

NORTHERN TERRITORY OF AUSTRALIA

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

Fifth Assembly
First Session

PARLIAMENTARY RECORD

Tuesday 22 November 1988
Wednesday 23 November 1988
Thursday 24 November 1988

Tuesday 29 November 1988
Wednesday 30 November 1988
Thursday 1 December 1988

Part I - Debates
Part II - Questions
Part III - Minutes

THE GOVERNMENT OF THE NORTHERN TERRITORY

AGRICULTURE AND RANGING

1980-81

ANNUAL REPORT

Printed and published by the
Government Printer, Darwin, Northern Territory,
Australia.

Copyright © 1981 by the
Government of the Northern Territory,
Australia.

Printed by the
Government Printer, Darwin, Northern Territory,
Australia.

NORTHERN TERRITORY LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

Fifth Assembly
First Session

Speaker	Roger William Stanley Vale
Chief Minister Treasurer	Marshall Bruce Perron
Opposition Leader	Terence Edward Smith
Deputy Chief Minister Minister for Mines and Energy Minister for Industries and Development	Barry Francis Coulter
Attorney-General Minister for Lands and Housing Minister for Conservation	Daryl William Manzie
Minister for Health and Community Services	Donald Francis Dale
Minister for Education Minister Assisting the Chief Minister on Constitutional Development	Tom Harris
Minister for Transport and Works	Frederick Arthur Finch
Minister for Labour, Administrative Services and Local Government	Terence Robert McCarthy
Minister for Tourism Minister Assisting the Chief Minister on Central Australian Affairs	Eric Houquet Poole
Minister for Primary Industry and Fisheries	Michael Anthony Reed

Price, including postage, \$7.50 per calendar year. Subscriptions, made payable to the Collector of Territory Moneys, should be sent to the Editor, Hansard, G.P.O. Box 3721, Darwin, N.T. 5794.

MEMBERS OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

MEMBERS OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

MEMBERS OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

MEMBERS OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

Arafura
Araluen
Arnhem
Barkly
Braitling
Casuarina
Fannie Bay
Flynn
Jingili
Karama
Katherine
Koolpinyah
Leanyer
Ludmilla
MacDonnell
Millner
Nhulunbuy
Nightcliff
Palmerston
Port Darwin
Sadadeen
Sanderson
Stuart
Victoria River
Wanguri

Stanley Gabriel Tipiloura
Eric Houguet Poole
Wesley Wagner Lanhupuy
Ian Lindsay Tuxworth
Roger William Stanley Vale
Nicholas Manuel Dondas
Marshall Bruce Perron
Enzo Alido Floreani
Richard Alfred Setter
Michael James Palmer
Michael Anthony Reed
Cecilia Noel Padgham-Purich
Frederick Arthur Finch
Colin Charles Firmin
Neil Randal Bell
Terence Edward Smith
Daniel Murray Leo
Stephen Paul Hatton
Barry Francis Coulter
Tom Harris
Denis Wilfred Collins
Daryl William Manzie
Brian Richard Ede
Terence Robert McCarthy
Donald Francis Dale

MEMBERS OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

MEMBERS OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

MEMBERS OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

MEMBERS OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

MEMBERS OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

MEMBERS OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

MEMBERS OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

Chairman of Committees - Mr N.M. Dondas
Deputy Chairmen of Committees - Mr D.W. Collins
Mr W.W. Lanhupuy
Mr R.A. Setter

House Committee
Mr Speaker
Mr N.M. Dondas
Mr W.W. Lanhupuy
Mr D.M. Leo
Mr M.J. Palmer

Standing Orders Committee
Mr Speaker
Mr N.R. Bell
Mr B.F. Coulter
Mr C.C. Firmin
Mr W.W. Lanhupuy

Publications Committee
Mr N.R. Bell
Mr N.M. Dondas
Mr S.P. Hatton
Mr R.A. Setter
Mr S.G. Tipiloura

Privileges Committee
Mr N.R. Bell
Mr N.M. Dondas
Mr C.C. Firmin
Mr M.B. Perron
Mr T.E. Smith

Subordinate Legislation and Tabled Papers Committee
Mr N.M. Dondas
Mr M.J. Palmer
Mr R.A. Setter
Mr T.E. Smith
Mr S.G. Tipiloura

Public Accounts Committee
Mr N.M. Dondas
Mr B.R. Ede
Mr D.M. Leo
Mr M.J. Palmer
Mr R.A. Setter

Sessional Committee - Environment

Mr N.R. Bell
Mr N.M. Dondas
Mr C.C. Firmin
Mr S.P. Hatton
Mr S.G. Tipiloura

Sessional Committee - New Parliament House

Mr Speaker
Mr F.A. Finch
Mr D.M. Leo
Mr R.A. Setter
Mr T.E. Smith

Select Committee - Constitutional Development

Mr B.R. Ede
Mr T. Harris
Mr W.W. Lanhupuy
Mr M.B. Perron
Mr R.A. Setter
Mr T.M. Smith

PART I

DEBATES

DEBATES

Tuesday 22 November 1988

Mr Speaker Vale took the Chair at 10 am.

PETITION
Cuts in Funding for Libraries

Mr HARRIS (Port Darwin): Mr Speaker, I present a petition from 594 citizens requesting that the Assembly take cognisance of the detriment to the quality of the Darwin public library services able to be provided due to funding cuts imposed by the Department of Education. The petition bears the Clerk's certificate that it conforms with the requirements of standing orders. Mr Speaker, I move that the petition be read.

Motion agreed to; petition read:

To the honourable Speaker and members of the Legislative Assembly of the Northern Territory, the humble petition of certain citizens of the Northern Territory, electors of the greater Darwin area, respectfully sheweth that the recent cut in funding to the book vote to public libraries by the Northern Territory Department of Education has drastically affected the ability of the Darwin public libraries to adequately service the needs and demands of the general public, especially with regard to: (a) magazines in English or other languages; (b) paperbacks; (c) cassettes; (d) Commodore 64 and children's games; and (e) newspapers. We ask that the level of the book vote be re-examined and reinstated to the level necessary to fulfil the needs of the public for the library services. Your petitioners therefore humbly pray that the Legislative Assembly of the Northern Territory take cognisance of the detriment to the quality of library services able to be provided due to funding cuts imposed by the Department of Education on the Darwin public libraries, and your petitioners, as in duty bound, will ever pray.

MOTION
Discharge of Bill from Notice Paper

Mr MANZIE (Attorney-General)(by leave): Mr Speaker, I move that Government Business Order of the Day No 10 relating to the Cancer Registration Bill (Serial 105) be discharged from the Notice Paper.

Motion agreed to.

DISTINGUISHED VISITOR
Usher of Black Rod, Mr R. Alison

Mr SPEAKER: Honourable members, I draw your attention to the presence in the gallery of the Usher of the Black Rod in the Australian Senate, Mr Rob Alison. On behalf of honourable members, I extend to him a warm welcome and hope that his visit to the Territory is a pleasant one.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

Mr LEO (Nhulunbuy)(by leave): Mr Speaker, I refer to an answer that the Minister for Mines and Energy gave to a question asked by the member for Ludmilla. I apologise to the House and to the minister if in some way he

feels I have injured his somewhat robust pride. However, I had no way of knowing the content of any legislation that the minister intended to introduce. Unfortunately, I did not see his second-reading speech because it did not reach me. Because of the nature of air services from Nhulunbuy, I was unable to read his second-reading speech before I had that interview on ABC radio this morning. Once again, I apologise to the minister if I have in some way injured his dignity.

As yet, I have not seen any bills which may be presented to the House. I stand by what I said this morning. At that time, I did not know the content of the legislation. Given the information provided in the second-reading speech, I have some indication as to what is likely to be contained in it, but I still have not seen the legislation.

