force of rotten apples. It seems to me that, in reality, that is what the honourable members opposite were condemning in their inferences yesterday. They would rather see rotten apples put on trial and, if acquitted, remaining in the force.

Mr Smith: What is wrong with that?

Mr PERRON: You will hear what is wrong with it in a minute.

Mr Speaker, I hope that members opposite realise what they are advocating. Surely they realise the consequences of having rotten apples in the organisation. I would like to refer here - and I ask honourable members to listen carefully - to what Mr Fitzgerald said after a very long and in-depth inquiry. I quote him:

There is an enormous problem created when police officers are acquitted of criminal offences, especially serious offences. Not only does police culture ...

Of course, Mr Fitzgerald is talking about Queensland police culture.

... probably enhance their prospects of an acquittal, but their powers and authorities are restored and their careers, and probably their extracurricular activities, continue unabated, perhaps even aided by sympathy at their ordeal or by increased respect for their achievement in beating the charge.

Whilst I do not believe that we have a police culture of the type which unfortunately existed in Queensland - indeed, we would seem to have the opposite - I quote from Mr Fitzgerald simply to show what can happen. We must encourage a different regime here. I quote Mr Fitzgerald again:

Police and the police force can only be served by a disciplinary regime in which all matters affecting the suitability of any person

to remain a police officer can be reviewed, and in which discipline and efficiency is enforced quite independently of any other criminal or civil considerations.

Fitzgerald is on about getting rid of rotten apples and so is the Northern Territory's Commissioner of Police. He should be congratulated for it, not castigated. If honourable members opposite want to play a game which lets rotten apples stay, then it is they who deserve condemnation.

Further, I think it is very relevant to talk briefly about the exercise of prosecutorial discretion, particularly in the light of the member for Stuart's offensive suggestion that there is one law for the police and one for the rest of the community. In short, he is saying that the Commissioner of Police does deals for his mates. Let me quote from the guidelines issued by the Crown Prosecutor's office. These guidelines are not unique. Indeed, they accord generally with similar guidelines issued throughout Australia. While these are the Crown Prosecutor's guidelines in the exercise of any discretion, the Commissioner of Police also takes into account similar considerations. Before quoting from parts of the document, I will table a copy of the guidelines which is headed 'Prosecution Policy of the Northern Territory of Australia: Guidelines for the Making of Decisions in the Prosecution Process'. In fact, these guidelines may have been tabled in a previous debate in this Assembly. Under the heading 'Prosecutorial Discretion', the guidelines say:

The decision whether to place a person on trial is a very important and at times difficult decision to make. There can be no absolute rules relating to this decision. However, general guidelines which allow for individual cases and views of the Crown Prosecutor are of assistance in achieving consistency and fairness. The discretion of the Crown Prosecutor cannot and should not be impinged upon. The guidelines exist to assist the Crown Prosecutor, not to tie his hands.

There are many matters which are relevant to the decision to place an accused on trial. Obviously, the view of the police, the victim and the instructing solicitor will all have a role to play and are closely considered by the Crown Prosecutor. Informal and formal representation from the accused, through his counsel, to the Crown Prosecutor, as to the laying of the indictment and counts therein, are also closely considered by the Crown Prosecutor. However, all these considerations are minor compared to the Crown Prosecutor's consideration of the evidence.

Before any subjective matters are considered, the Crown should be appropriately satisfied as to the strength of the evidence. The first question is: is there sufficient evidence to establish all the essential elements of the offence to the satisfaction of a properly instructed jury? If the objective answer to this question is no, then the indictment should not be signed. If the answer is yes, the Crown Prosecutor should ask himself/herself: is there a fair chance of conviction (not necessarily a better than even chance)? Again, if the answer is no, then the indictment should not be signed. If the answer is yes, then the indictment should be signed unless one or more of the following factors mitigates against signing the document:

1. the trivial or technical nature of the offence;

2. the youth, age, physical health, mental health or special infirmity of the alleged offender or a witness;
3. the antecedents of the accused;
4. the antiquity of the alleged defence;
5. the degree of criminality in each particular accused, when there are 2 or more;
6. the affect on public order and morale;
7. the obsolescence or obscurity of the law;
8. whether the prosecution is necessary, or will it be counterproductive;
9. the existence of realistic alternatives to prosecution;

I think that point is particularly relevant when considering the case of a police officer who has offered a resignation.

10. the prevalence of the alleged offence and the need for deterrence;
11. whether unduly harsh and oppressive consequences would flow from the conviction;
12. the attitude of the victim to the alleged offence;
13. the likely length and expense of a trial;

And I think that that is important in many cases.

14. whether the alleged offender is willing to cooperate in the investigation or prosecution of others, or the extent to which the alleged offender has done so;
15. the likelihood of a nominal sentence;
16. the availability of summary jurisdiction;
17. the necessity to maintain public confidence in the legal system;
18. whether amendment to the legislation is imminent;
19. whether the Aboriginality of the accused or witnesses affects the prosecution; that is, have the Anunga Rules been breached? Will an Aboriginal witness give evidence, given the Aboriginal culture? Has the requisite intent been formed? That applies in deciding cases like murder/manslaughter.

The Crown Prosecutor takes all those things into account. The matters that he should not be influenced by are:

- A. the race (other than it being a subjective feature favourable to Aboriginal accused), religion, sex, national origin or

political associations, activities or beliefs of the accused or any other person involved, (in the context that these matters should not be the real reason for the prosecution rather than the existence of the appropriate amount of evidence);

- B. his personal feelings concerning the accused, the victim, other involved persons or the nature of the offence;
- C. political implications;
- D. his career prospects;
- E. media pressure.

These are all matters not to be taken into consideration by the Crown Prosecutor.

These factors of public interest, which may be taken into account, are not exhaustive but rather representative of the type of public interest which may properly be considered. It is important to realise that these guidelines apply to every accused; police, public officers, politicians etc are not in any special category.

If no prima facie case exists, or the prospects of conviction are not fair, then an indictment should not be signed. However, if the evidentiary standards have been met, the calling to aid by the accused of any of the above subjective factors would be less rewarding for, say, a public figure, or in a case which has attracted public notoriety, because other factors such as the necessity to maintain public confidence in the legal system will vitiate the particular subjective factors raised by the accused.

Under the heading 'Charge Bargaining' the guidelines read:

There is nothing objectionable about discussion between the defence and the Crown relating to arrangements as to the charge and plea. It is not desirable for the Crown to initiate this bargaining by making an offer to the defence. However, it is a normal and proper matter for the Crown to approach the defence to ascertain the situation so far as trial is concerned. If, during these discussions, or indeed at any time, the defence offers to plead to a particular charge, then it is appropriate to discuss this offer and to make counter offers if necessary. Obviously, any charge which is offered on a plea basis only should be consistent with the guidelines established for the signing of indictments. This means that the offered charge must reflect the criminality, provide an appropriate sentencing basis and be clearly available on and supported by the evidence.

The decision to participate in charge bargaining should be taken carefully and the acceptability of any proposal must take into account:

- (a) the accused's assistance in the prosecution of others;
- (b) whether the likely sentence for the proposed charge will accurately reflect the criminality of the accused;



- (c) the desirability of prompt and certain disposal of the case;
- (d) the accused's antecedents;
- (e) the strength of the prosecution case;
- (f) the availability of witnesses;
- (g) the likelihood of adverse consequences to witnesses;
- (h) the need to avoid delay in the disposal of other pending cases;
- (i) the time and expense involved in a trial and any appeal proceedings;
- (j) the vagaries of trial proceedings;
- (k) the question of concurrent sentences, cumulative sentences and the totality principle;
- (l) the appropriateness of using of the Fifth Schedule to take matters into account;
- (m) where restitution is sought, whether satisfactory arrangements for restitution have been made;
- (n) the attitude of the victim;
- (o) the attitude of the office in charge of the police investigations;
- (p) the court's view, as anticipated, on the propriety of acceptance of such a plea;
- (q) the necessity to maintain public confidence in the legal system;
- (r) the desire to avoid known technical difficulties with particular legislation; that is, where forfeiture of proceeds of crime is available to the Crown under one legislation but not another;
- (s) the Aboriginality of the accused or witnesses.

In the Courts of Summary Jurisdiction, charge bargaining arrangements are subject to obtaining specific instructions from the Officer in Charge to accept the offer. In the Supreme Court, arrangements must be approved by the Crown Law Officer, the Senior Crown Prosecutor or either of the Deputy Senior Crown Prosecutors.

Mr Speaker, nothing of which I am aware suggests the Commissioner of Police or anyone else involved has acted other than in accordance with these guidelines. There is no deal for the police. Indeed, the only suggestion or conclusion which can be drawn is that higher standards of behaviour are expected of police and senior public officials. In short, if there is a deal, it does not work in their favour.

If what is implied in the not-so-veiled criticism of the Commissioner of Police by the questions is that he should not get rid of rotten apples by accepting resignations in appropriate circumstances, then I will tell honourable members what the alternative is, assuming one does not want these rotten apples to stay in the police force. The alternative is a power of summary dismissal by the Commissioner of Police, perhaps with a right of appeal. That is an option which I am prepared to consider. It is not a novel approach. A power of dismissal rests with the Police Board in New South Wales, and I understand that a power of dismissal is proposed for the Commissioner of Police in Queensland under the new police legislation being introduced there. It is a power which the Commissioner of the Australian Federal Police has recently called for.

I might understand the implied criticisms of honourable members opposite if they were concerned that the effect of resignation was that a police officer could enjoy the fruits of resignation through collection of retirement benefits. I do not think that is their concern, but I believe it is a concern that some members of the public might have. I would like to refer to what Fitzgerald had to say about that:

The concern that police officers and public officials should not be allowed to take advantage of unavoidable delays in preparing prosecutions by retiring quickly and taking with them benefits derived from public moneys is understandable. The government's understandable desire, however, to prevent any payment of publicly-funded benefits to suspected police officers or public officials must be tempered by concern to avoid the risk of individual injustice and, importantly, the desirability of encouraging corrupt police officers and public officials to retire. Realistically, and despite the cost, the community is far better off with such people out of positions of authority, particularly since not all will be detected and even fewer will be successfully prosecuted.

I draw honourable members' attention to that last paragraph in particular. Far from the horror which members opposite showed regarding the practice, and the tut-tut approach taken by ill-informed media commentators to this topic, it is a practice which is right. It is in the public interest, and it is a practice which is endorsed by anyone who has an ounce of common sense. Indeed, it is time honourable members opposite came clean. I have faith in the Northern Territory Police Force, and I have particular faith in and admiration for the Northern Territory Commissioner of Police. It is all very well for the Leader of the Opposition to talk in terms of our respected Commissioner of Police, but then he allows his honourable colleagues to imply that the commissioner's character, credibility and honesty are open to be questioned or to be impugned by innuendo. The Leader of the Opposition deserves condemnation. Honourable members opposite know the commissioner is right to rid the police force of unsuitable personnel. They know he is right because, realistically and despite the cost, they know and have always known that the community is far better off with bad police officers out of positions of authority.

Mr Speaker, I would now expect the Leader of the Opposition and the members for Stuart and Barkly, at some convenient opportunity, to accept publicly that this is the appropriate course of action.

Request for Visit to Galiwinku

Mr SMITH to CHIEF MINISTER

The Chief Minister will be aware of suggestions that he and I should be prepared to visit Galiwinku in order to reassure people in that community of our interest in their concerns. I seek an acceptance from him, in principle at this stage pending the issue of any formal invitation from the Galiwinku community, that he would be prepared to do that as I would be prepared to do it.

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, I am unaware of suggestions that he and I should visit Galiwinku.

Mr Smith: It was on the 7.30 Report last night.

Mr PERRON: Mr Speaker, I do not generally regard the 7.30 Report as an authoritative broadcast and source of messages to the Chief Minister on just about anything at all. However, if requests come to me formally from any source, obviously they will be considered.

Government Tendering and Purchasing Arrangements

Mr FIRMIN to MINISTER for INDUSTRIES and DEVELOPMENT

Have there been any recent developments in the matter of government tendering and purchasing arrangements?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, I thank the honourable member for the question which is most appropriate as there have indeed been recent developments in this area. These have been driven by the government's primary aim in this regard: to obtain value for money and to ensure that such moneys are spent in such a way as to provide maximum benefit to the Territory economy. We have been monitoring closely the direction of procurement activities, particularly since the introduction of new and innovative procedures and guidelines in early 1988. This new system devolved a large element of responsibility for purchasing decisions to the Chief Executive Officers of departments and authorities. The strategy behind this move was to allow managers to manage and to have greater control over the effect of purchasing decisions and outcomes with an emphasis on support for the local economy.

These new initiatives also established a single Supply and Tender Board for review of procurement over \$50 000. A significant feature of the membership of this new board is representation of the private sector by the Industrial Supplies Office. The ISO is playing a vital role in matching the requirements of government purchasers with the capability of local suppliers. The role of the ISO is strongly supported by government and I believe without question that the Territory ISO is the most innovative and successful such agency in Australia. I have also established within the Department of Industries and Development a supply and tender review working party made up of key government purchasing agencies as well as representation from the Confederation of Industry and Commerce, the Master Builders Association and the ISO. This working party has been reviewing key issues flowing from the introduction of these new procedures and guidelines

with a view to further streamlining and refining present procurement arrangements.

In addition, a watching brief is being maintained over developments in the Commonwealth's new and wide-ranging procurement procedures which were introduced late last year following a major review under the financial management incentive plan. These federal procedures also embrace the philosophy of allowing the manager to manage. The working party has looked at various key issues and has made recommendations on such matters as a draft code of tendering, advice to government departments and agencies on legal aspects of the procurement process, review of procedures for approval to approach interstate suppliers, and review of documentation and procedures for period contracts in the works and services and supplies areas.

Presently, some key issues are also under consideration at Cabinet level, which I should be in a position to announce soon. These relate to the government's position on contractors who default on government contracts or who would not otherwise satisfactorily discharge their contractual obligations to government.

The extent of government's obligations to subcontractors and suppliers is similarly topical. Recently, Cabinet reviewed its policy in relation to pre-qualification and pre-selection procedures. Broadly, Cabinet decided to retain the current threshold of \$1m for the pre-qualification of tenderers for capital works, whilst recognising that certain complex projects below that level may also require pre-qualification. As well, Cabinet approved the extension of existing procedures to include certain categories of projects over \$1m, other than capital works, to be subject to pre-qualification procedures, and also approved the pre-selection of tenderers for projects valued at over \$5m. Recently, Cabinet approved the relocation of the Supply and Tender Board Secretariat from its present location within the Department of Transport and Works. Now it will come under the auspices of the Department of Industries and Development. This followed representation from the private sector. I should point out that the Secretary of the Department of Industries and Development is also the Chairman of the Supply and Tender Board, which enhances the administrative reporting requirements of the chairman.