TABLED PAPER

Commissioner of Consumer Affairs - Annual Report 1986-87

Mr DALE (Health and Community Services): Mr Speaker, I table the annual report of the Commissioner of Consumer Affairs for 1987-88 which includes the 1987 Annual Report of the Commissioner of Motor Vehicle Dealers. Mr Speaker, I move that the report be printed.

Motion agreed to.

TABLED PAPER

Subordinate Legislation and Tabled Papers Committee
Seventh Report

Mr SETTER (Jingili): Mr Speaker, I table the Seventh Report of the Subordinate Legislation and Tabled Papers Committee. I move that the report be adopted.

Motion agreed to.

STATEMENT

Housing Purchase Assistance Package

Mr MANZIE (Lands and Housing): Mr Speaker, I rise to make a statement about government home loan schemes in the Northern Territory. Before self-government, a home loans scheme was operated by the Housing Commission for the sale of its houses. However, it was highly regulatory in terms of who was eligible to buy and, consequently, it did little to encourage home ownership in the Territory. The federal government, through the then Department of the Northern Territory, also administered a home loans scheme for public servants and a limited loans scheme for the general public.

With self-government on 1 July 1978, housing in the Territory entered a new era. The Northern Territory government was well aware that the basis of the future economic development of the Territory depended greatly on its ability to stabilise the population. This meant not only increasing the overall supply of affordable housing but also making home ownership a more financially viable and attractive alternative. A new system of land release and tenure, vital in addressing the land shortage and consequent lack of housing, also followed self-government. Before 1978, all residential land was developed under the federal government's capital works program and leaseholds were sold to private buyers at infrequent and irregular auctions. This was one of the first areas to be improved by the new Territory government and, since 1979 in Darwin, 1981 in Alice Springs and 1983 in Katherine, vacant Crown land has been subdivided by private developers and sold on the private

market. In addition, in 1981, the majority of leasehold titles in the major urban centres were converted to freehold.

Together with the freeing up of residential land, the Northern Territory Government Home Loans Scheme was introduced in October 1979. This scheme provided housing finance which placed home ownership within the reach of all but the lowest income earners. The scheme was available to all first home buyers in the Territory and, significantly, it applied to buyers in both the public and private sectors. During the 5 years of its operation, the scheme provided a total of 4575 loans to the value of \$191.5m. This contributed to a massive rise in the level of home ownership in the Territory from around 28% to 44% of all dwellings.

At the same time, the Government Employees Sales Scheme, introduced in 1976, was operating. This scheme allowed public servants to buy their homes and, from self-government until the scheme closed at the end of 1986, some 3000 houses were sold. With home ownership given a sound basis by these schemes, the Territory government moved to increase the participation of private enterprise in its housing loan schemes. As you would be aware, Mr Speaker, this government supports a philosophy of introducing policies which actively encourage the involvement of the private sector and this led to the introduction of the Northern Territory Home Purchase Assistance Scheme in September 1984.

The major feature of the scheme is its emphasis on the participation of private lending institutions. In fact, the private sector lent 88% of home finance in the Territory in 1987-88 as compared to 34% in 1983-84. Loans under the Northern Territory Home Purchase Assistance Scheme are low-start loans for low-income earners. Repayments are low in the early stages of the loan and increase as income increases. As you would recall, Mr Speaker, the scheme was designed in an economic climate where home loan interest rates were lower and real estate prices and wages were increasing at a steady rate. It was designed specifically to operate under those conditions and, had the economy remained stable, I believe the scheme would have continued to operate successfully. However, soon after the scheme's introduction, thanks to the machinations of the federal Labor government, the economy became anything but stable and, as a result, the scenario for low-income earners changed drastically for the worse.

As honourable members would remember only too well, interest rates increased, property values declined and real wages lagged behind increases in the Consumer Price Index. These factors, when combined, meant that incomes did not increase sufficiently for borrowers to increase their repayments and, while all this was happening, Australians were given the very cold comfort of the federal Treasurer telling all and sundry that Australia was becoming a banana republic and the federal Finance Minister stating that ordinary Australians would have to expect a decline in their living standards. The effect of these factors on the Territory Home Purchase Assistance Scheme should be obvious. With a higher interest rate to service on a bank loan, coupled with a repayment level no greater than 20% of gross income, the level of repayment dropped in real terms in many cases. Debt began to accumulate on some loans and, in conjunction with low property values, this has resulted in a scheme which is generally unworkable in today's economic climate.

A typical example of this is the situation of low-income families, who are financially stretched, meeting higher bank interest rates. As a result, they are unable to cover the full interest charges on their Housing Commission loans and they see their overall debt rising, their equity disappearing and a depressed market where the value of their home is not increasing. As you

would appreciate, Mr Speaker, borrowers in this situation experience varying degrees of difficulty. The picture is graphically illustrated by a typical example from the Housing Commission's books. This example is the case where a single-income couple borrowed \$50 000 - that is, the full amount of their loan - from the commission in 1984 to buy a \$60 000 unit. Four years later, the debt had risen to \$58 000 and the market value of the property had dropped to \$55 000. In cases such as this, there is no incentive to get out of debt. To some, the temptation simply to walk away is great.

The majority of borrowers under this scheme have continued to meet their obligation to put 20% of their gross income into repaying their loans and, indeed, some have increased their payments. However, in many cases, interest is still accruing on borrowers' loans and their equity is disappearing. As honourable members will no doubt agree, steps must be taken to assist participants in the Northern Territory Home Purchase Assistance Scheme to repay their loans on fair and equitable terms and under circumstances which will allow them to regain equity in their homes. Most importantly, a strategy must be put in place to assist recovery in the home ownership market.

I should point out that the Territory government most emphatically does not support the federal government's decision to ignore the needs and aspirations of Australians. We are committed to helping people who wish to settle in the Territory to achieve their goals, to put down roots and to become a part of the Territory's future. In order to address the present difficulties in the home finance area, the Territory government has put together a comprehensive package.

The first part of the package is to close the Northern Territory Home Purchase Assistance Scheme to new applications and to address the problems of the current participants. The other elements of this strategy will be the introduction of 2 new schemes to assist first-home buyers in the Territory, and I table for public comment a discussion paper on a draft shared equity scheme.

To return for a moment to the Northern Territory Home Purchase Assistance Scheme, the new terms have been designed to assist all borrowers and I stress that no borrowers will be disadvantaged. I urge honourable members to be aware of the distress which uninformed and alarmist comments could cause to existing borrowers. The government seeks all members' cooperation in avoiding this situation. Letters are now being sent to all participants in the Northern Territory Home Purchase Assistance Scheme to advise them that there will be a favourable change in the administration of their loans. I repeat that the loan situation of all borrowers will improve. Each of the 1600 borrowers will be contacted over the next few weeks and the new arrangements for their loans will be explained. I am determined to ensure that all changes to loans under the scheme will be resolved as soon as possible.

In essence, the changes involve reducing the principal on all loans by 10% and decreasing the effective interest rate to 4% a year. The interest rate will increase by 0.5% in December 1989 and annually from then on until it reaches the Commonwealth Bank's home lending rate. There will be corresponding, small increases in payments as a result. There will be no cost to the Territory government in real terms as a result of reducing loans by 10%, because the reduction in principal is more than offset by the total outstanding interest which is accrued on loans. The government is aware that the loan reduction will be more beneficial for the 25% of borrowers who have not accrued any outstanding interest. However, it must be recognised that many of these people have gone through financial hardship to ensure interest

has not accrued on their loans, often paying in excess of the required 20% of gross income. In the interests of equity, the changes will apply to all borrowers.