Notwithstanding all these arrangements and the valuable progress which has been made by officers, I consider that also there should be an ongoing consultative process between myself and industry association representatives. The joint purpose of this is to gain a first-hand appreciation of the issues that are most important to industry and, where appropriate, to accelerate the resolution process. Several such combined meetings have been held with representatives of the construction, supply, retail, manufacturing and export industries, and small business. Their priority concerns have been identified clearly, resolution is now well advanced and I expect to make several announcements on these in the near future. Specific matters raised by the group include: ensuring, where possible, that inappropriate persons do not win government contracts in the first place; the extent to which government should and can protect subcontractors and suppliers to prime contractors on government works; possible extensions to pre-qualification arrangements; and maximising benefits to the Territory economy.

Whilst the vast majority of goods, services and works required by government are presently sourced from within the Territory, it is obvious that there is still room for improvement. My commitment is to identify and introduce such improvements to the benefit of our Territory community.

Trust Fund Repayments to Consolidated Fund

Mr EDE to TREASURER

My question is to some degree complex. I gave the minister about half an hour's notice of it but I will understand if he is unable to give me a full answer at this time. The government's third quarter accounts demonstrate an extraordinary transfer of more than \$20m from the trust fund repayments to the Consolidated Fund. In recent years, such repayments have never been more than \$3m in a full year. I ask the Treasurer to explain the financial and accounting decision which has led to this extraordinary transfer and to provide the parliament with some indication of where the \$20m came from.

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, I appreciate the notice of this question which the honourable member gave me. If he had given me about another half-hour's notice, I would certainly have been able to respond in detail this morning. Because I was involved in talks with other people, I received his advice only just before coming into the House. I have sought from Treasury an explanation which I will be able to give to the House. If I attempted to explain this complicated matter in my own words, I am sure that I would not get it quite right. I undertake to provide the honourable member with the answer during the course of this day.

National Summit of Education Ministers

Mr SETTER to MINISTER for EDUCATION

On radio this morning, there was an item about a national summit of education ministers which is apparently being conducted in Melbourne today. I am surprised to see that the Minister for Education is still in the House. Unless he has a fast jet to get him down to Melbourne in the luncheon adjournment today, he will miss out. I would like the honourable minister to advise the House whether the Territory is to be represented at the summit and on the nature of matters to be discussed there.

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, unfortunately I was unable to attend the meeting in Melbourne because it would have required me to miss 2 days of these sittings. Initially, the federal minister, John Dawkins, had made it very clear that only ministers would attend. After I contacted his office, he indicated that the Secretary of the Department of Education could attend on my behalf and would also have voting rights at that meeting. I was very pleased with that decision by Minister Dawkins. I only hope that the other ministers feel the same way because a very important issue is being discussed at that meeting, and I refer to the award restructuring exercise.

Honourable members would be aware of the processes which all education ministers are going through at the moment. At that meeting, the Commonwealth should make very clear its position in respect of its contribution to the award restructuring process. We are talking about how many dollars the Commonwealth will contribute. Members would be aware that most of the states and territories are playing the game and we hope that the Commonwealth will be true to its commitment. When John Dawkins attended the Australian Teachers Federation Conference in Darwin last year, he indicated that the current award restructuring process should be used to redress the

general imbalance of salary levels in different occupations in order to attract and retain quality teachers. He stated also that teachers' salaries must be overhauled and significant increases provided in those areas where disparities were greatest. He made that commitment at the Australian Teachers Federation Conference last year.

I am fearful that the honourable minister is perhaps changing his position somewhat, rather as members of the opposition do on occasions on issues such as the treaty, compact or whatever you like to call it, or the code of conduct they discussed. The opposition tends to move away from its original, stated position. However, John Dawkins is in an awkward position. There is concern about the possibility of a wages break out. All the other unions will be looking very closely at that whole exercise and at what happens at today's meeting. We are proceeding well in the Northern Territory. Honourable members will be aware that the first 3% was granted in November. The second 3% is before the Industrial Relations Commission today and that is an agreed position between the government and the Northern Territory Teachers Federation. I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate the federation on that exercise. It has put considerable time and effort into it and I take my hat off to the federation's officers. Some of the teacher unions in the states have not really carried out the exercise in the responsible way that the NT Teachers Federation has.

After reading a press release that was issued last night by the Northern Territory Teachers Federation, I became concerned. Some other members may have received copies of that press release which referred to the fact that the federation was looking for stop-work meetings to be held on Friday in protest over the incentive package that was put forward by the government some time ago. I would hate to see the 3% increase put at risk because of this particular action. I ask the Northern Territory Teachers Federation and the teachers themselves to rethink their position in relation to that. We are to appear before the Industrial Relations Commission today to argue an agreed position before the commissioner and, at the same time, the Northern Territory Teachers Federation is looking at holding stop-work meetings on Friday. That makes it pretty hard for the commission when the federation says it is addressing an agreed position before the commission whilst it is still fighting outside. To enable us to move ahead with the 3% increase, I hope that the federation and its members will reassess its position in so far as stop-work meetings are concerned.

I am disappointed that they should be seeking to protest over the incentive package on Friday. A great deal of time and effort has been put in by myself and other members to try to ensure that the package we offered was reasonable. The package that we have presented is a good package. It compares very well with what is available in the states. There is 1 state in particular that has some differences, but those differences could be argued. I have indicated that the incentive package will be reviewed. I have given an undertaking that the government will do that, and that process is in place. Any teacher is able to make a submission on his or her views or concerns and those matters will be considered in an appropriate and responsible manner by government.

I give the commitment to the teachers and the Northern Territory Teachers Federation that I will continue to push for the issues affecting teachers as far as their remuneration, isolation allowances and incentive packages are concerned. We have to remember that all ministers are fighting the same battle for their different departments, and balancing contending interests is a very difficult task on occasions. Given that undertaking, I hope that the federation will change its position so that the 3% increase is

not put at risk at this time. I am sorry that I was unable to attend that summit meeting, but I can be contacted at any time by phone by the Secretary of the Department of Education if the need arises.

Member for Karama - Possible Conflict of Interests

Mr BELL to CHIEF MINISTER

I draw the Chief Minister's attention to statements made by the member for Karama who is also the Chairman of the Public Accounts Committee. I refer to the member for Karama's intentions with respect to the Karama Tavern. Does the Chief Minister accept the standard whereby a member of his government may have a beneficial interest in the granting of a government liquor licence? Further, I ask what steps he has taken to ensure that there is no possibility of a conflict of interests involved in the process whereby the member for Karama becomes a tavern operator?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, as all honourable members know, a system was established several years ago in the Northern Territory that requires members of parliament to register their pecuniary interests and any interest they have in a business, in land, in buildings, in shares etc. Members of the public are able to view that register - and it has been viewed from time to time - to determine that everything is aboveboard and is seen to be aboveboard. It is an accepted practice in Australia - and this has been the case for some time - that politicians can have interests in business.

Mr Bell: What about the liquor licence?

Mr PERRON: Many of them had had interests in business for many years successfully and, I guess, some not so successfully before they entered parliament. Being a politician is a fairly precarious business, as most people would be aware, and quite often people prefer not to shed their existing business interests in case they find themselves looking for alternative employment at some time in the future. Of course, there is nothing at all to prevent a member taking an interest in a business, buying shares or whatever whilst he is in parliament.

In the Territory, we have a system whereby such matters are disclosed. If it is perceived that there may be a conflict of interest in a member's role, that matter is exposed and can be debated in various forums. The member for Karama has made no secret of his intended involvement, with other persons, in a tavern in his electorate. He is an Australian citizen and therefore enjoys several freedoms in this regard. He is not attempting to cover anything up. I do not see a possibility for a conflict of interest to arise. If a licence is granted to the organisation of which the member for Karama is a part, and if honourable members believe that he is acting contrary to the interests of this parliament, I am sure that they will take the opportunity to raise the matter. However, to argue that he should not be permitted to have any interest in this venture is a nonsense. The consequence of that argument would be that all members of parliament should forgo all their business interests upon being elected. As I understand it, all political parties, including the Labor Party, accept that members of parliament should be able to retain outside business interests. There are a few fat cats on both sides of the federal parliament. I am pleased to see that because, quite often, such interests demonstrate that a man has some initiative, has done something successful in life or will do something

successful in life. Perhaps, as a consequence, he will be a better member of parliament.

Member for Karama - Possible Conflict of Interest

Mr BELL to CHIEF MINISTER

I refer the Chief Minister to his decision to allow video gaming machines in hotels. Did the Chief Minister ensure that the member for Karama, our prospective taverner, absented himself from discussions and decisions in that regard? Did the member for Karama absent himself from discussions and decisions in that regard on the grounds that there was a potential conflict of interest, and was that decision minuted? If not, why not?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, I am not about to advise the member for MacDonnell as to whether or not we minute meetings of the parliamentary wing. As far as I am concerned, it is none of his business.

Mr Smith: Where there is a potential conflict of interest, it is his affair.

Mr Coulter: Oh, rubbish.

Mr Bell: It is in the public's interest. Those people want to know.

Mr SPEAKER: I remind honourable members that question time is being broadcast.

Mr Bell: We are hoping that the people who are listening can get some decent answers.

Mr PERRON: Mr Speaker, decisions taken in relation to matters such as whether or not video gaming machines will be allowed to spread from clubs to hotels were taken by Cabinet. That is the process that has been adopted by the Country Liberal Party since the commencement of our role in government. Clearly, we advise our colleagues of most of the decisions taken by Cabinet. That decision has been made by Cabinet and the move by the government was foreshadowed by the Minister for Racing and Gaming yesterday in this Assembly. I can assure you, Mr Speaker, that from my point of view as Chief Minister and leader of this party, the member for Karama has nothing whatsoever to answer in this regard.

Mulholland Investigation

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH to CHIEF MINISTER

In its work, will the Mulholland inquiry encompass any reinvestigations into all those cases alleging police impropriety that have already been examined by the Ombudsman and on which he has made a decision? If so, can the Chief Minister give reasons for then keeping an Ombudsman in the Northern Territory?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, the answer to the first part of the question answers the second. I have been quite specific in the terms of reference for



Mr Mulholland that he will examine 3 current cases of alleged police misconduct. There is no intention whatsoever to broaden his brief to cover past matters which, to my mind, have been handled adequately by the procedures which have been in place for a long time whereby the Ombudsman is advised of all complaints against the police. In fact, some of them are laid with his office and some are laid with the police. That information is exchanged under a strict procedure which is laid down. The police and the Ombudsman carry those investigations out jointly so that both are totally satisfied that the matter is handled properly. In some cases, those complaints are found to have some substance and action is taken. In other instances, that is not the case. I understand that, in all cases, the complainants are advised of the outcome of those investigations.

I have great faith in the Ombudsman of the Northern Territory. As I said yesterday, the Northern Territory was the first place in Australia to introduce legislation establishing an office of Ombudsman. It is generally recognised among authorities around Australia that our Ombudsman/police procedures for investigation of complaints against police are among the best in Australia. I have total confidence in them. I would certainly not propose to interfere with them in any way.

#### Size of NTPS

Mr POOLE to MINISTER for LABOUR, ADMINISTRATIVE SERVICES and LOCAL GOVERNMENT

On radio this morning, the Leader of the Opposition said that he would not increase the size of the public service if he won government. Can the honourable minister advise how this compares with the government's current policy?

#### ANSWER

Mr Speaker, it was rather surprising that the Leader of the Opposition would state on radio that he would not increase the size of the public service. He said: 'We want to give a very clear message to the public of the Northern Territory that we will not be inflating the public sector'. That is surprising given the very clearly stated policy that the Labor Party has that it would increase the size of the public service. I would like to quote directly from Labor Party policy. The platform of the Labor Party states: 'A Labor government will review the current system of contracting and subcontracting with the aim of increasing the government's permanent work force'. I would have to say that there is a distinct difference between what the Leader of the Opposition said on radio this morning and the stated policy of the Labor Party.

One of the proud achievements of this government has been its ability to get government work out into the private sector where it can be done more effectively and more cheaply, and can create more work for the private sector which is the driving force of any state or territory. The government does not drive. The private sector should be driving the economy and we have set the scene for that to happen. However, that is not what this Labor Party would do.

Let us have a look at some of the rest of its policy, which is in direct conflict with what was stated this morning on radio: 'A Labor government will support, by all possible means, union advocacy of a short working week with no reduction in wages and conditions'. It would cut the working week, but not inflate the public service. How in hell would it do the job? Talk about forked tongues!

Mr Coulter: Give them the definition of 'work'.

Mr McCARTHY: That is a beauty too: 'A Labor government will ensure no government employee or employee of a statutory authority will be required to work in excess of 35 hours a week'. That is another indication that the Leader of the Opposition speaks in one language to his loony left and in his party platform and in another to the community in an effort to achieve government by stealth and convince the wider Territory public that the ALP would not increase the public service.

Let us look a little further: 'A Labor government will support union initiatives to discourage the use of modern technology to monitor performance in the workplace'. What great stuff that is! It would even extend this policy to local government. It would direct local government, the third tier of government, which surely should have discretion to operate in its own way: 'A Labor government would ensure that, as far as possible, all labour employed by local government authorities is employed as councils' permanent work force and that the use of contract labour is discouraged'. Some 12 or 18 months ago, members opposite were crying that the subcontractors in the Territory were not getting enough work. What great stuff this is for all those subcontractors and contractors in the northern suburbs who will not get work under a Labor government because that government has said that the public sector will be expanded.

Perhaps I can locate the definition of 'work'. This is magnificent stuff! 'Labor in government will adopt a more liberal definition of the word "work" to support those developing work programs not as important as paid work, those who wish to become self-sufficient without using labour as a means of exchange, and those who pursue cultural activities which may not lead to self-sufficiency ...'. They will liberalise the word 'work' so that people do not have to work and the people of Australia will have to pick up the cost.

Mr Smith interjecting.

Mr McCARTHY: Do not try to weasel out of it. This is your policy document, not mine. Mr Speaker, to show that the member opposite is not honest ...

Mr SPEAKER: Order!

Mr McCARTHY: Mr Speaker, I withdraw that remark. To show that the Leader of the Opposition speaks with a forked tongue, I would like to refer again to the radio interview this morning. He indicated that the policy of the Labor Party would be put in place. When talking about the amalgamation of Health and the Liquor Commission, he went on to say: 'That is our policy and therefore we will put it into place'. It is their policy to liberalise the word 'work', cut out the subcontractors and increase the public service.

We have a very good and effective public service in the Northern Territory. This government has built that public service into a great body of people which performs without enormous growth. Because of the policies of this government, the public and private sectors are working together to develop this Northern Territory into a place that we can all be proud of.

### Mortgage Repayments

Mr COLLINS to MINISTER for LANDS and HOUSING

Is the minister aware that the financial sector agreed recently, at a meeting in Darwin, that it would accept mortgage payments on a fortnightly basis rather than the normal monthly basis? Is he also aware that studies have shown that there are tremendously large savings to be made by that simple process of paying half as much fortnightly of your mortgage repayments? The total interest paid over the period of a loan is reduced and the number of years over which the loan has to be paid is also greatly reduced. In other words, the equity in the dwelling for the mortgage holder grows at a much greater rate. This is good news, but it is not generally known in the community. Would the minister check the facts and perhaps issue a pamphlet so that all Territorians will be aware of the advantages of paying fortnightly? This would fit in pretty well because most of us are paid on a fortnightly basis.

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, I am aware of the decision by the banks to accept fortnightly payments. It does give an advantage because, over a 12-month period, the equivalent of 13 monthly payments have been made. I have asked my department to look at the possibility of our loans scheme being set up so that it could complement that fortnightly payment but I have not received any final advice on that as yet. In terms of providing advice to the community, I have not contemplated the printing of a pamphlet to provide that information. I will certainly examine whether that could be the most effective way of providing information. Honourable members may wish to advise their constituents in their regular newsletters that the banks have taken such a decision and that there are advantages in using that method to make repayments.

### ALP Policy on Election Campaign Funding

Mr FIRMIN to CHIEF MINISTER

Is he aware of an opposition policy commitment which will force taxpayers to pay for election campaigns mounted by political parties, and can the Chief Minister assure taxpayers that his government will not adopt this policy?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, page 40 of the Labor Party's current platform contains a specific commitment that a Labor government in the Territory would legislate to provide for the financing of political parties' election campaigns from the Consolidated Fund. This is not a policy which is designed in any way to benefit Territorians. It is designed to benefit the Labor Party. Obviously, Labor receives very little voluntary financial support from the public. To overcome that, this policy proposes to take the lazy way out and to take the funds from the pockets of taxpayers. I can assure Territorians that the Country Liberal Party will not adopt this policy. We will not have a bar of it because we do not believe that the people of the Territory want to see their taxes handed to political parties. If Labor ever forms government in the Territory, which is pretty unlikely, that is exactly what will happen. Money which should be used to pay for government services, teachers and nurses etc will be used to pay for the advertising and public relations high-fliers of all political parties.

In my view, the fact that public funding of election campaigns has been introduced in some places in Australia does not justify it in any way whatsoever. It is a proposal for a cynical and unjustifiable use of public funds. If taxpayers want to support the ALP or any other political party, they will put their hands in their pockets to do so. That is their right and I respect that right. I greatly appreciate the voluntary financial support which the Country Liberal Party receives. However, if Territorians do not want to put their hands into their own pockets to support any political party, that is also their right. If Labor cannot obtain voluntary financial support from the public, it should question the relevance of its own policies - policies like this one - instead of forcing taxpayers to cough up.

Having said that, I must admit that it came as no surprise to find that Labor was committed to the introduction of this type of legislation. As we all know, in many cases, union members are already forced to finance the Labor Party whether they want to or not. I guess Labor's twisted logic brings it to the view that, if union members wear it, why not all taxpayers? I suppose that means that union members will be paying twice in some way. It would not matter if Labor received no voluntary support at all. It would have the unwilling support of the taxpayers and the unwilling support of union members to see it through.

The CLP relies on contributions from people who know that a Labor government in the Territory would be a disaster. If we did not have the right policies for the Northern Territory, we would not receive that support. There is no better incentive to ensure that Country Liberal Party policies reflect community values than the fact that our existence depends on it. That is the way it should be, and I am sure that the vast majority of Territorians would agree with me. If the Leader of the Opposition honestly believed that the people of the Territory would wear this imposition, he would have told us about it long ago instead of waiting for us to raise it in this Assembly. The opposition was hoping that no one would look in those corners of its platform document.

Mr Ede: I ran that in parliament. You said that you were going to look at it.

Mr PERRON: I am tired of waiting for the Leader of the Opposition to unveil his grand plan for the Northern Territory and so I am giving a bit of free publicity to his own platform.

Mr Smith: It has been the subject of a major debate in parliament.

Mr Coulter: We looked at it. We are giving you the answer.

Mr SPEAKER: Order!

Mr Ede: Do you want to check Hansard? I will give you the references.

Mr SPEAKER: Order!

Mr PERRON: Mr Speaker, let the Leader of the Opposition tell the public how he will make the Territory a better place to live by transferring the responsibility for political party fundraising from the parties to the taxpayers. What about those taxpayers who do not want to support any political party? I believe that there are plenty of people who do not want to support political parties, particularly by way of dollars out of their own pockets. Surely they have some rights in that regard. Let him tell the

public why he has this policy and why he will impose this burden on Territory taxpayers if ever Labor gets into government. I am sure that people would like to know.

Gardens Hill Site

Mr BAILEY to MINISTER for LANDS and HOUSING

Has the minister received advice from the Planning Authority on the rezoning of the Gardens Hill site? If so, has he made a decision on that rezoning? If he has made such a decision, what is it and is it consistent with the Planning Authority's recommendations? If this important public decision has not yet been made, when will it be made?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, to be quite honest, I cannot recall receiving any advice. I certainly would have no intention of overturning the Planning Authority's advice in this matter, as I have followed the Planning Authority's recommendations regarding this block ever since I have been involved with it. Further, there is no intention to rezone that particular block. As honourable members who have paid some attention would realise, the application did not require a rezoning of the land. It involved retaining the present zoning as recommended by the Planning Authority.

Waste Recycling

Mr POOLE to MINISTER for CONSERVATION

I note with interest that Darwin's only waste recycling company has closed down in recent days and I wonder what effect this will have on the community, particularly on community groups which are involved in recycling in the Darwin area.

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, it is true that there has been considerable community concern. I must say that I have had quite a number of letters from a wide range of people from Darwin and elsewhere expressing concern about the collapse of Vital Recycling and the consequences of this for a number of recycling schemes which have been operating through schools, government offices, businesses and homes. The family of one of my constituents had been going through a process of separating household rubbish for some 12 months and had dramatically reduced the amount of household garbage put out for collection. Recycling was actually working quite successfully at the consumer level, reducing the amount of waste and providing plenty of material for recycling.

I do not propose to go through the circumstances surrounding the collapse of Vital except to say that real difficulties are emerging nationally in relation to the whole issue of recycling. We have very successfully stimulated the community to become involved in recycling. However, there is much more work to be done in reducing the amount of waste and packaging generated in the first place. The problem is that the recycling industry is still very much in its infancy and the demand for recycled products nowhere near matches the amount of material supplied for recycling. That means the actual cycle is not being completed.

In a number of cases, large amounts of material have been collected in places like the Northern Territory, shipped to recycling plants interstate and stockpiled. In fact, I believe that there is enough raw material in stockpiles at present to keep recycling plants going for 5 years. As a consequence, a considerable amount of paper has been going into landfill sites down south. In other words, the process has actually been self-defeating, consuming additional energy to transport materials only to result in their being used as landfill.

The problem in the Northern Territory is not simple. We have a number of difficulties. We have relatively small volumes of waste, large distances to processing places and high transportation costs. For some time, the community and the government have been addressing the problems through an organisation known as the Total Recycling Advisory Community Committee, which has been working to develop a recycling strategy for the Northern Territory.

I must say that I was very pleased to accept the invitation from the shadow spokesman on the environment, the member for Wanguri, to adopt a bipartisan approach on this issue. It is a very serious community issue and it is very pleasing to contemplate taking it beyond party politics in the search for a practical solution. As part of a bipartisan approach, I will involve the member for Wanguri in all stages of the government's strategy development. That will include participation in decision-making, at least at the administrative level.

I can advise that we are moving quickly to get a solution in place and to support the work of TRACC. We have obtained the services of a gentleman from the Western Australian government Environmental Protection Authority, a Mr York, who has recently completed the development of the recycling strategy for Western Australia and therefore has the latest information on markets, the economics of recycling and the nuts and bolts of what needs to be done to develop recycling programs which are economically and environmentally rational.

Mr Ede: It is a Labor state.

Mr HATTON: Yes, it is a Labor state and that just shows that this government is prepared to cooperate with its sister states no matter who is in power. We have been doing that for 15 years and it is an indication of what a proficient, efficient and professional government we have in the Northern Territory.

To return to the point, Mr York is making his initial visit to Darwin later this month when initial assessments will be made. Work will proceed as fast as possible to develop an appropriate recycling strategy for the Northern Territory. We do need to do that quickly because it is very important that we do not allow disillusionment to take over in the community on the issue of recycling. We need to maintain the incentive for recycling but we also need to find practical solutions to the problems. I advise all members of the community who are involved in recycling that we know the situation is frustrating at the moment, but I ask them not to lose heart. Recycling is important. It is an important long-term goal for the community and we need to get our act together and establish directions as soon as possible so that we can do something which will be practical and genuinely responsible environmentally.

Water Supply in Darwin Area

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH to MINISTER for MINES and ENERGY

In view of the recent dry wet season and the expected very dry dry season, with bore water levels falling early, can the minister tell me what form of water rationing will be put in place in Darwin? What is the truth of rumours about the Power and Water Authority trying to meter and restrict bore use in the rural area in order to leave plenty of water in the bore fields to supply continuing extravagant use in Darwin?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, you have to hand it to the member for Koolpinyah in terms of knowing the issues in the rural area which can give her a little publicity. The last time there was mention of metering private bores, a public meeting the likes of which I have never seen in my life was organised by the member for Koolpinyah, and I was invited to be the guest speaker. Fortunately for me, I happened to know about half of the people there and I was able to walk away after giving a firm undertaking that we would not be metering private bores in the rural area. That is still the position.

However, in terms of the aquifer and the poor rainfall, the present situation is serious. I am not sure exactly what the rainfall was for this wet season. I know it was very dry at the start of the season. However, I am not sure what our average rainfall was over the whole wet season as compared with elsewhere. At the moment, the watertable in my bore is 6 ft below the surface which is not bad for this time of the year. I will obtain some information from PAWA about the actual rainfall in the area. I will take the stargazing, 'it's all done with smoke and mirrors' weather forecasting of the member for Koolpinyah into account. I will speak to Monty at the ABC and see if we can obtain some support for her statement. I will obtain information on the current state of the aquifer in the rural area and provide that to her during the course of these sittings.

Toxic Emission Standards

Mr LEO to MINISTER for CONSERVATION

Does the government have any standards on the level of toxic emissions, either into the atmosphere or the waterways, with which manufacturers are forced to comply? If so, what are those standards and how does the government monitor compliance with those standards?

ANSWER

The honourable member has raised an issue that is being addressed at a national level. At the moment, monitoring processes are carried out by specific departments. For example, water monitoring is carried out by the Power and Water Authority which has responsibility for monitoring water quality. I understand that there are some general standards for water quality.

The Australia and New Zealand Environment Council meetings have indicated that a great deal of work is being carried out to develop some national standards on air quality and water quality monitoring. There is a significant and valid difference of opinion as to the appropriate methods of monitoring. There is one school of thought, which is promoted by governments such as that of Victoria, that suggests that the standard of

release in water should be fixed at so many parts per million and that that standard should apply across Australia. There is valid scientific evidence indicating that that is illogical because of the different hydrology of different parts of Australia and that the standard should be based on the outputs rather than the inputs. The issue is whether there should be tolerance of any form of pollution in the waterways. For example, the Northern Territory has very high levels of tidal flushing. Does that have a significantly different impact than on enclosed waterways in the southern states where there is very little water movement and pollution and contaminants can accumulate far more dramatically? That is an example of the scientific debate that is taking place on that issue.

We are monitoring the waterways in order to avoid or clean up any pollution problems. I am not the minister responsible, but my advice is - and I have been querying these matters - that the waterways throughout the Northern Territory are the cleanest in Australia.

Mr Leo: We do have standards?

Mr HATTON: We are monitoring and measuring. There are no fixed standards. I have gone to some length to explain that fixed standards do not necessarily provide an appropriate answer. It is the level of material allowed to go in and, in particular, the measurement of the quality of the water. We are working with the rest of Australia and New Zealand at developing appropriate methods of dealing with water monitoring and water quality control.

Similarly, standards are being applied in respect of air quality monitoring. This has not been a significant issue in the Northern Territory because of the absence of heavy and polluting industry. That is not to say that it is not a potential issue. The Department of Mines and Energy has undertaken air monitoring. We are working at a national level on the development of air quality standards and monitoring procedures. We do not have specific legislation in place but, where there are emission standards in respect of particular industries, we address them.

One of the reasons why we do not have major problems in the Northern Territory is that, even before industry was developed here, we were working actively and successfully on programs to avoid pollution in the first place through very effective environmental assessment processes. Industries have been developed under stringent environmental guidelines which have avoided pollution processes, both atmospheric and aquatic. That is why we have a clean environment. We have successfully maintained the biological diversity of the Northern Territory despite the very rapid economic developments that have occurred since self-government. That is something that we should be proud of. That is not to say we should rest on our laurels. We are looking at stages to ensure that we do not pollute our atmosphere or our waterways and that adequate monitoring is undertaken as we move now into our secondary phase. We are working, at a national level, to develop national standards and procedures, and that is the appropriate course of action to adopt.

ANSWER TO QUESTION  
Water Supply at Brunette Downs

Mr COULTER (Mines and Energy): Mr Speaker, in response to the member for Barkly, I am advised that water for consumption by all people at Brunette Downs came originally from water tanks. Lagoon water was used for all other purposes. With increased population, the water usage exceeded the



rain water supply and the lagoon then became the primary all-purpose water source for the Aboriginal people. No one questioned the quality of water in the lagoon until August 1989 when the presence of strongyloides, a genus of roundworm, was identified in some of the people in the community. This prompted investigation of the water which was found to be outside accepted water-quality standards. However, it was not the carrier of the worm. The Power and Water Authority advised the then Department of Aboriginal Affairs, the community station people and other associated groups of the situation.

Due to the fact that the Aboriginal people are living on land without tenure, the PAWA has not provided or installed any capital infrastructure. The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission has been prepared to fund such infrastructure. The Power and Water Authority has provided technical expertise and assistance, and a solution to the water-quality problem was forwarded to ATSIC in January 1990. This consisted of desalinating water from the existing Department of Education bore. The Department of Education has indicated that it is receptive to the proposal and it would have access to the desalinated water. The Power and Water Authority has indicated that it will maintain the facility.

The estimated cost of installation and associated reticulation, fully funded by ATSIC, is \$100 000. As the facility will be fully funded by ATSIC and, ultimately, will be the property of the Aboriginal people, it is considered that availability of supply to the European community would be at the discretion of the owners.