I turn now to the future. Considerable thought has been devoted to the formulation of the new home loans scheme which will replace the Northern Territory Home Purchase Assistance Scheme. Intensive research has been undertaken by officers of my department on the subject since early this year, including investigation of how interstate government loan schemes are operating. In addition, I have held talks with representatives of the real estate industry and have consulted extensively with representatives of major lending institutions. Not unexpectedly, our research showed that there was little demand from people from the low- to moderate-income bracket. As a result, the government concluded that any new scheme must aim to increase the level of home ownership and population stability in the Territory and, at the same time, to encourage the continued development of the private home finance, real estate and building sectors. Therefore, the new scheme should be directed at low- to moderate-income earners, should be available to buyers in the public and private sectors, and should involve the private lending institutions to the greatest possible extent. It was also accepted that, to achieve these objectives in the most cost-effective way in current market conditions, a non-recoupable interest subsidy would have to be provided.

To allow for this non-recoupable advance for housing assistance, a minor amendment to the Housing Act will be required. I gave notice this morning that I will be introducing this amendment tomorrow, and I advise honourable members that I will be seeking their cooperation in having the bill passed through all stages this week. This is necessary to allow the concurrent closure of the Northern Territory Home Purchase Assistance Scheme and the commencement of the new scheme, the Northern Territory Interest Subsidy Scheme, on 1 December 1988.

In broad terms, the Interest Subsidy Scheme requires the Territory government to provide a subsidy based on income to applicants who meet eligibility criteria and who have successfully negotiated a housing loan in the private sector. Under such an arrangement, applicants will have their eligibility for the subsidy determined by the Housing Commission before negotiating a loan. Eligible applicants will then be issued with a statement from the Housing Commission providing details to the lending institution involved. The government will have no involvement in individual loan negotiations and applicants will be expected to meet the lending requirements agreed on between the Housing Commission and the lending institutions. The subsidy will be paid monthly, directly into the loan accounts of successful applicants.

To be eligible for assistance under the new scheme, applicants must meet the following criteria. The income of the major breadwinner must be at least \$300 gross a week, but must not exceed \$600 a week. The home to be bought or built must be the buyer's first home in the Territory, although special consideration may be given in cases where a marriage has broken down. The applicant must not own another home anywhere in Australia and, if the applicant does have an interest in another property, this must be sold before the subsidy will commence. This means that a person may apply for the subsidy and negotiate a loan before the property is sold. However, that person will not become eligible until the sale of the other property is completed. The home must be for the applicant's immediate occupation, and the maximum house and land value must not exceed \$100 000.

I turn now to the details of how the new scheme will operate. The maximum subsidy will be based on a \$55 000 loan over 25 years at the current Commonwealth Bank interest rate of 14.5% a year, with repayments not to exceed 30% of gross weekly income. The maximum amount of the subsidy payable, to those in the lowest income bracket, will be a reduction of 7.5% a year in the payable interest rate. This means that an applicant receiving the maximum amount of the subsidy, who has a loan of 14.5%, would pay only 7% interest. The Commonwealth Bank's interest rate will be used as the benchmark figure for the scheme. It is not intended that the government will increase the amount of the subsidy over 7.5%. However, should the benchmark rate decrease, the maximum level of the subsidy will be lowered accordingly. For example, should the benchmark interest rate decrease from 14.5% to 13.5%, the maximum level of the subsidy would be lowered to 6.5%.

With the exception of such fluctuations in the benchmark interest rate, the monthly subsidy payable will be frozen for a 3-year period at the level at which the applicant commences. When the 3-year period expires, the subsidy will decrease 1% to the next level, and annually from then on until the applicant is no longer eligible for a subsidy. The decision to freeze the subsidy for the first 3 years is to allow participants in the scheme to adjust to the budgetary requirements of home ownership. If the level of subsidy were to decrease after the first year, those on the lowest incomes might have difficulty in meeting the increased payments.

Applicants for the subsidy will not be restricted in the amount of the loan they negotiate, provided the house and land package does not exceed \$100 000 in value. However, the subsidy will be paid on a maximum level of \$55 000 and those borrowing more than \$55 000 will have to pay full interest on the additional amount.

To give an indication of the salary levels of people who will be eligible to participate in the scheme, I can advise that people earning salaries equivalent to those of the A1 to A7 levels in the Northern Territory Public Service will be eligible for some level of the subsidy. In the Northern Territory Public Service alone, almost 8000 employees earn less than the upper income limit of \$600 per week. Indeed, the latest report of the Australian Bureau of Statistics puts the average weekly adult wage at \$521.50 and, as at September, there were 54 178 adults above 20 years of age working full time in the Territory plus 5593 15- to 19-year-olds. As I said earlier, the amount of the subsidy payable to eligible applicants will be based on breadwinner income at the time of assessment. There are 8 levels of the subsidy ranging from 7.5% to 6.5% to 5.5% and so on, and the level at which the applicants commence will depend on their income. For example, an eligible applicant, whose income is between \$300 and \$340 per week gross, will enter the scheme at level 1, with a subsidy of 7.5%. The applicant will receive that subsidy at that level for 3 years after which it will decrease to level 2, a subsidy of 6.5%. Then it will decrease yearly until the applicant is no longer eligible to receive a subsidy.

A participant in the scheme who begins on level 1 will be subsidised for a 10-year period and the maximum non-recoupable cost to government during this period will be \$22 500. It is estimated that the scheme will cost about \$1.7m in its first full year of operation in 1989-90. Of course, the cost to government will increase in the initial years of the scheme as more people apply. However, this cost will level out in about 10 years time, when the number of people entering the scheme will be negated by the number who come to the end of the subsidy. The subsidy will be transferable to another property as under the present mortgage transfer scheme.

Mr Speaker, by now some honourable members will no doubt be thinking of the perennial problem which faces many would-be home buyers and that is the deposit gap. I am pleased to be able to announce that participating financial institutions have indicated to me that they will give favourable consideration to lending up to 90% or 95% of the value of the property if mortgage insurance is purchased. The cost of mortgage insurance can be added to the loan principal so that it will not constitute a significant extra burden.

The next part of the package is the introduction of a home establishment grant. The Territory government will provide a grant of \$1000 to all Territorians buying their first home in the Territory, provided that the total package is \$100 000 or less. This grant will assist new home buyers to purchase mortgage insurance or to defray the up-front costs of entering home ownership. The operation of the grant will be reviewed at the end of this financial year to ensure that it is a cost-effective way of helping people to establish their first home in the Territory. It is estimated that the grant will cost the government about \$350 000 for the rest of the financial year.

No doubt many honourable members will think that this home ownership package is very generous. These schemes are intended to be generous. We are all aware that the low- to middle-income end of the property market is in the doldrums, that interest rates are high and that real wages have not increased substantially in recent years. These conditions have combined to make it almost impossible for many families to buy their first homes. With this package, such families will be given the chance to buy houses in the Territory and to make it their home. As honourable members know, the Territory needs a stable and growing population to ensure its continued economic development. In addition, the schemes will serve to stimulate the property market, the building industry and the private lending institutions, all of which are necessary for a healthy economy. This package is unashamedly generous and it is an integral part of this government's strategy for growth.

I turn now to the discussion paper on the draft Northern Territory Shared Equity Home Ownership Scheme. As honourable members may know, shared equity schemes are currently operating in South Australia and Western Australia and one is being introduced in Victoria. This has given the Territory government the chance to examine the operation of such schemes and to analyse their advantages and disadvantages. The discussion paper that I tabled today will provide a foundation for future discussions on the need for such a scheme in the Northern Territory, particularly in the light of the new Interest Subsidy Scheme. As honourable members will appreciate, this Interest Subsidy Scheme will become the major home ownership initiative of this government. Similarly, this draft shared equity scheme is aimed at low-income earners and, if introduced, it would apply to the purchase of a Housing Commission house only. In broad terms, the draft shared equity scheme would allow potential home buyers who live in Housing Commission dwellings to purchase an affordable equity in their home, using private-sector finance. The titles to the dwellings would be in the names of the buyers and the Housing Commission on the basis of their being tenants in common.