ANSWER TO QUESTION  
Darwin Joinery

Mr COULTER (Industries and Development): Mr Speaker, yesterday I undertook to provide information to the Leader of the Opposition in relation to Dalloway Pty Ltd. In response to the question asked in the House on Wednesday 2 May, I will provide to the Leader of the Opposition various summary sheets on Dalloway's position as at 16 March 1990. Of course, this date was the day following settlement of the acquisition arrangements. These sheets include a summary of the government acquisition objectives, a breakdown of the government's \$2m purchase price, the board of director arrangements, the product summary, a sales budget projection from 1 July 1990 to 30 June 1991, current contract totals and work in progress, potential future work totals and an estimated balance sheet as at 16 March 1990.

I urge the Leader of the Opposition to listen carefully to my further remarks on this matter, as I have no doubt that I will have to remind him of them again in the future. It is a fact that Dalloway Pty Ltd is owned by the Northern Territory government and was purchased with taxpayers' funds. Whilst our intention in this regard was clearly to benefit the Territory by preserving jobs and protecting trade creditors and subcontractors etc, that is a separate issue. The nonsense uttered by the Leader of the Opposition suggesting that the government has exposed itself to an \$8.25m liability is issued ...

Mr Smith: Answer the question.

Mr COULTER: Mr Speaker, I will not go on because this becomes a little personal about his ability to understand. Can I offer him a briefing by Tony Watson of the Department of Industries and Development? Tony Watson is a highly regarded officer who is on secondment to us from Westpac at the moment. He is involved in refinancing deals of this type. Mr Speaker, I

will not go on at length about that. Members on this side of the House regard it simply as the Leader of the Opposition provoking a minister into making an inappropriately detailed response.

The estimated balance sheet at 16 March 1990, which was provided to him, clearly shows a net surplus in the order of \$2.85m of assets of \$7.174m over liabilities. The \$4.319m non-current liability shown in this to the extent of \$3.129m includes a secured loan by the Territory Insurance Office which does not involve taxpayers' funds. We are clearly discussing the acquisition of a saleable asset, not the exposure of a liability. The Leader of the Opposition does himself no credit by again spreading misinformation and clearly shows no regard for the workers now employed by Dalloway nor for the creditors and subcontractors concerned, all of whom would otherwise now be in a different position.

Having said all that, I must indicate to members opposite that I do not propose further to debate the in-house financial arrangements of either the Darwin Joinery or Dalloway Pty Ltd. Members opposite have never yet evidenced any ability to differentiate between their right to know, their need to know and their desire to know matters which are commercially confidential. Whilst the government has acquired Dalloway, it does not propose to operate a people's joinery. Dalloway has a private enterprise board of directors which has a charter to run the business as a commercial venture ...

Mr Smith: Who are they?

Mr COULTER: That is in the briefing that I am about to give to you. I am not sure how they will react to their names appearing in Hansard. In fact, their names are not included in this. However, the board includes Mr Alex Neale from the Gold Coast, Jim Bell, who is the Darwin manager of Sitzler Bros, a company director from Victoria, who is involved in refinancing and restructuring companies, and Mr John Pastrikos.

Mr Smith: Who is actually managing it at the moment?

Mr COULTER: Jim Bell has responsibility for the day-to-day operation of the project.

The government does not intend to operate this as a people's joinery. This business will be run as a commercial venture until such time as government divests itself of its interest. Divulging the day-to-day financial operating data of any company operating in a competitive commercial environment would be suicidal for such a company. This may well suit the political agenda of the Leader of the Opposition but, as with many things he does, it would be of detriment to the Territory. If the Leader of the Opposition is desirous of making any positive contribution to the Territory, a good starting point would be to support Dalloway or, at least, to refrain from turning it into yet another political football.

#### ANSWER TO QUESTION Trust Fund Repayments to Consolidated Fund

Mr PERRON (Treasurer): Mr Speaker, I rise to answer a question asked of me by the member for Stuart in regard to trust funds. The 1989-90 budget provides for \$27.04m to be paid from the Northern Territory Housing Commission Trust Account to the Consolidated Fund. This is being effected at the rate of about \$6.08m per quarter. That makes approximately \$20m to the end of March. The transaction is new in 1989-90, reflecting the fact

that the funds for public rental housing built by the Department of Transport and Works for the Housing Commission are now allocated by appropriation direct to the Department of Transport and Works. Previously, the Department of Transport and Works recouped its costs from the trust account. In order to provide moneys in the Consolidated Fund to do this, it is necessary to transfer the money from the trust fund to the Consolidated Fund. This is purely an accounting transaction with no financial significance.

Mr Ede: That is what I could not work out.

Mr PERRON: In the view of the administering department and the Housing Commission, the system of funding public rental housing from appropriation is a better way to go.

ANSWER TO QUESTION  
Gardens Hill Site

Mr MANZIE (Lands and Housing): Mr Speaker, in relation to a question asked by the member for Wanguri this morning, I would like to confirm that I have yet to receive advice from the Planning Authority in relation to Lot 5690, Dashwood Crescent.

Trade Development Zone - Contracts of Chinese Workers

Mr SMITH to MINISTER for INDUSTRIES and DEVELOPMENT

The minister will recall that, in apologising for his false accusations in relation to the Trade Development Zone, he expressed regret that the real issue of the human rights of workers there, particularly the Chinese workers, had been overlooked. Is he aware that a delegation from the provincial employer of the Chinese workers is presently in Darwin to discuss the workers' employment contracts? Further, can he confirm that the new contracts will entitle the workers to collect their full award wages or will the contracts simply be redrawn to leave the workers with little more than the amount of about \$US120 which they received under the original contracts after all deductions were made?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, I wonder if I might address the matter raised by the Leader of the Opposition in a broader context. I refer particularly to the tripartite negotiating arrangement and the monitoring committee which met in Darwin last Wednesday to continue talks aimed at resolving all of the issues which have arisen. All parties to the tripartite negotiating arrangement were present, although the ACTU and the Department of Industrial Relations were represented at national level by telephone conference. The aim of the meeting was to clear the decks, with a special further meeting likely to be held on 17 May at which the reactivation of the tripartite negotiating arrangement will be considered.

Honourable members will realise that the tripartite negotiating arrangement determines the conditions under which foreign workers take up temporary or guest status at the Trade Development Zone and that the arrangement has been suspended while aspects of working conditions for Chinese guest workers at the Hengyang factory have been examined. The basis of the present discussion is the payment of overtime to Hengyang guest workers and my understanding is that it will be completed to the satisfaction of all parties this week.

Concern remains about the existence of individual contracts between guest workers and employment agencies in China, which is what the Leader of the Opposition has alluded to, and conditions in those contracts which are totally unsatisfactory in an Australian environment. To this end, I met with representatives of the Guandong Manpower Corporation in Darwin last week. I explained to them that the contracts were not acceptable and that they needed to be replaced with documents recognising that the Chinese guest workers in Australia were entitled to the same rights as any other workers in Australia. After discussions, this position was recognised and accepted and I will be able to view the new contracts before they are put in place, unlike the previous contracts.

I have already come to similar arrangements with other participants in the Trade Development Zone, chiefly the SZ Australia group which plans to start operations at the TDZ in October. Honourable members will be aware that this group will become the largest employer in the Northern Territory when its 5-stage development plan is complete. It will be bigger than Nabalco, employing some 850 workers. Whilst most of these workers will be Australian, some will be Chinese.

I am confident that the tripartite negotiating arrangement will be renewed at the meeting on 17 May. I do not doubt that all parties to the

discussions agree in principle that the arrangement should continue and that the TDZ should continue to expand. I have had discussions with national and local representatives of the ACTU, various unions and Commonwealth departments. Those talks have been positive and encouraging. The 3 federal ministers with responsibilities in the area, Ministers Dawkins, Cook and Hand, have indicated their support for the concept of a tripartite negotiating arrangement within the TDZ environment. Hopefully, all matters outstanding from the unfortunate Hengyang affair are close to resolution, and the zone can get back to work.

#### Protest March by Aboriginal Women

Mr POOLE to CHIEF MINISTER

Last Saturday morning, the Chief Minister and the Minister for Health and Community Services met a large group of Aboriginal women in Alice Springs. These women were protesting against the prevalence of alcohol in the Northern Territory. What was the outcome of the talks the Chief Minister held which, I understand, continued over the weekend?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, I would be pleased to give the House some brief details of the talks that were held. The Minister for Health and Community Services and I met with about 12 male traditional tribal elders on Friday evening when we reached Alice Springs. On Saturday morning, there was a march by a large number of Aboriginal women from the regions around central Australia, and from as far away as the South Australian and Western Australian borders. They met with the minister and I for several hours on the Saturday afternoon. The march stemmed from concern felt by those people that the effects of alcohol on members of their communities were deleterious. Of course, those effects have been highlighted in recent times in Alice Springs.

The women put many matters to the minister and myself, the principal one being that they were not satisfied that organisations, which have been established over past years to speak on behalf of Aborigines, do in fact speak on their behalf. Two organisations mentioned in this regard were the Tangentyere Council and the Central Land Council. Most of the issues raised related to alcohol and alcohol abuse in the communities. They were concerned that tribal custom was being affected very severely by the large number of people who are abdicating their responsibilities to their families and communities by moving away, particularly from dry areas, and going to places like Alice Springs for long periods. They were gravely concerned also that, when Aborigines who have been on drinking binges return to their communities in a drunken state, they cause considerable violence and grave concern to families. The women believe that all take-away liquor outlets should be shut down. They oppose the formation of any Aboriginal licensed clubs in Alice Springs. That view was modified by some of the speakers opposing more than one Aboriginal drinking club in Alice Springs. The government has handed over land for a licensed Aboriginal club in Alice Springs as an experiment to determine whether or not people who run such a club can make inroads into educating Aboriginal drinkers in relation to alcohol.

A suggestion was proposed - and this was well-received by the traditional women - that steps should be taken to make it more difficult for Aboriginal drinkers to gain access to the money that they use to obtain alcohol. Much of the money used for the drinking binges is taxpayers' funds which are paid to Aborigines in the form of various welfare payments. It

is very sad to think that these payments, which are designed to help unemployed or ill persons support their families, are being used largely for this purpose by some people. We must be very careful not to make the mistake of believing that all Aborigines are in this situation. Indeed, it seems the majority of them are either non-drinkers or are able to handle alcohol quite adequately.

A suggestion was made that the cheques for these drinkers should be payable only on their communities and not in places like Alice Springs. Then they would have to return to their communities each week or fortnight when the cheque was due. At present, they can stay in Alice Springs indefinitely by registering with the local welfare office and picking up their cheques there. The families are not receiving very much benefit from those cheques. I propose to write to relevant federal ministers in this regard to propose they undertake an examination of that option.

The women suggested that money that was to be spent or proposed to be spent on establishing Aboriginal drinking clubs in Alice Springs would be better spent on Aboriginal women's centres on each of the communities in order that constructive activities could be fostered and that alcohol education programs could be run in conjunction with those centres. They advocated strongly that there should be no alcohol sales at all on Sundays. They said also that no special liquor licences should be issued for Aboriginal sporting events. There are a number of specifically Aboriginal sporting gatherings in central Australia and I understand that most, if not all, have such licences. That is not unusual in the Northern Territory of course. These women advocate that no such licences be granted for those venues.

I was given a letter signed by 2 male tribal elders. It advocated the abolition of drinking rights for Aborigines on the basis that they believed that Aborigines could not control themselves in relation to liquor. Alcohol has had such an effect on tribal custom and families that they believe that the drinking rights should be withdrawn. I pointed out to those men that what they were seeking was probably quite unconstitutional and impossible for the Northern Territory to introduce. I said that I did not believe that the wider Australian community would see that as a step forward. Nevertheless, I sympathise with the motivation of those people in proposing that extreme step to revert to pre-1967 when the law was changed to provide to Aborigines in the Northern Territory the same rights to consume alcohol as are available to other members of our community.

The Minister for Health and Community Services met separately with the women on Sunday morning and agreed to form a committee to work on health issues, including alcohol abuse problems. Traditional women will nominate a number of persons to that committee and they will deal direct with the minister and the minister's office on those issues. I met separately with the minister and tribal male elders and have undertaken to form what we have loosely called a council of traditional elders. This council will meet once or twice a year, or as required. The council will be comprised of specific senior Aborigines from each of the tribal regions in central Australia and it will meet with ministers only. No lawyers, anthropologists or bureaucrats will be involved in the process. These men specifically wanted to have a forum where they could meet directly with the government at the highest level and express their views. They felt aggrieved that no other forum has provided them this opportunity. They are very concerned that the Central Land Council claims to speak on their behalf and to represent their needs. They rejected the Central Land Council as being insufficiently

representative as a body, in an Aboriginal traditional way, to represent their views.

No one could deny the genuineness of the concerns that were expressed at the demonstration. It was moving to sit for several hours and hear speaker after speaker enunciate his or her perception of the grog problems in central Australia. We were speaking through interpreters at the time. It was not a case of simply seeking those Aboriginals who were articulate in English and listening to their views, although a couple of the traditional Aboriginal women certainly were competent English speakers as well. It brought home to me the fact that past actions by governments, though well meaning, have really established structures which have left the traditional tribal hierarchy out in the cold, as it were, under their systems.

Whilst a couple of honourable members opposite are far more familiar with these matters than I, it seems that the spokespersons for Aboriginal communities are clearly tribal elders, and they have their own system of deciding who should speak on behalf of the community. No community can speak on behalf of any other community, whether it is adjoining or otherwise. They do not follow the democratic system that we follow of electing people to boards and so on. In fact, it appears that that concept cuts right across the tribal system. I believe that the Northern Territory government will move increasingly towards seeking representation and the views of the tribal hierarchy in trying to meet the needs of Aboriginals.

Honourable members will be aware that the sacred sites legislation, which was passed controversially through this Assembly last year with very strong opposition from the land councils, requires a compulsory procedure of consultation with traditional custodians of sacred sites. That is exactly the type of provision that ought to be reflected in other laws of the Northern Territory. Nevertheless, the land councils, perhaps understandably, saw that as a threat to their very existence. They wanted to be the only bodies to speak in relation to sacred sites on behalf of Aboriginal custodians. I think that is unfortunate.

I believe that, in the future, we should go increasingly to the right and powerful people under tribal tradition to talk about their people's needs and aspirations. The views we obtain through that process will be quite different from some of the views that are promulgated by other organisations, albeit well-meaning organisations which I am sure are trying hard to meet the needs of Aboriginals as they see them. However, that is the problem. For too long, we have discussed the subject of the needs of Aboriginals as if they are all one homogenous group with the same aspirations, and that is not the case at all. I appreciated the opportunity to talk to these people over the weekend. The government has taken on board a range of matters which it will examine and discuss further with them.