The discussion paper proposes that buyers would take up a minimum 25% equity in their homes and be able to provide a minimum of 10% of their share of the purchase price as a deposit. Loan amounts would be self-regulated in that they would be governed by the buyers' ability to pay which is, of course, in line with normal lending practices. The draft scheme would allow the buyers to buy the whole or part of the remaining equity at any time but they would have to do so in minimum lots of 10%. The draft scheme proposes to make allowances for the buyers' improvements to the property after

the original purchase. All fees, including stamp duty, valuations, transfer and agent fees would be the responsibility of the buyer.

The discussion paper suggests that, to encourage participants to increase their equity, a system of rental mortgage repayment reviews could be introduced. Under this proposal, the buyer would have normal rights of home ownership and total responsibility for maintenance, insurance and charges, and the government would pay local government rates. The discussion paper demonstrates that, by restricting shared equity to the sale of Housing Commission dwellings, the government would be able to guarantee lenders that it would buy back the buyer's equity in the event of financial difficulty. It is proposed that this would alleviate the major concern that lenders have had with shared equity schemes in the states and encourage them to lend to people of more limited means. It would also provide a safety net for low-income earners concerned about their future financial situation. Under this proposal, in those rare and unfortunate cases where the Housing Commission was forced to take possession, the dwellings would be suitable to be returned to public housing stock.

Mr Speaker, the discussion paper proposes that buyers would pay rent on the government's equity in their homes, but that rent would be reduced to reflect the buyer's responsibility for insurance, maintenance and other charges incurred on behalf of the government. Another proposal contained in the discussion paper, and one which would provide additional assistance for low-income earners is that, if prospective buyers were eligible under the Interest Subsidy Scheme, they could use this to buy a share of their home. Of course, the Home Establishment Grant would also be available to people buying their first home in the Territory. It is not anticipated that this draft shared equity scheme, if introduced, would attract a great number of buyers. It is not expected that numbers would exceed a maximum of 50 dwellings a year, which would generate revenue to the government of about \$1.7m over a full financial year. As I stated earlier, the need for such a scheme is questionable in light of the new Interest Subsidy Scheme and the Home Establishment Grant which will be introduced next week. Nonetheless, I table the discussion paper for public comment, and I hope that the government will receive responses to this draft scheme, not only from members of this Assembly but also from a wide spectrum of interest groups in the private sector.

The government's immediate priority has been to introduce a package to encourage increased home ownership and growth in the real estate and building industries. I believe that the Interest Subsidy Scheme and the Home Establishment Grant will achieve those aims. Honourable members may now be reflecting on the generosity of the new schemes. If so, I would ask them to reflect also on the economic and social gains of increased levels of home ownership to the Territory and Territorians.

Mr Speaker, I commend the Northern Territory Interest Subsidy Scheme and the Northern Territory Home Establishment Grant to the House, and I table the discussion paper on the draft Northern Territory Shared Equity Home Ownership Scheme. I move that the Assembly take note of the statement.

Mr LEO (Nhulunbuy): Mr Speaker, the scope and extent of this package is, in fact, a terrifying admission of the disaster that this government has created in the housing sector. We all knew it was bad, but we had no idea that it was this bad. The package is not an adjustment; it is massive and radical surgery on a policy that has brought thousands of Territorians to the brink of ruin. It is a most compelling and convincing confession of failure and neglect.

The reason for today's statement is not contained in the minister's lavish self-praise. It appears at page 5 where the minister says: 'The government is aware that the loan reduction will be more beneficial to the 25% of borrowers who have not accrued any outstanding interest'. This represents an admission by the minister that, over a considerable number of years, this government and successive ministers for housing have pursued a policy which was so unworkable that 75% of borrowers had no hope of keeping pace with their repayments. That is what the minister's comment means.

This package will relieve the symptoms of the problem being faced by those people. There is no disputing that. However, it will not address the underlying illness which has been created by this government's pursuit of economic policies which have been driving people out of jobs and, ultimately, out of the Territory over the past 2 years. No mortgage package can be designed and sustained for people who cannot get jobs. The problem is further illustrated at page 3, where the minister describes the situation now facing the typical borrower. This typical borrower has found, during the past 4 years, that his debt has increased by \$8000 while the value of his property has dropped by \$5000. That is what the government's policy has achieved in the past - a loss of \$13 000 for the typical borrower. That is a typical example of what has occurred under this government's home loan schemes, managed by successive ministers. We could not have a clearer or more compelling explanation of why, despite the government's denials, people are voting with their feet and leaving the Territory.

The fact is that, in every state of Australia, typical borrowers are enjoying unprecedented growth in their equity in their houses. However, the same minister who has just given this perfect explanation for our population drift, sat there less than an hour ago and listened to his colleague denying the very existence of population drift. That demonstrates the government's logical capacity. One moment, we hear a minister arguing that the population drift is a nonsense and that the Bureau of Statistics figures cannot be believed and, the next moment, we have the Minister for Lands and Housing telling us that the drift is a fact of life which needs to be addressed. The real problem faced by the housing and building industries in the Northern Territory is that the government is completely inconsistent and it issues conflicting statements. No wonder there is so much uncertainty. After his colleague talked about telephone connections, the Minister for Lands and Housing talked about home owners simply locking the doors of their houses and walking away. That is the level of ignorance that underlies the strategy.

Let us not exaggerate the impact of this policy switch. We are not talking about the vast majority of home owners, who are operating on private mortgages. We are talking about the 1600 borrowers under the government scheme and we are talking about a relief package that will give them, and only them, about \$2000 a year. Mr Speaker, do not hold your breath waiting for the banks to match this offer. They are talking about lifting interest rates. It is a fact of life that the banks will lift the interest rates. They will not be matching this package. They are talking about lifting rates because of the acceleration of equity value in every corner of Australia except the Northern Territory.

More than 80% of Territorians buy through the private sector. They are suffering the same equity losses as the government's borrowers. However, this free-enterprise government, this supporter of the private sector and all who toil in it, can offer them nothing. Of course, it is impossible not to admit that this will be a very beneficial program for those people who have borrowed from the government. What people will be bitter about is that this government

has engineered a policy of economic disaster which has turned their most vital investment into a millstone around their necks.

On behalf of government borrowers, the opposition accepts all the concessions granted by the government, but what the opposition does not accept is that this package is anything more than a relief package. What the opposition does not accept is that the package does anything more than offer partial compensation for the damage inflicted by the government's own economic vandalism. What the opposition will never accept is the continuation of the disastrous economic policy which has created the need for this package.

That is why, Mr Speaker, I move that all words after 'that' be omitted and the following be inserted in their stead: 'this Assembly welcomes the change to the home loan scheme, but expresses its concern that: (1) so many homeowners have been forced out of their houses before action was taken; and (2) no action has been taken by the government to address the wider problems causing the housing crisis'.

Mr HATTON (Nightcliff): Mr Speaker, the opposition has exceeded any depths to which it has previously sunk. Quite frankly, that was one of the most disappointing speeches that I have ever heard from the member for Nhulunbuy in the 5 years that I have been in this Chamber. Whilst often I have not agreed with the member for Nhulunbuy, generally I have believed that at least he was honest and sincere in his approach. He evidences that usually by standing up and speaking from the heart rather than presenting a written response prepared by the Leader of the Opposition's speech writer as he trots into the House. Now he is wandering off, having done his deed for the Leader of the Opposition. It is a very sad indictment.