#### Government Consultation with Aboriginal People

Mr BELL to CHIEF MINISTER

I note with interest the comments just made by the Chief Minister in respect of his meeting at the weekend with traditional Aboriginal women, and Aboriginal women from Alice Springs and from many of the communities in my electorate. I should point out that I was invited by the Chief Minister's staff to attend the rally but not, unfortunately, to attend the subsequent meetings. As a member of the Sessional Committee on the Use and Abuse of Alcohol by the Community, I have 2 questions. Firstly, how does the Chief Minister expect this new consultative process that he has set up to

relate to the actions of this Assembly? Secondly, I note the Chief Minister's apparent distrust of Aboriginal organisations that are based in Alice Springs, and that was an unfortunate theme of the Chief Minister's meeting. Does the Chief Minister accept that those organisations have an important role to play?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, in response to the honourable member's first question, I believe that there is an important role to be played by the Sessional Committee on the Use and Abuse of Alcohol by the Community in going to some of these communities, either by way of full session or perhaps subcommittee, and that is that it should go to whatever lengths are necessary to contact members of the appropriate tribal hierarchy to obtain their views. I believe that the attitude of those people should warrant special attention in the committee's report. I am sure the honourable member will know exactly what I am talking about and will be able to facilitate that happening, particularly within his own electorate.

The honourable member commented that I reflected some mistrust of Aboriginal organisations working on behalf of Aboriginals. It is not mistrust. As I said in my earlier response, I believe that these organisations are well meaning and do a great deal of good work, and I speak of organisations such as the Tangentyere Council. Most certainly, I believe that they have a role to play. However, as a result of the weekend's activities, I will regard with more scepticism the firm attitudes put forward by organisations like the Tangentyere Council when they claim to reflect the attitudes and aspirations of 'Aboriginals'. The problems differ from place to place, and the views and possible solutions certainly differ from place to place as well. It is wrong for an organisation, which is based in urban Alice Springs and which, I believe, is comprised mainly of Aborigines who have spent much of their lives in Alice Springs, to claim to be able to speak on behalf of traditional Aborigines living all over central Australia.

#### Australia New Zealand Transport Authorities Conference

Mr SETTER to MINISTER for TRANSPORT and WORKS

At the recent Australia New Zealand Transport Authorities Conference held in Darwin, what agenda items had specific relevance for the Northern Territory, and what implications do they have for future directions in the Territory?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, ANZTAC, as it is known, is comprised of senior officers of all transport authorities throughout Australia, both state and federal, and a representative from New Zealand. The agenda included items on the licensing system, vehicle registration, commercial passenger vehicle requirements, road safety, and some aviation and shipping topics. It was pleasing to have those officers in the Territory where they could see some of the problems that Territorians face in relation to road safety. These problems are quite dramatically different from those elsewhere in Australia. For that reason, the safety items on the agenda were certainly of most interest to myself.

For myself, the highlight of the conference was the recognition that the Northern Territory has been a leader in many ways in the development of



uniformity in traffic regulations. Much of that has conflicted with the views expounded recently by the federal minister. During the course of the 2 days, we discussed the Prime Minister's 10-point package briefly. The ministers will be considering the 10-point package again in Perth later this month. The conference gave me the opportunity to raise some very specific issues that I think are worthy of addition to the 10-point package. I should indicate to honourable members that I will be forwarding to my interstate ministerial colleagues and to the federal minister an amendment to the 10-point package that I believe is more practical and would lead to identifying specific solutions to each state or region's unique problems.

In addition, I was able to highlight matters which were omitted from or undersold in the original 10-point package. One of these relates to seat belts. The federal minister has castigated us already for our track record this year, and it is not glorious at all. Nevertheless, when the actual problems that are faced in the Territory are analysed, it is obvious that we need to arrive at different solutions from those applied in the south-east corner of Australia. Of the first 23 fatalities this year, not one of the victims was wearing a seat belt where a seat belt was fitted. Obviously, some of the fatalities are motor cyclists or pedestrians but, of all the vehicular accidents, not 1 person killed was wearing a seat belt. Members will be aware that we have flagged an increase in the penalties for seat belt offences. However, that is not good enough in itself. As I did in December, I will be asking my transport minister colleagues to examine technical means of addressing this extremely devastating problem.

In addition, our statistics involve a far greater representation of Aboriginal people. These relate not only to serious accidents and fatalities in the bush - and travelling in the trays of vehicles is high on our agenda - but also the accidents that occur when Aboriginal people come to town. While those accidents do not always involve alcohol, alcohol is involved in a high proportion of pedestrian accidents. However, often Aboriginal people have trouble in handling the road traffic conditions in towns and we need to be addressing those matters seriously through some educational programs. The stability of vehicles on bush roads is another matter which I wish to have included on the agenda. The number of single vehicle roll-overs, particularly on gravel roads, is of great concern to us.

All in all, the meeting addressed a broad range of issues. Those of principal interest to me and, I believe, to Territorians generally, are those of road safety. We will be taking those matters to ATAC later this month in what I believe to be a far more sensible and a far more achievable 15-point road safety package.

#### Death of Mr Francisco Pires

Mr SMITH to MINISTER for POLICE, FIRE and EMERGENCY SERVICES

In this tragic case, given that Mr Pires was known to be depressed at the prospect of police charges against him, and given the knowledge that police in fact did not intend to proceed with those charges, why was Mr Pires not advised much earlier that the charges would not be proceeded with?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, I do not have that information before me at present. However, I will undertake to obtain it and pass it on to the Leader of the Opposition during these sittings.

Darwin Water Supply

Mr FIRMIN to MINISTER for MINES and ENERGY

At least one landholder in the Darwin rural area has been publicly critical that decisions have not yet been made in relation to the location of water reservoirs in the region to supply the needs of Darwin and its environs well into the next century. Is the honourable minister in a position to say when such decisions will be made?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, I am indeed aware of the situation to which the member for Ludmilla refers. I understand that the Minister for Lands and Housing will address the matter of the strategy plan for the Darwin rural area in a statement to the House today. One of the highlights of that strategy plan is the provision of water to service a Darwin population which is expected to rise to a million within the next 100 years.

I have a fair degree of sympathy for the plight of rural landholders affected by the siting of future dams and I can understand their frustration. Because the government has undertaken the exercise properly, with full consultation with the community, it is well known that property in certain areas is likely to be affected. As a result, landholders are finding it difficult to sell those properties and, in most cases, are waiting anxiously for decisions to be made. However, we are talking about the expenditure of large sums by government and the establishment of a sound and stable water supply for Darwin and the immediate region for the next 100 years. It is not a matter for an off-the-cuff decision. The government needs to be completely satisfied that all detailed, technical and financial studies have been completed before committing such funds. The exhaustive process is now almost complete. This month, Cabinet will have before it all the material needed to make this important decision. The first event to follow the decision will be discussions with the landholders affected. It could be that up to 34 properties will be involved.

Preliminary talks have already been held with landholders. They will be offered either land swap, other arrangements or acquisition of their land. In all cases, the value of properties will be determined by the Valuer-General. Initially, the government looked at several sites in terms of the potential for major reservoirs. After public discussions and geotechnical investigation, the sites at Batchelor, Acacia Gap and Tumbling Waters were dropped from consideration. The decision now focuses on sites at Marrakai, Warrai and Mount Bennett, and which one should proceed first. I am pleased to report that the waiting period for affected landholders is almost at an end.

Trade Development Zone - Contracts of Chinese Workers

Mr COLLINS to MINISTER for INDUSTRIES and DEVELOPMENT

In the light of the fact that some 200 000 guest workers from China are working throughout the world, and that they all sign contracts with the Chinese government before they are allowed to leave China, what guarantees can the minister give that, when they return to China, the Chinese workers at the Trade Development Zone will not have to pay back the full Australian wages for which the minister has been fighting? If he cannot give any guarantees, would it not be a good idea to obtain our guest workers from places like Taiwan or Hong Kong?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, as I said in response to the Leader of the Opposition in his first question this morning, I am confident that the people from the Guangdong Manpower Corporation are aware of the facts. This is the first time that they have started doing business with Australia. The Guangdong Manpower Corporation alone would have 200 000 guest workers placed around the world, and I think the figure is probably in excess of 1 million people. We have pointed out to the people of the Guangdong Manpower Corporation that their contracts are unacceptable unless they offer conditions equal to or better than those which apply currently to all Australian citizens. They are well aware of that now. They understand that, and they have gone away to review those contracts in that light.

It is worth saying that, after their investigation of the working and living conditions here, they hailed them as the best that they had seen. They travel to many countries around the world where they have guest workers placed, yet they have hailed ours as some of the best working conditions that they have inspected. I sincerely support their observations in that regard. Very good working conditions are offered at the Trade Development Zone. The Guangdong Manpower Corporation is in no doubt about what is acceptable in Australia regarding working conditions. A contract is a contract and those contracts will be adhered to.

Year 10 Examination Essays and Violence

Mr BELL to MINISTER for EDUCATION

The minister will recall that he has been reported as being concerned about violence depicted in essays written by Year 10 students during their examinations. Will the minister confirm reports that he intends to require inspection of school and community library stocks for what he describes as 'anti-social material'? Will he detail the mechanism by which this is to be accomplished and what he intends to do with such anti-social material once it is identified? Finally, can he confirm that, as Minister for Education, when the sexual abuse phone-in was conducted in 1985, he banned posters advertising that very phone-in on the problem of sexual abuse from Northern Territory schools?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, I thank the honourable member for his question. I had expected him to put it earlier because I had anticipated that he would continue with the wonderful Shakespearian performance that he commenced last night on the 7.30 Report.

Mr Bell interjecting.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The member for MacDonnell's question was heard in silence. It was a statement and a question. We gave the honourable member a tremendous degree of latitude and I would hope that he will listen now to the minister in silence.

Mr HARRIS: Mr Speaker, the acting opposition spokesman on education does not have a good record for his acting. I recall the last exercise, when he started to talk about patronage of clubs, and how he shot from the hip on that occasion. He has done that again in this exercise. In fact, the member for MacDonnell has not checked the details at all. Last Saturday's NT News reported the position accurately. I received a report

from the Board of Studies on Year 10 assessment. Concern was expressed in that report and I asked to have the matter investigated. Could I also ...

Mr Bell: By whom?

Mr HARRIS: By the Board of Studies. It is up to the Board of Studies to determine how it will do this. All I have done is ask it to investigate this matter. I am surprised at members of the opposition. They have nothing of substance to raise and so they are digging up issues. I guess this relates back to the Labor Party platform which indicates that the party intends to eliminate all forms of censorship in public or private for any person. That is what members of the opposition should be talking to the people about, and they have a great deal to answer in that regard.

COGSO was also concerned about this issue. In its newsletter, it made the following comment: 'However, there is cause for concern about the widespread level of violence included in answers and of student expectation that the future will be nasty and brutish'. COGSO was concerned, as I am concerned. It is quite obvious that members of the opposition are not concerned about this issue. They would not have it investigated at all. They would have the board look at the issues and advise the minister, and then the minister would do nothing.

This government is concerned about these issues. Crime and violence is of major concern in our community today.

A member interjecting.

Mr HARRIS: Mr Speaker, a report has been made by the National Committee on Violence, and the member for MacDonnell raised this issue. It is true that it has made constructive suggestions for the prevention and control of violence in Australia. That is fine; I am not denying that at all. It is a good report which contains recommendations that need to be examined, but let us not stop there. If we identify that, at certain year levels, there are concerns in relation to what is being written in answers by the students, those matters should be investigated. I have initiated such an investigation on this occasion.

I mentioned this matter when I opened a seminar and at the AGM of COGSO recently in Katherine. I am sure that most of those people are as concerned as I am about the trend that was indicated in some of those papers. All I have done is ask that the Board of Studies look into this matter and report to me by the end of the year. How it goes about that is entirely up to the Board of Studies. I will not become involved in that exercise, but the matter is of concern to this government. It is about time that members of the opposition realised that, if they are raised, such matters should be pursued vigorously through a body such as the Board of Studies. I have asked the board to investigate this matter and also to examine matters in relation to students below Year 10 or above. I am happy to give the opposition a copy of that. There will be a major report from the Board of Studies. All I have asked is for the matter to be investigated and that is what is happening.

#### Allegations Relating to Education System on Groote Eylandt

Mr SMITH to Minister for Education

My question relates to another matter which ought to be inquired into. I refer to allegations concerning the education system on Groote Eylandt.

This morning, a petition, calling for a public inquiry, was presented from 203 adults on Groote Eylandt. We know that the honourable minister initially rejected calls for such an independent investigation into events on Groote Eylandt on the basis of internal reports and teacher support. Now that we have this petition from 203 people on Groote Eylandt and the minister has had time to review the files and has been made aware of the widespread rejection of the internal report by teachers throughout the Northern Territory, is he prepared to initiate such an independent inquiry?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, the issue of Groote Eylandt has been thrashed out very thoroughly. The longer that debate continues on this issue, the more it will undermine the morale of teachers in that community and other communities. I spoke to the Leader of the Opposition outside of the Assembly during the last sittings and I told him that I would be looking into this matter. I indicated that I would be watching what happened very carefully. Many people suggest that teachers should be moved on regularly. That relates to the comment about the so-called 'old boys' network'. The longer someone remains in one community, the more likelihood there is of an old boys' network being established. On the other hand, there is the comment that isolated schools and areas want consistency in respect of teaching staff. They want teachers to remain for more than 2, 3 or 4 years. That wish has been expressed by people in those areas, and that needs to be examined too. I believe that the allegations in respect of Groote Eylandt had no substance whatsoever. That was identified when Col Young went to Groote Eylandt to defend his case. He has to put forward a view in relation to his members and I accept that he has that right. He went there for a public meeting, and very few people attended.

At this stage, I am satisfied with the processes that have been followed. I have indicated very clearly to this Assembly that certain processes are required to be adhered to by the Department of Education and the Teaching Service Commissioner. I am aware that the Leader of the Opposition has written to me in relation to this. On a previous occasion, I made the comment that mistakes had been made on both sides, that those matters had been examined and that the people concerned had been spoken to and had spoken to each other. I believe that the matter has been settled.

Community Service Orders Scheme

Mr POOLE to MINISTER for PRIMARY INDUSTRY and FISHERIES

The Secretary of the Trades and Labor Council, Mark Crossin, alleged on ABC radio over the weekend that participants in the Community Service Orders Scheme would be used to do the work of council employees. Is it intended that community service orders replace work undertaken by council employees?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, I heard the reports on ABC radio in relation to Mr Crossin's comments. He expressed concern regarding possible competition from community service orders participants doing the work of council employees. I believe his concern was aroused by a letter that I wrote to the councils in Darwin, Litchfield, Katherine, Tennant Creek and Alice Springs the week before last urging them to make more use of the Community Service Orders Scheme. I did that because I believe there is potential under the scheme for councils to avail themselves of further assistance over and above - and

this is a point that I have been very careful to emphasise - the work done by council employees or day contractors.

The scheme was introduced in the Northern Territory in 1979 as an alternative to prison sentences. It has been working extremely well. That is best illustrated by the fact that, apart from the successes achieved in the Northern Territory, it has attracted considerable attention from authorities interstate. Participants work on projects especially approved by regional community service orders panels.

I was a little surprised to hear Mr Crossin's comments. As far as I am aware, he had not approached the Department of Correctional Services and, certainly, he had not approached my office for advice or assistance in relation to his comments. In fact, as do members of the community, the unions have representation on the community service orders advisory panels. When any job which community service orders participants might be directed to do comes up for consideration, the union has direct input through those panels. When writing to the councils and in statements that I made on radio, I took particular care to emphasise that in no way should the Community Service Orders Scheme be used to undertake work done currently by council employees or contractors. It is my view that there are many jobs that could be done by community service orders participants. For example, there are simple jobs such as litter clearance and the beautification of towns to the benefit of the councils and the ratepayers. Such work could be done at minimal cost although the councils would have to provide supervisors. The communities would be cleaner and more presentable to residents and visitors. This is important for our tourist industry.

Work done for councils in this way would certainly place emphasis on the community aspect of the Community Service Orders Scheme. It would be work done by the participants for the community. I believe that would lead to a better appreciation in the minds of the general public of the value of the scheme. That is important because, if the scheme is not well-respected by the community, it could be in danger of losing its value. I emphasise to honourable members and indeed to any council employees that it is not intended that community service orders participants undertake work that council employees currently undertake. I urge Mr Crossin to contact my department or my office if he seeks further information. I reaffirm that, in any event, unions have representation on the panels which consider any work to be done.

#### Sentencing for Rape and Assault Offences

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH to ATTORNEY-GENERAL

The minister has said publicly that he has put in place an investigation into all relevant legislation dealing with sentencing prisoners for criminal offences. When will we see a result in the form of suitable punishment to fit gross crimes against women such as rape and assault? Women are beginning to lose faith in government attention to their personal welfare. They believe that it is more than time that perpetrators of major crimes of assault should be made to pay suitably heavier penalties.

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, this problem is not unique to the Northern Territory. It is evident Australia-wide and even in other areas around the world. I will be making a detailed statement on the matter tomorrow. I certainly hope that

the member for Koolpinyah will contribute in a positive way towards the debate on that statement.

Pastoral Properties - Rents and Ownership

Mr LEO to CHIEF MINISTER

I am aware that this question deals with the subject of pastoral leases. I direct it to the Chief Minister because it requires an answer on a matter of government policy as opposed to departmental administration. Is the Chief Minister aware of reports at the weekend regarding the ownership of, and rents being paid for, pastoral properties in the Northern Territory? What explanation can he offer for the fact that the government of Brunei pays less rent than a tenant of a Housing Commission unit for property holdings which cover an area as large as the country of Brunei? Further, what explanation can he offer for the fact that, despite the recommendations of the Martin Report of 1980, we still have no foreign power ownership register in the Northern Territory? What explanation does he have for the fact that there is no public register of who owns what leases over what pastoral lands in the Northern Territory?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, I believe that the question would be more appropriately directed to the Minister for Lands and Housing, who is responsible for the matters raised by the honourable member. However, I point out that the drawing of comparisons between parties such as the government of another country and a Housing Commission tenant is really quite absurd.

Pastoral Properties - Rents and Ownership

Mr LEO to MINISTER for LANDS and HOUSING

Mr Speaker, I readdress my question to the Minister for Lands and Housing.

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, to suggest that lessees of properties pay a pittance in rent in comparison with people who are in Housing Commission houses is a gross distortion of fact. I would hope that, after all his time as a member of parliament, the member for Nhulunbuy is aware of the procedures involved in obtaining pastoral leases. The owner of a pastoral lease is required to purchase the pastoral lease at a market price and, in some cases, that price is many millions of dollars. Furthermore, there is a requirement to meet covenants involving expenditure on fencing, bores, buildings, yards, stock and so on. There are requirements to be met under the Brucellosis and Tuberculosis Eradication Campaign. In respect of the comparison with a Housing Commission tenant, if the tenant was required to pay the full market value of the house and, in addition, to pay rent and meet requirements in relation to fencing and the building itself, the comparison would be valid. Obviously it is not.

Any suggestion that people are receiving some type of special deal is ridiculous in the extreme. Indeed, the fact that people are forced to pay full market value as well as a rental seems to be something that should be looked at in terms of fairness. Mr Speaker, you would be well aware of what occurred before we had self-government in the Territory. In those days, all properties were held under leasehold title and an annual rental charge

applied. I think the rental for my block of land was 10¢ or \$1 a year. The member for Nhulunbuy's suggestion is ludicrous. I wonder whether he really knows what is required of purchasers of pastoral leases or whether he is trying deliberately to mislead people. Either he is trying deliberately to mislead people or he is abysmally ignorant of the circumstances of pastoral properties.

As far as a list of owners is concerned, the information is public. The Land Titles Office has the information. Recently, I answered a written question in relation to who owns what where. In this context, it is worth pointing out that the only group which is not required to pay rent or meet covenants etc is that of Aboriginal parties who, on purchasing a property, apply to have the land converted to Aboriginal land under the Land Rights Act. It then becomes inalienable freehold and totally divorced from the Territory requirements. It cannot be purchased, sold or controlled. That is a matter which needs detailed consideration because I believe all Australians should be treated equally, regardless of the colour of their skin.

ANSWER TO QUESTION  
Water Supply in Darwin Area

Mr COULTER (Mines and Energy): Mr Speaker, last week the member for Koolpinyah asked a question concerning water supply in the Darwin area. The matter was raised in the context of the below average rainfall figures for the last wet season. Whilst Darwin received a considerable amount of rainfall during the weekend, until Friday evening the 1989-90 wet season had produced 1116 mm of rain compared with the annual average of 1652 mm. Darwin's water supply is drawn from 2 sources, 90% coming from the Darwin River Dam and 10% from the McMinns bore field. The Darwin River Dam is currently 60% to 65% full and contains enough water for several years supply. There is no plan to increase water pumping from the McMinns bore field. There are no plans for water restrictions in Darwin or elsewhere in the Northern Territory and no evidence to suggest that the level in the McMinns aquifer will be significantly lower this year as a result of Power and Water Authority pumping.

I note that the member for Koolpinyah again raised the subject of metering of bores in the rural area. She has to start acting responsibly sooner or later, but I will say again that there is no intention on the part of the Power and Water Authority to meter bores in the rural area.



Mr COULTER (Deputy Chief Minister): Mr Speaker, in the Chief Minister's absence, I ask that any questions relating to his portfolio areas of responsibility be directed to myself.

Sheraton Hotels and Yulara Costs

Mr SMITH to MINISTER for INDUSTRIES and DEVELOPMENT

This morning, as I understand it from a newspaper reporter, the Chief Minister said that the government planned to plunge the Territory into deficit budgeting. Some 8 days ago, the minister was asked how much of the expenditure of the Department of Industries and Development, which has already blown out by \$7m, has been sunk into the government's Sheraton and Yulara deals. The minister promised to supply that figure during these sittings. Could he supply it now?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, firstly, may I say that deficit budgeting has always been an option that is open to the government. It is an option which the Treasurer always has in trying to get through yet another fiscal year. In respect of what the Chief Minister and Treasurer said to a reporter this morning, I was not present and therefore I can hardly be expected to comment on that without direct knowledge. I have a transcript of the interview that he gave this morning and there is no doubt that the mission that the Chief Minister is on today is probably the most crucial mission to Canberra ever to be undertaken by a member of a Northern Territory government.

I would like to spend some time on this issue because it is very important. I ask for the Leader of the Opposition's indulgence in answering this question.

Mr Smith: Sure.

Mr COULTER: I will supply him with the information that he and the Deputy Leader of the Opposition asked for recently.

For the benefit of honourable members, I will read the letter that the Chief Minister has written to the Prime Minister. He will meet with the Prime Minister this afternoon at 5 o'clock. He wrote to the Prime Minister on 20 April:

On 27 April last year, I met with Treasurer Keating to attempt to settle on a level of ongoing special assistance for the Northern Territory. You will recall that officers from our respective Treasuries had collaborated earlier on a joint report about the Northern Territory's physical disabilities. That report confirmed that the Territory's physical disabilities were real, largely beyond the Territory government's influence or control, and had been compounded over 5 years by a series of sharp cuts to our general purpose funding. Officers did not feel able to agree, however, that the disabilities were ongoing and thus warranting a permanent supplement to the Territory's funding base.

I have had the Treasury officers' report updated to take account of the Grants Commission relativities update of March 1989. The updated report clearly shows that the Northern Territory's physical disabilities identified therein have, far from diminishing, actually increased over the intervening year. This confirms, yet again, that

the Northern Territory requires special revenue assistance on a continuing basis, assessed on all relevant expenditure needs and revenue capacities, not just those in the Grants Commission standard budget, instead of the ad hoc and partial support given at the Premiers Conference according to the federal government's prevailing macro-economic policy objectives.

I am gravely concerned about the Territory's budget prospects for 1990-91. Present indications are that there could be a gap as high as \$70m between realistic revenue estimates and the maintenance of real expenditure. Far from being a situation of our own making, this prospective revenue deficiency arises primarily because of the continuing fall in real Commonwealth payments implicit in your forward estimates. We only managed to cope with the last cut by using up our modest cash balances, and that is no longer an option. The depressed Territory economy, especially in the aftermath of the pilots' dispute, is a further contributing factor to the budget difficulties.

I must emphasise that this is not the result of seeking to provide standards of service higher than in the states or the ACT. Indeed, the Grants Commission found that, in 1987-88, the Northern Territory was providing below average levels of government services in the standard budget areas which account for the bulk of government services. ABS data since 1987-88 demonstrates that the Territory's standards have continued to fall relative to those in the states. I have little doubt that the next update, due shortly, will confirm that trend. We need increased Commonwealth assistance to close this prospective budget gap responsibly.

The only realistic alternative to additional Commonwealth support is a further reduction in standards of services to Territorians to levels even further below those applying elsewhere in Australia. Looking beyond 1990-91, it is clear that the problem is getting worse, given the progressive move to equal per capita funding in certain areas not assessed by the Grants Commission, most notably general purpose capital funding. To avoid annual political decisions, some mutually acceptable and ongoing arrangements are necessary to ensure the Territory's overall fiscal capacity does not fall even further behind that of the states.

I need to discuss these issues with you in the near future and I would like to suggest that we take advantage of the fact that we are both scheduled to attend EPAC on 11 May.

Mr Speaker, to the Prime Minister's credit, the Chief Minister had absolutely no difficulty in obtaining an appointment with the Prime Minister to discuss this very serious issue.

I have the response to the Deputy Leader of the Opposition's question regarding the Sheratons. An increase in funding has been provided to the Sheratons and I will table that for the Leader of the Opposition. An increased amount went to the tourist industry and an additional amount was also required because of the Alice Springs flood.

I turn now to the question which the honourable member asked last week. I had intended to deliver a response after today's question time. During question time last Wednesday, the member for Stuart intimated that, in the third quarter of the 1989-90 financial year, expenditure by the Department

of Industries and Development totalled some \$36m, which is \$7m more than the department's allocation for the whole year. He further asked, with highly subjective qualifications and descriptions, how much of this expenditure related to those contingent assets otherwise known as the Yulara Sheraton and the other Sheraton hotels. I undertook to provide substantive data in response to his question during the course of these sittings and, with the indulgence of honourable members, I will do so now.

As honourable members will clearly recall, the pilots' strike of 1989 had a quite disastrous effect on the number of tourists and others who would otherwise have visited the Territory during that extended period. It will also be recalled that the Northern Territory government undertook remedial initiatives which were innovative, timely and effective, and which were widely applauded by our own community and throughout Australia. These included aircraft charters and stages 1 and 2 of a tourism assistance scheme. Unfortunately, while these responses were necessary they were also expensive. Markedly diminished hotel occupation led to the necessity for significant additional funding in relation to tourism infrastructure support. Indeed, most of the additional expenditure by the Department of Industries and Development went into those areas, particularly the Sheratons.

Those expenditures could not have been anticipated when the department's budget was formulated and they were not able to be absorbed by the department's original appropriation of \$29.169m. As a result of the approved budget review, the department received an additional \$11.2m. This comprised \$2m for stages 1 and 2 of the tourism assistance package and \$9.2m for tourism infrastructure support. In addition, the department received \$2m from the Treasurer's Advance for the purchase of the Darwin Joinery. The net effect of these variations is described in the summary which I have tabled.

At this stage, I will leave it at that and simply conclude by saying that things are pretty tough. I started out in this Assembly last week by showing what the picture of Australia's economy was like. Things do not look to be getting any better. We will get through in the Territory. There is hope. It is not all doom and gloom. The Trade Development Zone is one light at the end of the tunnel. It will cushion our economy from the effects of the economic downturn which has gripped Australia for more than 2 years. The oil industry is another. Both are growth industries that will support us and I am quite confident. We have been in tough times before although I stress that, as I said at the commencement of my answer, the Chief Minister's mission is the most important such mission ever undertaken by a minister of a Northern Territory government. On behalf of all Territorians, I wish the Chief Minister well in his discussions with the Prime Minister at 5 pm this evening.

Expenditure Cuts by Northern Territory Government  
Departments

Mr SMITH to ACTING TREASURER

I note in passing that the estimated budget for the full year for Yulara and the 2 Sheratons was \$16.7m. Already this year, we have spent \$23.4m, an increase of over \$7m or more than 40%. Clearly, that is one of the reasons why this government is looking at deficit budgeting in the next 12 months. Will the minister confirm that departmental heads have been told to make significant expenditure cuts in advance of the next budget, and indicate the extent of the cuts demanded?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, as I understand it, we have been told by the Commonwealth that, if we maintain expenditure at the current level throughout 1989-90, we will receive 3% less than we received last year in real terms - some \$30m. That is simply to do what we did last year without any budget bids, without any new initiatives and without substitution. That is a cut in what we will receive from the Commonwealth in the first round of talks. That is the hard data that I can provide to the Leader of the Opposition. For a start, we will receive \$30m less than last year in real terms.