We heard the usual claptrap from the member for Nhulunbuy about the disastrous economic policies of the Northern Territory government, how it is terrible that the Northern Territory government, single-handedly, has driven up Australia's interest rates, driven up the cost of repayments and driven down the value of housing, and how the population is flooding out of the Northern Territory because we have had 15% less money to spend than we had before. It is all the fault of the Northern Territory government. That is the typical line being touted by the would-be opposition opposite. It is about time the community took it to task for the nonsense that it is spouting. The fact is that, for a decade, the Northern Territory government has led Australia consistently in providing opportunities for its citizens to purchase their own homes. It is a fact that a number of the nationally-inspired economic circumstances have meant that the Home Purchase Assistance Scheme has worked to the disadvantage of low-income earners. House and land prices in the Northern Territory have fallen in the last 2 or 3 years and, for 2 or 3 years before that, they were stable. As a result of significant increases in interest rates, the interest burden on low-income earners has increased. Because of the wages policy of the federal government, there has been a reduction in real wages across Australia, including the Northern Territory. It was the normal expectation of people that their wages would increase year by year and, as a result, a larger amount of money would go toward repayments each year.

The wages policy of Australia was not inspired by the Northern Territory. In fact, it was Senator Walsh who stood up beside the federal Treasurer and said Australians would have to incur a reduction in their standard of living. They made that clear and unequivocal statement. That was achieved by wages increasing at a lesser rate than the cost of living so that there was a steady reduction in average real wages in Australia. The federal government has been

successful in that. It has been successful also in lifting the value of the Australian dollar, but it has been very unsuccessful in bringing down the very high interest rates and in bringing the inflation rate down to those levels ...

Mr Bell: That is nonsense!

Mr HATTON: It has brought them down significantly but it has not brought them down to the levels of those of our competitors, as was promised. We have the highest real interest rates. If the member for MacDonnell would like to check ...

Mr Bell: Come on, you tell us what the terrific Johnny Howard did.

Mr HATTON: Here we go. We are off again, Mr Speaker. As soon as anyone starts challenging what the Labor government has done, and it has been there for over 6 years now, they want to talk about what happened 6 or 7 years before that. If it is good, it is to the credit of the Labor government but, if it is bad, it is the result of something that occurred 10 years ago. I do not cop that. If the member for MacDonnell wants to look at long-term economic trends, he ought to look at the Whitlam era and the problems that that generated for Australia, which we have never overcome successfully. I will not participate in that because, quite frankly, it is irrelevant just as consideration of the Fraser government years are irrelevant to the points that I am making now.

What I am saying is that the federal Labor government openly, publicly and deliberately pushed up interest rates to dampen demand. It made the point in this year's budget that it intended to do that. It was concerned about the rising level of demand and it wanted to damp it. The way to dampen demand is to push up interest rates and it has adopted monetary policies to achieve that objective. In the old days, it was called a credit squeeze and now it is called dampening demand.

Lowering living standards was a deliberate, conscious and publicly-stated policy of the federal Labor government. I am sick and tired of the Northern Territory government being totally blamed for all of these factors. Each and every one of those factors has affected the ability of people to make their repayments of interest on the loans they took out under the Northern Territory Home Purchase Assistance Scheme. It is simply unbelievable that the member for Nhulunbuy would stand up in this Chamber and suggest that somehow these worries have been 100% created by the economic policies of the Northern Territory government.

I have been involved in the public affairs of the Northern Territory for well over a decade and I can remember very clearly complaints, including complaints from the opposition, year in and year out, about the high cost of rent and the high cost of housing. It was said that the government should do something about the high cost of housing because it was not fair on the lower- and middle-income earners who could not buy a house because it cost too much. What do we hear now from the member for Nhulunbuy? The cost of housing is coming down. Suddenly, homes are more affordable for people but that is bad because the consequential effect has been that there are not the windfall gains of inflation-related profits being earned on the value of homes. I am a home owner, Mr Deputy Speaker, and I have gone through the problem. I would love to see land and home values shooting through the roof and my equity in my home increasing, but the fact is, in the community as a whole ...

Mr Collins: Are you going to leave?

Mr HATTON: No, I am not leaving anywhere.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order!

Mr HATTON: It is in the interests of the community at large that we keep the price of housing within the reach of the ordinary citizen of the Northern Territory. I fully support the policies of government that ensure that the availability of housing is such that there is not an inflationary burst in the cost of housing such as has so traumatically affected home buyers in the capital cities elsewhere in Australia. For a middle-income earner in Sydney, I imagine it would be necessary to look for a property 50 km or 60 km from the GPO before he could even think of buying a home. There has been a frightening increase in costs. Why have costs increased? Because of shortages of supply, because of failure to build houses and failure by people to buy housing and invest in housing again because of very high interest rates. Every endeavour has been made to boost the building of houses in Sydney and Melbourne and those other places, to overcome the shortage to try to bring those cost increases under control.

I find it amazing that a Labor Party member would stand here and criticise the government for actually controlling the cost of housing and keeping it within the affordable reach of citizens of the Northern Territory. I find it extraordinary that we are hearing this crazy, belly-aching digging around to find something that can be criticised in this parliament by the members of the opposition trying to make some sort of political capital out of it. They would have done themselves great credit if they had stood up and said that this was a good scheme. It is well thought out, it is well constructed and it meets the emergent problems that have been clearly and openly identified by the minister. It meets those, and it gives relief to those people who have been caught out by the combined effects of falling prices, reductions in real wages and increases in interest rates. It addresses the needs of those people so that they do not find themselves being driven out of their homes or being driven into unacceptably high levels of debt. It provides an opportunity for people again to take that step and buy a home in the Northern Territory. Wouldn't people in Sydney, Melbourne, Perth, Adelaide, Hobart and Brisbane love to have this available to them and wouldn't a young couple in any of those cities love to think that housing was still within their reach?

That is what they do not have in those cities and what they do have in the Northern Territory, because of the good policies of this government that have kept the price of housing within the reach of young people and which are providing home loan schemes that are within the affordable reach of young people so that they can establish their roots in the Northern Territory, settle here and raise their families here. I can see the member for MacDonnell scribbling away there and I will guarantee we will hear from him about the loss of jobs. When he speaks, I hope he has the integrity to explain also the economic consequences for a government that has had to reduce its expenditure by 15% in 2 budgets, as a result of reductions in funding that came directly from the federal government. I am not arguing the pros and cons of whether that was justified or not. I am merely saying, if the honourable member intends to participate in this debate, let him stand up and explain to the community the economic consequences of a 15% real cut, and over 10% in a single budget. Let him explain to the community the dampening effect that has had on economic activity which, in turn, has affected population figures in the Northern Territory. I think that is important if one is to take a position of honesty and integrity in this debate.

I find this package great. It deserves the support of the community. It deserves the unqualified support of every member of this House because it deals with a difficult economic situation in an effective and positive way to the great advantage of young Territorians and new Territorians in particular. I urge all members to study this shared equity discussion paper. Certainly I will do so. This and the other issues addressed by the minister have been of concern to the government. This scheme has been well researched and well thought out and has been developed in close consultation with the financial, housing and real estate industries in order to arrive at a practical and workable package of proposals once again to give that sort of lift to Territory people. In closing, I ask again: wouldn't people everywhere else in Australia love to have this available to them?

Mr BELL (MacDonnell): Mr Deputy Speaker, I want to make a variety of comments in relation to this statement and in support of the motion moved by the member for Nhulunbuy. I hope to make them in a reasonably ordered fashion but, unfortunately, the opposition has not had a great deal of time to consider this statement so honourable members will have to bear with me as I go through it.

To commence, we can dispatch the very loyal comments of the member for Nightcliff, and I think loyalty was probably the only quality that characterised his comments or made them in any way worth while. It is very laudable of him to support the government of which he is a part. Of course, the substance of what he had to say was so shot through with holes that it does not matter.

Neither the minister nor the member for Nightcliff has confronted the fact that the Northern Territory housing market is not a buoyant one. It is a depressed market, and that is in contrast to the situation in every state, where housing markets are very buoyant. There was a period when the housing market was a bit flat in New South Wales but, subsequently, there has been considerable growth in Sydney. In contrast, the Northern Territory is confronted with a depressed and depressing housing market. The minister's statement did not address that issue. He failed to come to grips with the question of why the housing market in the Northern Territory is so depressed when, in every state capital, it is going through the roof.