We do not envisage revenue picking up that much. We do not envisage any boom for the economy unless Coronation Hill goes ahead. There are a number of other initiatives that the federal government could undertake tomorrow to get our economy going. Unless there is finally some steel in the backbone of the federal Cabinet and it gets off the Northern Territory's throat, we do not envisage a very big expansion in our economy for next year. Revenue will probably be about the same as for last year.

That is the reality with which the Treasurer is faced. Already, he has \$30m less with which to do merely what he did last year. Naturally, departmental heads have been asked to look at ways and means of getting through the 1990-91 fiscal year. I am not aware of the minimum amounts by which CEOs have been asked to reduce their budgets. However, a great deal of time is being devoted to how we will get through the 1990-91 fiscal year.

Marrakai Pastoral Lease

Mr PALMER to MINISTER for LANDS and HOUSING

My question relates to the Marrakai pastoral lease. What stage have negotiations reached with the owners of that lease for the excision of an area for low-level tourism development and camping facilities?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, I am very pleased to be able to say that an application has been received to excise an area of approximately 11 km<sup>2</sup> from the Marrakai pastoral lease to develop a camp ground, a kiosk and a buffalo enclosure. A preliminary environmental report has been assessed and accepted and discussion with the applicants is currently occurring to finalise a number of details. My department will then be in a position to provide me with a briefing and recommendations.

I am very pleased to be able to inform honourable members and the community that public access to the billabong will be maintained. This has been of particular concern to fishermen. The applicant has agreed to excise the access road, the boat ramp area and the car park. These will remain as public assets. I am sure that will put to rest many of the concerns that have been expressed by a number of people. This will certainly provide quite a welcome camping area for both tourists and locals.

Deficit Budgeting in the Territory

Mr TUXWORTH to ACTING TREASURER

Can he advise whether, under the terms of the Northern Territory (Self-Government) Act, it is possible to have a deficit in the Northern Territory budget without the consent of the federal Treasurer because the

federal government underwrites the liabilities of the Northern Territory? If that is necessary, does the Territory have an undertaking from the Commonwealth that such an approval would be forthcoming?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, I will answer that question in the words of the Chief Minister. Somebody asked him recently how one becomes involved in deficit budgeting. He said with pride: 'We have never had to worry about it in all the years that we have been in government. We do not know'.

Mr Leo: You just borrow money.

Mr COULTER: There is a response from the member for Nhulunbuy.

True to his style, when Treasury officers put it to him on a number of occasions, the Chief Minister would simply refuse to listen to them or even discuss it. The truth is that, until yesterday, nobody knew how to become involved in deficit budgeting. Discussions took place yesterday at a briefing with officers from the Department of Treasury and that issue was discussed as an option that may be considered. I was not privy to those briefings. Some of the questions which the member for Barkly has asked this morning will be put to the Prime Minister at 5 pm today. Until now, the Territory government has never considered how it could become involved in deficit budgeting. I can only say that that option has never been considered before. It is a very involved and technical process. There are many restrictions placed on our becoming involved in deficit budgeting. All those issues are being considered at the moment as an option. As I said, it very much depends on the outcome of this afternoon's meeting with the Prime Minister and the Treasurer.

#### Imposts on Transport Industry

Mr FIRMIN to MINISTER for TRANSPORT and WORKS

From an article in yesterday's The Australian, it would seem that the Territory transport industry is set to suffer a major impost in the form of a national registration scheme and increases in fuel levies. Has the minister been made aware of the details of such developments and would this have an impact on the Northern Territory in any major way?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, certainly I read yesterday's article with a great deal of interest, as would anyone who has anything to do with the transport game in any remote area in Australia. Last week, we saw some leaks from an interstate commission report, which is to be tabled next week by the federal Minister for Transport, that registration for trucks is to rise, in the Territory's case from some \$900 per truck to some \$16 000 per truck. I do not have a copy of the report as yet. I assume that, in due course, we will receive a copy of what the federal government intends to do in regard to the recommendations.

The leaks of yesterday indicated a 10¢ per litre increase in fuel tax. That would increase the price of fuel at the bowser in Darwin to about 80¢ per litre. I remember the days when we used to wonder if the price of fuel would ever reach \$1 a gallon. At this stage, it has long gone past \$1 a gallon although it is still \$1 a gallon in the US, and one has to ask where the differences ought to be. When we look at the cost approaching \$1 a

litre, it is getting a little heavy. Of course, that will mean an extra \$3000m roughly in taxes into the federal government's coffers. To try to soften the blow, the federal government says that it will reduce the registration on small vehicles. I believe that registration fees on small vehicles in the Territory are the lowest in Australia at the moment or, if not, they are very close to it and very little reduction is available to Territorians. However, Territorians are heavier users of motor vehicles because we travel long distances etc. The impost of 10¢ a litre will have an astronomical impact on Territorians compared to others, and that is not only for the ordinary motorist.

Mr Leo: But it is not out of a report ...

Mr FINCH: The honourable shadow spokesman on transport ought to take a little more interest in this matter.

Mr Leo interjecting.

Mr FINCH: He may have had word from the federal minister on the side as to what the attitude will be. We will ask him next week, in view of the fact that he is showing so much interest. We will ask him next week, after the federal government has adopted its position. It is no good crying when it is already done. I call on him this week to contact his colleagues in Canberra and put to them the very special case for all residents of Australia who live outside of city limits, where we do not have access to rail as an alternative for freight. We pay sales tax on our freight ...

Mr Smith: On this side of the House, we are in the lucky position where we now have a minister in the federal government who is protecting our interests.

Mr FINCH: The Leader of the Opposition has now put his 2 federal colleagues right on the spot - which is where they ought to be. That must be to the advantage of Territorians and, if it is not, there are a few questions to be asked. The Territory now has in Canberra the secretary to the Minister for Transport and Communications - the federal member Warren Snowdon. We also have the Minister for Shipping and Aviation Support and he has direct access to the senior Minister for Transport and Communications. As I said last week, I expect that not only will they address the \$16 000 registration, where we do not have alternative transport, but also address this 10¢ per litre increase which will ...

Mr Bailey: What cooperation have you offered, Fred? Have you offered them your support?

Mr FINCH: If the member for Wanguri would like to contain himself for a moment, I will explain to him what this means.

Mr Speaker, that 10¢ a litre increase represents approximately a 5% increase in freight costs for Territorians ...

Mr Bailey: It does not represent anything at the moment.

Mr FINCH: It would represent a 5% increase in freight costs, and freight costs comprise one-third of the cost of most products on the shelf. That will mean a considerable cost increase for every Territorian. All I ask members opposite to do is to put in their word on each of those 3 subjects. It is quite simple. It is no good their sitting there and

going off half-cocked every 3 minutes. What is required of them is that they take their representative responsibilities seriously.

Mr Leo: Nothing is expected of you, Fred.

Mr FINCH: The member for Nhulunbuy, as the shadow spokesman for transport ...

Mr Leo: You couldn't deliver. You are a waste of time, space and fresh air.

Mr FINCH: ... ought to be concerned about this. His electorate has greater freight cost problems than the rest of the Territory. Mr Speaker, we always know when the member for Nhulunbuy is beaten for ideas and that is most of the time.

Mr Leo: Bring it on as a statement.

Mr FINCH: Mr Speaker, it is delightful. I guess it will be a sad day when he leaves this House.

Mr Leo: It will be the same day that you leave, Fred. The same day, mate.

Mr Smith: At least the member for Nhulunbuy will leave voluntarily. That is the difference.

Mr FINCH: Mr Speaker, we might have a debate on the circumstances of the member for Nhulunbuy's departure from this House at a later time. In the meantime, if he would like to engage the residue of his mental capacity for a few moments and think seriously on behalf of Territorians about ...

Mr Leo: Why don't you bring it on as a statement, Fred?

Mr FINCH: ... the 10¢ per litre increase, the \$16 000 registration fee per truck and the sales tax on freight, Territorians would be just that little bit better off.

#### Centre For Aboriginal and Islander Studies

Mr LANHUPUY to MINISTER for EDUCATION

What assurances can he give to this House and the students attending the Centre for Aboriginal and Islander Studies that the centre will receive adequate funding for the next financial year, and why was the supplementary assistance grant scheme not distributed equitably to the centre?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, a number of matters need to be canvassed in response to the honourable member's question. I will begin by saying that, on the steps of the Assembly this morning, I received a letter from Peg Havnen in relation to funds not being allocated to the Centre for Aboriginal and Islander Studies at the Northern Territory University. It related to a whole range of moneys, totalling some \$10.5m, which go into Aboriginal education. We spend a great deal of time and effort on making sure that money does go to Aboriginal communities for the development of schools, programs in outstations, community education centres and so on. Peg Havnen's letter

will be referred to my department and I will be responding to it. I have given her that undertaking.

I received a letter last night from the students of the Centre for Aboriginal and Islander Studies at the Northern Territory University in relation to funding. That letter was also referred to my department. Contact was made with the Vice-Chancellor of the university, Malcolm Nairn, and I understand that he will be meeting with CAIS to discuss the issues which have been raised. We are examining the matter.

It needs to be made very clear that this morning's demonstration directed hostility at the wrong quarter. It is not the Northern Territory government which should be kicked in relation to the funding of higher education; it is the federal government. I hope that the Canberra colleagues of honourable members opposite try to address the injustices which have been imposed on the Northern Territory in relation to the funding of our university. This year, we are contributing some \$6m towards higher education. It is disgraceful that we should have to do that, and honourable members opposite should be trying to bring about a situation in which our university is funded in the same way as other universities are. The Commonwealth government should be footing that bill.

I will continue to fight to ensure that the dollars allocated for Aboriginal education go to the areas where they are supposed to go. I have instituted a review of Aboriginal education and honourable members are aware of that. CAIS will be part of that review. I am talking about the very real issue of higher education. The review does not relate only to education in Aboriginal communities. It looks also at higher education for Aboriginal people. I make it very clear, however, that the bottom line is quality and the credibility of the courses which are developed and the awards which are issued. We cannot have a second-rate system. We must ensure that whatever we do maintains quality and credibility.

The other thing which people sometimes forget and need to be reminded about is that the Northern Territory University is autonomous. There are occasions when I would like to kick it, and one of those concerns the graduation ceremony tonight. However, it is an autonomous institution which looks after its own operation. It sets the rules and distributes the dollars to the various courses which it conducts. Of course, I will be making sure, as I always do, that the university is indeed performing its task. However, I do not have any control in relation to the development of the university and honourable members would be aware of that fact.

I ask honourable members to be aware of one thing. When they are promoting aggression towards the Northern Territory government, they should check their facts. The issue of funding in relation to the Northern Territory University is a matter for the federal government. As far as higher education is concerned, the federal government should be the target of any hostility, and I do battle with it continually. To give an example, Aboriginals are currently being denied funds through the Aboriginal education policy because of the slowness with which the agreement is being put together.

The Northern Territory government has been fighting for that funding. We had reached an agreement in relation to Aboriginal education policy where FEPPi and a whole range of people, including the Department of Employment, Education and Training, have been involved in putting together a proposal. The proposal went before Cabinet and Cabinet agreed to it. The negotiating team wanted further amendments and I agreed that we would again look at the



matter. I wrote to John Dawkins asking him to release the money. Some \$16m is being held up. This government is prepared to proceed immediately.

The hostility should be directed at the federal government. I give an undertaking to the people in the gallery here today that I will speak with CAIS in relation to Aboriginal education and funding. However, I ask them to get their facts straight. I am told that there was a banner this morning reading: 'NT Government Squeezing Us Out of Existence'. Goodness me! It makes one feel like chucking it all in and walking out the door. We are fighting very hard to ensure that all sectors of our community receive appropriate education as required. I will continue to do that, but I will not sacrifice quality in the process.

Kava

Mr SETTER to MINISTER for HEALTH and COMMUNITY SERVICES

The matter of excessive kava consumption in northern Arnhem Land communities has been of concern for quite some time now. The minister indicated recently that he intends to do something about that. Exactly what action does he intend to take?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, in answering this question, I must make an apology to some members of this Assembly. I had planned to make a ministerial statement in respect of kava during these sittings. I will not be able to do that because the situation is a little too fluid to make any definitive statement. A procedure is taking place at the moment and it would be my intention to proceed with a comprehensive debate on the total issue of kava perhaps during the next sittings.

In the meantime, I would like to give honourable members some background information on kava and what we are doing about it at the moment. I will attempt not to take up too much of the Assembly's time in doing so. Kava is pretty well known in the general community. Its scientific name is *Piper methysticum* which means intoxicating pepper. It is prepared from the crushed root of a pepper plant. It has been used traditionally for centuries throughout the South Pacific region. Since 1981, it has been used within the Northern Territory Aboriginal communities to the point where it is in heavy use in some 6 Aboriginal communities. Research in 1986 by a group called Alexander, Watson and Fleming found that 42% of people aged 15 and over in these communities drank kava, 71% of men and 22% of women drank kava and 70% of kava drinkers consumed kava at least once a week whilst 21% of drinkers consumed kava daily. That indicates a fairly heavy usage of kava within those communities.

There has been considerable debate over the years about whether it is good or bad. The argument was that, when a person drank kava, he or she did not get into fights and kill people as was the consequence of alcohol consumption, and that it did not cause the irreversible brain damage and death that had been occurring as a consequence of petrol sniffing. It was regarded as perhaps a less dangerous substance to be abused in communities. There was argument about whether in fact there was a health risk associated with it. That was substantially put to bed when Professor John Matthews, the head of the Menzies School of Health Research, and his colleagues published in the Medical Journal of Australia in July 1988 the results of findings. I might quote that for the benefit of honourable members:

The findings of this study have considerable public health importance as it appears that, in addition to its causing acute intoxication, sedation and relaxation, a rash and weight loss in long-term users, kava may also cause liver and renal dysfunction, haematological abnormalities and possibly pulmonary hypertension. On balance, it appears that the toxic effect of kava on the liver may be considerably greater than that of alcohol. At present, it is not known whether the long-term use of kava causes liver damage which progresses to cirrhosis of the liver and whether it causes chronic irreversible damage in other organs.

Later research indicates that it probably causes more liver damage than does alcohol. Anybody who has visited the communities where there is high kava usage has no doubt that it has quite serious health effects. There is significant evidence and certainly the view is held by many within those communities that kava consumption has contributed significantly to the deaths of a number of young people.

I have been particularly concerned about this issue since I have become Minister for Health and Community Services, and I initiated a series of inquiries and consultations directly with those communities through the Drug and Alcohol Bureau at the end of last year and early this year. Following lengthy debate and a number of reports, I decided finally that we needed to take some definitive action, at the very minimum to bring in controls and restrictions on the use of kava, if not to move to an outright ban on the product. That is really where the debate lies at the moment: whether we should move immediately to an outright ban on kava or whether we should move initially to impose some restrictions and then work towards the removal and banning of the product from the Northern Territory. It is my firm view that we should move quickly in whatever way we can to remove kava as one of the substances being abused in Aboriginal communities. I will move in that direction. The only issue under debate at the moment is how and how quickly we move to that position.

Following investigation into what powers I have available to me, some 10 days or so ago, I invoked the provisions of section 19(1) of the Consumer Protection Act. That section says that the minister may cause an inquiry to be carried out by the Commissioner for Consumer Affairs - and I have done that - into products that 'may cause death or injury to the body or health of any person, whether directly or indirectly, and, where it is determined that the goods do pose such a danger, the minister may make an order prohibiting or restricting the supply or sale of those goods upon such terms and conditions as the minister thinks fit'.

I have received a report from the Commissioner for Consumer Affairs that has referred me specifically to the findings of the Menzies School of Health Research. It is my view that I can and should impose the provisions of section 19(1) of the Consumer Protection Act to limit the supply of kava whilst I carry out an immediate investigation into the feasibility of a complete ban. That process will be carried out over the next month.

I have had an instrument prepared for signature. For the benefit of honourable members and by way of public advice to those who supply kava, I can advise that this instrument states: 'I Stephen Paul Hatton, the Minister for Health and Community Services, in pursuance of section 19(3) of the Consumer Protection Act, by this order prohibit the supply or sale of goods specified in the schedule except and with ...'

Mr BELL: A point of order, Mr Speaker! At the commencement of his answer to the question, the honourable minister said that he was not in a position to make a statement. For somebody who is not in a position to make a statement, he is reading a heck of a lot of the material before him. I suggest that he is abusing question time and should be instructed to finish as soon as possible.

Mr SPEAKER: There is a point of order. I ask the Minister for Health and Community Services to resume his seat because I think that he has answered the member for Jingili's question.

#### Restructuring of NTPS

Mr TIPILOURA to MINISTER for LABOUR, ADMINISTRATIVE SERVICES and LOCAL GOVERNMENT

I remind the minister that, on 17 April, the Office of the Public Service Commissioner informed all public servants that the Cullen Egan Dell job restructuring report would be fully implemented by September this year. I remind him that, 2 weeks later, Cabinet changed the date to September next year. Given the morale problem created by the uncertainty surrounding the outcome of the report, why was full implementation postponed, what was the cost of implementation, what bearing does that cost have on the decision to postpone, and how many positions have been upgraded as a result of the report and how many downgraded?

#### ANSWER

Mr Speaker, I am not in a position to answer all aspects of that question in detail. However, I can inform honourable members that the job evaluation system which the government is moving to put in place is the product of an agreement between the unions and the government before the Industrial Relations Commission to implement a system of broad banding and job evaluation as part of award restructuring. That is an agreement which is endorsed by all parties.

The Public Service Commissioner put before Cabinet a time frame for the implementation of the job evaluation system. The recommendation of the Public Service Commissioner in relation to that was endorsed by Cabinet. The present time frame goes beyond the September deadline originally published by the Public Service Commissioner. The decision to change that was made by the Public Service Commissioner as a result of the concern of many public servants that not enough time was to be provided under his original estimation for full evaluation of individual positions. That is the fact of the matter, which I am sure would be borne out by the Public Service Commissioner, if individuals wish to discuss that with him.

I should refer at this stage to Public Service Union Joint Secretary, Mr Rod Ellis - Ellis in Wonderland - who refused to take part in the job evaluation because, obviously, as candidate for the seat of Casuarina in the forthcoming Territory election, he wanted to be able to snipe from the sidelines rather than to take part, even though his union is a party to the agreement to put the job evaluation system in place. That is an outrageous situation. Numerous members of the Public Service Union have something to gain from job evaluation and the job evaluation system that we are putting in place, but the union secretary refused to participate for his own personal reasons. It is not unusual for this man to do this sort of thing. He has done it on a number of occasions in recent times, when he has put his

position as candidate for Casuarina before his duty as Joint Secretary of the PSU.

Mr Smith interjecting.

Mr McCARTHY: Mr Speaker, I stand by what I have said. Cabinet has endorsed the time frame suggested by the Public Service Commissioner. Progress is continuing on the job evaluation system. We will have the majority of positions in place in January and they will be finalised by September 1991.

#### Union Membership and Public Service Appointments

Mr POOLE to MINISTER for LABOUR, ADMINISTRATIVE SERVICES and LOCAL GOVERNMENT

I understand that, at a recent promotion appeal hearing, the union nominee asked the appellant whether or not he was a member of the union. Can the minister advise whether union membership is a criterion for selection in the Northern Territory Public Service?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, that is a very interesting question. I will respond by reading from the General Orders the criteria which apply to staff appointments, promotions and appeals in the Northern Territory Public Service. Section 34(1) says: 'In the selection of employees for promotion in the public service, consideration shall be given only to the relative efficiency of the employees available for promotion'. Section 34(2) says: 'For the purposes of this section, efficiency means suitability for the discharge of the duties, aptitude for the discharge of those duties, the extent of relevant experience, training, including formal training, capacity for development and relevant personal qualities'. Those are the criteria laid down by the government under General Orders.

I refer again to Ellis in Wonderland. I quote from his memo concerning union membership. It says: 'Recently, a union nominee to an Appeals Board asked the question: "Are you a member of the union?" This has created some debate as to whether or not the question was proper. To my mind it was'. This is Ellis in Wonderland, Mr Speaker.

Let us go down further in this memo and this will bring a real belly laugh, not only from members from this side, but I am sure also from members on the other side. It is almost as good as, or as bad as, what we find in the transition-to-government document and the Labor Party policy platform. This is from Ellis: 'It is fair comment to say that the unionist contributes more to the industry than the non-unionist'. He says that a unionist contributes more to an industry than does a non-unionist. He has the blatant hide to say to the 65% of the public service who are not unionists that they are not performing as well as the unionists do. I am sure that the 65% of public service employees who have now become aware of that will be appalled to think that their representative does not think that they perform as well as do his union members.

Mr Bailey: He is not their representative!

Mr McCARTHY: I thought the Leader of the Opposition went to Queensland to get ideas. He came back with a load of cane toads filled with poison to use on the public service.

'The question, of course' - and this is Ellis in Wonderland again - 'should only be asked in the above context', and the above context was to put everything in perspective. Imagine, Mr Speaker, how the non-unionist will feel when, at appeal, he will have to say: 'No, I am sorry, I am not a member of the union'.

A member: Why should he be sorry?

Mr McCARTHY: Well, no. It is simply another symptom of the blight of Labor Party policy.

In this House last week, I referred to the Leader of the Opposition's hit list. The hit list extends not only to where a person sits in the public service but to union membership. I will read again from Labor Party policy and, at this stage, this refers only to local government: 'Preference to unionists shall be extended by councils to all officers, staff and wage employees'. The Labor Party would offer preference to unionists for employment in local government. If it will do it there, it will put it into government entirely. The 65% of public service employees who are not members of a union would be under threat because they would not be given preference, even on appeal, as has been indicated by Ellis in Wonderland.

To show the sort of poison that this would-be leader has brought back from Queensland, here is a copy of The Weekend Australian ...

Mr SMITH: A point of order, Mr Speaker! Members on this side of the House have been very patient over this tirade, but I would remind you, Mr Speaker, that a very specific question was asked concerning promotion appeals. Frankly, the honourable minister has answered it very fully indeed.

Mr SPEAKER: I ask the Minister for Labour, Administrative Services and Local Government to finish his answer as soon as possible.

Mr McCARTHY: Mr Speaker, I want to draw to the attention of honourable members this issue of The Weekend Australian. It has the Gosse government hit list in Queensland that this man went across to find out how to copy. Already, he is planning whom he would get rid of in the public service. I know that there are EIs who are saying: 'For God's sake, I have been an understudy to you at E5 for a long time. Where will I be when you go?' That is what they are saying. They are very afraid.

Mr Speaker, I table this information: the PSU memo, The Weekend Australian article and the General Orders.

Kava

Mr SETTER to MINISTER for HEALTH and COMMUNITY SERVICES

How does he intend to invoke the instrument to control kava?

Mr Bell: Immature, Rick.

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, it is important that the community knows how I propose to implement the Consumer Protection Act in relation to kava which is a matter of some controversy in the Northern Territory. Even if the member for MacDonnell is not interested, I am sure that the member for Arnhem is.

With reference to section 19(1), I have signed an instrument today which means that, from 15 June, it will be illegal to supply or sell kava except in accordance with any approval that, from time to time, I may give. The effect of that is quite clear. If I do not give somebody a particular approval to sell it either for wholesale or retail, the sale will be illegal. It is my intention that, between now and that date, I will be in communication with each of the communities where kava is being consumed and with the current wholesalers of kava to discuss with them the circumstances under which they may be granted approval to supply kava to communities or where they may not be entitled to supply kava. In addition, I will be limiting the quantities that can be sold and the packaging and labelling regulations will be brought into full force as well as record keeping and liability for inspection to ensure proper controls are imposed.

I can advise that I will provide no approvals to supply kava in any form to any community where kava is not currently available, and no approval will be given to any community except with the express approval of the council of that particular community after extensive consultation. The restrictions and limitations that will be imposed will include any that those communities may wish to impose and may include additional restrictions that I think are important for public health purposes.

Former Methodist Church and Manse

Mr BAILEY to MINISTER for CONSERVATION

In the adjournment last night, I raised the matter of the former Methodist Church and manse. The minister gave a response. He stated that he was aware of the buildings and a possible impending risk to them posed by an auction to be held on 31 May. They are being sold as a prime redevelopment site. Will the minister give a commitment to make a decision prior to the auction as to whether he will be moving to protect the buildings or not so that potential bidders will be aware of his position? I would add, for the honourable minister's information, that the former church has been accepted on the National Estate Register and will be gazetted on 15 May. I state also that a Territory Labor government would like to support the maintenance of the integrity of those buildings.

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, there is no possibility of a Territory Labor government ever having the opportunity to protect any building and, in particular, those buildings.

I refer the honourable member to the comprehensive answer that I provided last evening. Quite obviously, I will be making a decision in respect of whether any protection or otherwise will apply to those buildings before the auction. As a matter of logic, I would need to make a decision before that date, and I will do so.

Winter Electricity Supply in Alice Springs

Mr COLLINS to MINISTER for MINES and ENERGY

Winter is approaching and that is a time of high electricity use in Alice Springs. The main source of power is the gas turbine which has a large capacity. Can the minister assure the people of Alice Springs that adequate capacity will be available and that, if that unit breaks down, electricity will still be supplied without restriction?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, within the next several weeks, I will be announcing a major upgrading of the power station and a major switchboard and circuit-breaker protection installation. As well, there will be some other developments with respect to capacity, new gas turbines etc. We are aware of the problem. Cabinet has discussed the issue and I will be in a position to make that announcement in the very near future.

Operation Raleigh

Mr FIRMIN to MINISTER for TRANSPORT and WORKS

I understand that some 120 young people will come to the Northern Territory this year to participate in Operation Raleigh. I know a request has been made to his department for some assistance. What form will that assistance take for this wonderful project that is to occur this year?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, the Northern Territory government is extremely pleased to be supportive of Operation Raleigh again. We supported it in 1987. This year, our assistance involves, among other things, the loan of some 13 vehicles. The vehicles were destined for auction but we will forgo that revenue for the 3 to 4 months that the project is in progress. The vehicles were handed over in the last day or so and some of them have already headed off into the bush on various projects. The projects are spread throughout the Northern Territory and I think there are 17 of them in all. They range from work at Cobourg Peninsula to diving in the harbour and some 4-wheel-drive work. Much of the work will be to the benefit of Territorians by way of effecting improvements to parks, recording of heritage and various other things. In addition to those very direct benefits, the Territorians who are participating will gain a great deal in terms of leadership qualities. After Operation Raleigh, the young people will return to their own countries throughout the world and we trust that, as occurred last time, they will act as ambassadors for the Northern Territory. That is an excellent return for the very small price paid through the loan of some vehicles.

SPECIAL ADJOURNMENT

Mr COULTER (Leader of Government Business): Mr Speaker, I move that the Assembly, at its rising, adjourn until Tuesday 14 August 1990 at 10 am or such other time and or date as may be set by Mr Speaker pursuant to sessional order.

Motion agreed to.

ANSWER TO QUESTION  
Removal of Banyan Tree

Mr FINCH (Transport and Works): Mr Speaker, during debate last week, the member for Wanguri raised the question of the removal of a banyan tree from a location which he described as 'north of the Supreme Court building'. For the benefit of honourable members, I would like to provide the background to the removal of that tree which was certainly not located to the north of the Supreme Court. It was between the old Supreme Court and the Nelson Building. The location of the tree was such that it was within the alignment of the proposed Parliament House. The architects and

surveyors deliberated on the matter quite extensively, and certainly I took a great deal of personal interest in the tree.

The member for Wanguri stated that the tree was part of the flora of the peninsula which predated white settlement. That, of course, is absolute nonsense, although it does not totally remove the concern that one does and should have for that tree. The tree did predate Cyclone Tracy. It was very badly damaged by that cyclone and the very poor state of health that it was in prior to its removal might have led people to believe that it was only about 15 years old. That was the advice of my department which, of course, was based on other external advice. Quite understandably, the very small size of the tree, relatively speaking, and its extremely poor health, was more a result of Cyclone Tracy than anything else.

The view of George Brown of the Darwin City Council was that there was no way that the tree would survive a move and that, secondly, it would never recover its original state of health and develop to the same extent as, for example, the tree next to the Wells Building. After a great deal of agonising, it was decided to remove the tree. It was not a clandestine operation carried out in the depths of the night. Discussions were held with George Brown at the council.

Mr Bailey: You should have asked Greening Australia about its concerns.

Mr FINCH: The member for Wanguri should acknowledge that some 30 other mature trees, which were capable of being transplanted, were so transplanted. The landscaping plan for the development will include banyan trees which will, given proper care and attention, reach the same stage of growth within 10 years as had the tree which was removed. I can allay the fears of the member for Wanguri. At one stage, he sought to blame on Greening Australia his misinformation to the House about the tree predating white settlement. That really was not very fair. His remarks in this House were made a couple of days before Greening Australia was aware of the situation and issued the press release.

Mr Bailey: Rubbish.

Mr FINCH: If he did not mislead Greening Australia, perhaps both have been misled by the same source. But, Mr Speaker, all is well. The landscaping proposals for the area, as with all Department of Transport and Works projects, will meet not only with the approval of Greening Australia but, I am sure, with the approval of the member for Wanguri who, during these sittings, has displayed an abysmal attitude towards the environment. He rode into this House on the coat-tails of the Green Independents and I am sure that they will be most interested in reading his speeches from these Assembly sittings.



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