The minister's statement is very thin in terms of analysing the current situation of the housing market in the Northern Territory. I suggest to you, Mr Deputy Speaker, that the pats on the back that the minister gave himself and CLP governments since self-government, and the few buckets he dropped on the Commonwealth along the way, do him no credit and do no service to the housing industry in the Northern Territory. I believe that the constructive comments that the opposition has offered in relation to housing policy are something of which this Assembly ought to be proud. I know that they have certainly been appreciated by the housing industry.

Let me turn to the Shared Equity Home Ownership Scheme proposed in the discussion paper. The Minister for Lands and Housing made no mention of the fact that it was one of the CLP's election promises. The contents of this glossy little document are an election promise. It certainly has been downgraded. The member for Nightcliff referred to the whole thing as being a well-thought-out and well-constructed package. It is a lovely word 'package'. It suggests that the government has actually thought about what it is doing when, in fact, it is the result of blind panic in the face of record numbers of mortgagee auctions. I have spoken to representatives of the Real Estate Institute and the Master Builders Association and I will tell the Minister for

Lands and Housing what their reaction is. When they are prepared to ignore their political colours for a minute, their reaction is that this is too little too late. There is no more dramatic evidence of that than the way the minister and the succession of Chief Ministers and half-wits on the other side of the Chamber ...

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! The honourable member will withdraw that remark.

Mr BELL: I withdraw, Mr Deputy Speaker. They are not half-wits. They are simply the sort of people who make election promises ...

Mr Finch interjecting.

Mr BELL: I do not think that the member for Leanyer will get to his feet to say anything on behalf of his constituents who are suffering because of the depressed housing market that he and his cronies have been attempting to administer for the last 10 years. How disastrously they have failed in that task!

Mr Finch: Socialism won't work!

Mr BELL: Did I hear the word 'socialism', Mr Deputy Speaker? This government is subsidising interest rates. The minister is grinning at me. He certainly knows that I am right in saying that no Labor government in this country is thinking of knocking 10% off the principal of its loans. The next time that the Minister for Lands and Housing attends a Housing Ministers Conference, he will have to hide under the table because they will be saying: 'We will not let you get away with this, boyo.' That will be their very first comment.

I have to say in response to the minister, and to the member for Nightcliff who made some extremely loyal comments, that I really wonder about what is happening to the reputation of the Northern Territory government as a responsible steward of public money in these circumstances. It bothers me that a minister and a former Chief Minister can argue that these measures are not the result of blind panic at the state of the economy which has people voting with their feet. They are voting with their feet because of the sort of administration we have had under 3 Chief Ministers in 5 years. It is the quality of that administration that is making people leave the Northern Territory and it is the lack of growth in those terms ...

Mr McCarthy: Labour force up by 6600 and unemployment down from 13% to 6.7%?

Mr BELL: Mr Deputy Speaker, in response to that comment from the Minister for Labour, Administrative Services and Local Government, I seek leave to table the Australian Bureau of Statistics Catalogue No 3101.0 which indicates that, since the March quarter 1986, for 10 collection periods, there has been negative growth in the population of the Northern Territory.

Leave granted.

Mr BELL: Mr Deputy Speaker, I trust that we will not have any more attempts from frontbenchers in the government to obfuscate those figures. The fact is that this paper represents an attempt on the part of the minister and the government to do too little too late. I am concerned that we have a draft shared equity scheme that was an election promise that has been walked away

from. While I am on the draft equity scheme, it is very interesting to hear these people knocking the Commonwealth government, knocking Labor governments and knocking the Labor Party in the Northern Territory. Let us have a look at the introduction of this draft equity scheme. I refer the honourable minister to where the creative ideas in housing finance come from. Shared equity schemes, the minister tells us, are currently operated by public housing authorities in South Australia and Western Australia, and one is being introduced in Victoria. Those are all Labor states.

I think it is about time that the Minister for Lands and Housing worked out that innovative housing policy has been led in this country by Labor administrations. I am pleased to see that this government is prepared to listen to what the Labor states are doing. The unfortunate mistake it made was to bolt into this election promise without doing its homework. Again, I refer the honourable minister to the banks involved, to the Real Estate Institute representatives involved and to the Master Builders Association representatives involved. They all tell me that the government did quite the wrong thing in announcing a shared equity scheme in a half-baked fashion, and now it is coming home to roost. The minister expects us to believe him when he says that this package has been well thought out and is well constructed. What a load of nonsense!

This is throwing money at the problem. Let us make no mistake about it, 10% off the principal for all Housing Commission borrowers is terrific. I am certainly not going to argue with it. People will be delighted but, by golly ...

Members interjecting.

Mr BELL: Fiscal responsibility? Have government members heard the term 'fiscal responsibility'? The Commonwealth returns to states have been reduced generally, and they do not find their housing markets in this parlous situation. That is why I say it is the fault of the administration opposite. I will tell you what, Mr Speaker, when they go down to the Premiers Conference or the Housing Ministers Conference in future, the Commonwealth will say: 'If you can afford to throw away dollars like that, boyo, you do not need as much as you had last time'. It will have exactly that sort of snowball effect.

Members interjecting.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! There are far too many interjections.

Mr BELL: I am not satisfied that the government has acted responsibly in this matter. I will be very interested to see what reaction there is to this sort of proposal elsewhere around the country and I will certainly be doing my research into that. I think that these proposals, generous as they may be, are unprecedented and I am concerned about the impact that they will have on the standing of the Northern Territory elsewhere.

I want to make a few more specific points. I really find the introduction to this speech by the Minister for Lands and Housing and the extraordinarily self-congratulatory tone that he adopted completely unwarranted. He referred to the freeholding of land and to subdivisional policies after self-government as models of appropriate public administration. The fact is that subdivision in Katherine and Alice Springs has been an absolute disaster. I do not intend to dwell on that. I have done so in other debates in respect of Alice Springs, but I will spend a minute or 2 on the case of Katherine.

There are still a few government members here who were members of the government when it gave away 50 ha of prime subdivisional land in Katherine for the princely sum of \$20. I know the Chief Minister was a member of that government. It was a great little deal, Mr Speaker. It may come as something of a surprise that the company which received that little windfall called in Henry and Walker afterwards and went through the hoop. We had undertakings from ministers in this government that certain prices would be paid for that land. My recollection is that minimum prices were referred to. I think the figures were \$15 000 per block for private sector sales and a minimum of \$20 000 for Housing Commission blocks. Is that right? Have I got the figures right?

Mr Perron: Close.

Mr BELL: Close. I look forward to the Chief Minister refreshing my memory, or giving me a full explanation of why this company that obtained 50 ha of land for \$20 went into association beforehand with Henry and Walker, the well-known associates of the people opposite. I would like to know exactly what happened to the dollars that the public purse was owed in that little subdivisional exercise. When the Minister for Lands and Housing gives us claptrap about the model process of public administration which has operated in the Northern Territory since self-government, I would like some explanation of that dealing.

I referred earlier to mortgagee auctions. It is a human tragedy and a tragedy for the Northern Territory when falling equity in houses brings about such consequences. In that respect, I am of one mind with the minister. Even where both parents are working, many families cannot keep up with payments and the result is often a savage cost in human terms, such as the splitting up of families. The Minister for Lands and Housing described the problem accurately, but he did not say that this government has known about it for a long while. I would like to know how many mortgagee auctions there have been. I would like to know about the scale of human misery caused, an issue which has been obfuscated by the minister's failure to give figures.

Mr Dale: Do you like the scheme? You have 1 minute to go.

Mr BELL: I have already passed comment about the scheme, Don. You were probably out of the room.

Mr Dale: What are you talking about?

Mr BELL: The final point I will be able to make relates to the minister's statement that 'loans under the Northern Territory Home Purchase Assistance Scheme are low-start loans for low-income earners'. Mr Deputy Speaker, I remind you that the former member for Flynn, as a minister in the government and hardly a low-income earner, defended by every member opposite, was able to take advantage of the Home Purchase Assistance Scheme and the transfer of mortgages scheme.

Mr Manzie: The transfer is available to you or any member in this House who has a loan or a part loan. You should know that. You are casting aspersions. You are a dishonest person.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! The Minister for Lands and Housing will withdraw that remark.

Mr MANZIE: That he was casting aspersions?

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: The reference to the honourable member as being a dishonest person.

Mr MANZIE: Mr Deputy Speaker, I have great difficulty, but I will accede to your request.

Mr SMITH: A point of order, Mr Deputy Speaker! An unequivocal withdrawal is demanded in this situation.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: The honourable minister will withdraw without comment.

Mr MANZIE: Mr Deputy Speaker, I withdraw.

Mr BELL: I will not debate that here, Mr Deputy Speaker. We will have another chance later. I would like the minister to pick this up. I presume that the reduction of 10% in principal is only for Housing Commission borrowers.

Mr Manzie: It is for Northern Territory Home Purchase Assistance Scheme borrowers.

Mr BELL: That is right. The interest subsidy is presumably for all borrowers who qualify. It is only within the government's power to reduce the principal by 10% for Housing Commission Home Purchase Assistance Scheme borrowers. I presume it will not do it for people who have a housing loan and are in strife through a private sector finance arrangement. That is one matter that I would like clarified.

In closing, I think that this is too little too late. It is characterised by blind panic. I suggest that the amendment moved by the shadow minister for housing is eminently worthy of support.

Mr PALMER (Karama): Mr Speaker, I will be brief. Honourable members, especially government members, will be aware of the concern I have had for some time about the inability of lower- and middle-income earners to afford to finance themselves into their homes and then continue with the payments. One of the problems we have faced over the last few years has been with the deferred interest schemes promoted both by governments and by the financial institutions. Those schemes were based on the premise that the payments on that capitalised interest would be able to be met at a later date given that real incomes kept up with real costs. Unfortunately, in the last few years, there has been a downturn in the real incomes of Australians which has not been matched by a fall in interest rates. In fact, as the member for Nightcliff said, real interest rates are now at an all time high. For the benefit of honourable members, the real interest rate is the interest rate minus the rate of inflation.

I commend the Minister for Lands and Housing for the introduction of the Home Purchase Assistance Package. It will go a long way to redressing the problems in respect of Territorians being able to afford their own homes. I have one criticism of it in that I think the upper level of \$600 a week is probably pitched a little low. That is about 115% of average weekly earnings. Personally, I would have liked to have seen that pitched at about 125% of average weekly earnings because I believe there are still people in that bracket - perhaps a single-income family with 3 or 4 children - who, even under this scheme, would find it hard to afford to buy their own home and meet the monthly repayments.

As for a shared equity home ownership scheme, that is something I have promoted for some time, and I believe the discussion paper is an advancement. The member for MacDonnell made much about what is happening in the Labor states. For his information, the South Australian scheme attracts applicants at the rate of about 5 a month, and that would indicate that it is not addressing the problem. It is aimed at those very low-income earners who probably cannot afford to buy a house under any circumstances, and that is unfortunate.

The opposition has confused monetary and fiscal policies. In the last few years, it is as a result of the monetary policy of the federal government that home purchasers have found themselves in trouble. As I said, it is through the deregulation of the banks combined with the high real interest rates that people, who have entered those schemes with the expectation that their real incomes will grow, are finding themselves in trouble.

The opposition made much ado about the local housing market and said that it is depressed or it is stagnating. The rate of inflation or the capital gain component of the housing market is completely irrelevant to the issues at hand today. If we talk about people in their first residence, trying to meet payments and trying to catch up with capitalised interest repayments, the realisable value of that house only comes into play when it is sold. For people who have occupied their residences for some years and intend to continue to occupy them, what they would realise on the market in comparison to what it is costing them to buy on a monthly or weekly basis is irrelevant. It does not matter. It is of no concern to them. What is of real concern to them are the real interest rates, what they are earning in real terms, how that is keeping up with inflation and the difference between the rate of inflation and the interest rates being charged by the various institutions.

I might say that, from what I can see of other schemes around Australia, this will be far and away the most innovative scheme available in Australia. In recent times, we have read chilling statements from the federal Minister for Finance, Senator Walsh, that Australians can no longer expect the privilege or the luxury of owning their own homes. I find that extraordinary coming from the Labor side of politics, those who purport to represent the working man, the aspirations of working Australians and the value that working Australians put on their family life. In conjunction, hopefully, with a shared equity scheme, this scheme will go a long way towards allowing average Territorians to realise their dreams of and aspirations to home ownership. It is a nonsense to say that the Australian dream of home ownership is somehow a drain on the economic resources of Australia which could be better directed at other types of investment and industry. The first and foremost consideration of the family man is to put a roof above the family's head. In terms of the GDP, the change in ownership of the housing stock, be it from the private individual to the corporate entity or to the public sector, in no way will reduce the percentage of the GDP expended on housing. All it does is change the nature of that expenditure. Quite frankly, I was appalled by the opposition's complete lack of understanding of the straightforward economics of the issue.

I do not know where the member for MacDonnell obtained the impression that the real estate industry and the housing industry thought that today's announcement was too little too late. I spoke to Frank Furness at lunchtime and he said that it is an excellent scheme that is well received by the industry. It certainly has no criticism of it.

Mr Bell: It has never been known to criticise the government publicly either.

Mr PALMER: The member for MacDonnell obviously does not pay any attention to the press, apart from the small amount which relates to himself.

Mr Speaker, in closing, I ask the minister to take up the matter which I raised in respect of 125% of average weekly earnings as opposed to 115%, because I believe that there are real problems in that marginally higher income bracket. People on that income are victims of tax bracket creep as well as having to meet loan repayments of \$600 or \$700 per month. Perhaps, if housing were more affordable in that sector of the marketplace, there might be more encouragement for mothers to drop out of the work force or take up part-time employment. That could lead to social benefits, with mothers spending more time with their children and fewer demands for child-care centres such as the one we will construct at Karama. I commend the government on its initiative and I ask the minister to consider the 1 small criticism that I have made.

Mr EDE (Stuart): Mr Speaker, I begin by saying that I do not think a single resident of my electorate will in any way benefit from this scheme. That is an indication of how things are in the Northern Territory. Although it is a fact of life, it will not prevent my talking on behalf of other residents of the Northern Territory who will be beneficiaries under this scheme.

I would like to raise some questions in terms of the various housing schemes which have been operated by the CLP government and I would like the minister to address these matters in his reply. In 1976, the government initiated the Government Employees Sales Scheme. As I recall, in 1977 or 1978, the definition of 'government employees' was extended so that the scheme applied to many more people. I would like the minister to give an indication of what happens to the people who came into the scheme between October 1976 and October 1979, when the Home Loans Scheme began. Honourable members will recall that the maximum loan under that Government Employees Sales Scheme was \$20 000. I believe that the interest rate was about 8% and, from memory, the term of the loan was in the vicinity of 25 to 30 years. It is not clear whether those people will continue to be covered by that scheme or whether they will be affected by the changes which the minister has outlined today.

During the period between October 1979 and September 1984, about 3000 people, or 600 a year, applied successfully for loans under the Home Loans Scheme. That was replaced by an interest subsidy scheme. In the 4 years for which the replacement scheme operated, about 1600 applicants obtained assistance, which would indicate that the scheme was not as popular as its predecessor. During that period, from October 1979 to 1984, the Northern Territory had a period of quite substantial growth. It was a period when housing costs were rising to the stage whereby the \$20 000 limit in the old sales scheme made it quite unrealistic. Whilst the loan was handy for people to use as a second mortgage or as a top-up mortgage to what they were negotiating from the bank, it soon became quite unrealistic.

The 1979-84 scheme extended borrowing capacity quite substantially. I cannot recall whether there was an upper limit in that scheme but, if so, it was quite substantial. When it was introduced, housing prices immediately rose quite substantially. That was partly due to growth in the economy but some people also argued that it was due partly to greater finance being

available to people which enabled them to negotiate for much more expensive housing. That was a period of relatively high inflation and wage growth. It may be of interest that, during that period, the real interest rate averaged 2.5% to 3%.

In September 1984, the government introduced the Home Purchase Assistance Scheme. It said at the time, and it says it again now, that it was designed to operate under the conditions that occurred during the previous 5 years. It does the honourable minister no credit that he turned around and blamed the federal government. It was rather a shallow observation because, by the time that Home Purchase Assistance Scheme was introduced, the federal Labor government had already moved to deregulate the financial markets, and that was something which the CLP applauded at the time. In light of the collapse of the terms of trade in 1986, it was lucky that it did.

However, banks turned around and forced the deregulation of new home loans by starving the housing market. Basically, they said that, if the highest interest rate they could charge on housing loans was 13.5%, when they could lend money at 15% to 16% for other purposes, they would make only a minimal amount of money available for housing. That has been known for years and what surprises me is that the government has waited 4 years to act. In spite of the excellent proposals put forward by the member for MacDonnell prior to the last election, which would have allowed people on very low incomes to begin purchasing houses, and in spite of the government's own promises made early in 1987, nothing has happened until now.

The member for Karama spoke about real interest rates and it is very important to be clear about exactly what they are. People may be thinking that they will be paying only 4% interest, and getting quite excited about that. They will be in for quite a shock if that is what they believe because, historically, real interest rates have generally been taken to be the difference between the 10-year bond rate and the inflation rate. In respect of housing, real interest rates have been taken as being the difference between the interest rate ceiling on home loans - which was 12.5% and was then lifted to 13.5% - and the inflation rate.

The real interest rate has averaged over 5% in the last 4 years and families have suffered. That is not so much because of low resale value, which does not affect people unless they join the rush to leave the Territory. The problem is the trauma which arises when people see that, while they are paying as much as they can afford in terms of loan repayments, their debts actually increase and they fall further behind. I would be very interested to know, Mr Speaker, how many people have simply walked away during the last couple of years. We hear rumours about people who have found that the amount that they owe is far above the actual value of the house and that, with the economic conditions that exist in the Northern Territory compared to the economic conditions in the south of Australia, people are simply deciding to leave it and walk away. Obviously, that was one of the major reasons why this component was a very necessary and very pragmatic ground for the government to introduce this. It has all the hallmarks of a debt write-off.

It appears to me that the government has assessed the numbers accumulating this debt and has simply drawn a line across the page saying that, if it reduces this outstanding principal by a factor of say 10%, it will be giving the participants in the old scheme a windfall gain in some way in that it is something which the government has given to them. In fact, what it has done is reduce the accumulation of debt above and beyond the original mortgage that was negotiated. From what I have heard, I believe that the government worked

out that 10% on the basis that this was an average accumulation of debt over and above the original mortgage and it would bring people back to taws. Of course, the risk that we run when something like this happens is that people will be in a situation where their mortgages possibly will be below the resale price of the house and there may be a build up of pressure and people who want to sell and leave the Territory may in fact do so. Of course, that is not a reason not to do it.

However, I would like to query the 4% real interest rate which is to be applied. In light of the current real interest rates, a 4% cap is a good thing. However, it should always be remembered that, if we do not use the artificial caps on the home market but the bond market, the average real interest rate from 1970 to 1987 was only 1.44%. Despite what the previous speaker said, real interest rates have declined over the last 3 years from around 7.7% to 4.5% to 3.5% last year. They have risen a little in the last 6 months but, if they do decline in the long term, this 4% will not be of much assistance to people.

The question that must be asked is how they will be adjusted. If, for example, inflation were to rise or interest rates were to drop so that the margin between real interest rates became less than 4%, will they be adjusted down from that period? How often will they be adjusted? We have to take in the CPI figure which is calculated on a quarterly basis. Will there be a quarterly adjustment in line with the quarterly CPI adjustment? Hopefully, it will mean that, in the very short term, this 4% which the government has so generously offered will mean nothing. Historically, it will mean nothing. It will provide a benefit over a couple of years and we will have to hope that, in the near future, interest rates will decline to the point where we are back to the historical real interest rates of between 1.5% to 2.5%. I would like the honourable minister to advise us what will happen when the rate falls below 4%, how often the adjustments will be made and whether they will be passed on automatically? I would like him to advise also whether the 20% cap as a percentage of salary is to stay. That was not mentioned in his statement. I presume that it will, but I would like him to make that clear.

When we turn to the new scheme, the Interest Subsidy Scheme, there is a point that I would like the honourable minister to clarify from the start. He spoke about participating financial institutions. I would like him to advise whether these have been set, whether a deal has been struck with a particular bank or whether all banks and financial institutions have agreed to be involved. There is often a situation whereby a bank will provide a housing loan provided the applicant moves all his business to that bank. If the minister has all the banks involved, there will be no problem. He may be able to put in the agreement with the banks that they will not force that on people.

I was a bit disturbed to note that the scheme is to be based on the level of gross income of the major breadwinner. I would have thought that a more equitable scheme would have been to assess the family income such as, for example, the income of the major breadwinner and a proportion of the income of the second wage earner. If he had done that, he would then have been able to provide more assistance for people at the bottom end of the scale who obviously require it. A family with a single wage earner on \$500 a week may be in far more straitened circumstances than a family which has 2 members each earning \$400 per week.

I note also that the maximum proportion of income which people will be required to pay has changed from 20% to 30% of salary. Previously, the 20% of

salary that people paid allowed 80% for other needs. Obviously, 30% means a 50% increase in the amount that people in that situation will have to pay per week. If somebody is paying the maximum of 20% and he has fallen behind, he may face a 50% increase in the amount that he has to pay per week under this scheme. I hope that the minister has done his sums and that very few people will be in that situation. He says that no one will be disadvantaged by the introduction of the new scheme.

I note that the maximum loan is \$55 000. I would like to ask the minister whether the 30% applies to the \$55 000 or to the total loan which a person negotiates. For example, if a person required a mortgage of \$80 000 and borrowed \$55 000 from this scheme and another \$25 000 as a second mortgage from a bank, would the maximum that he pays out be 30% of his income or is 30% the amount fixed for the \$55 000 so that there is an additional amount on top of that for the other \$25 000? We must bear in mind that the generous interest rates of 7% and 7.5% apply only to the \$55 000. Other loans above that presumably would have to be negotiated at the current rate which, at present, is around 14.5%. People must realise that this will raise their effective interest rate. In the example I quoted, the effective interest rate would be about 8.5%. That is still a very good interest rate in today's economic climate and I support that aspect of the statement.

However, I hope that soon we will be provided with more documentation on this to see how it will actually be calculated given that the rate is still floating with the Commonwealth Bank interest rate. The Commonwealth Bank rate for housing at the moment is 14.5%. A person on the maximum rate of 7.5% rebate would be paying 7% on his loan. If the 14.5% falls, there would be a recalculation in the amount that the government would pay to the lending institution. It would not affect the actual amount that the person would be paying into his bank but would affect the situation when he tries to find out his equity. In some schemes, people can use the equity in their house to secure other loans. Obviously, if the Housing Commission does not bring those figures up to date accurately and regularly, a person may have a quite inaccurate idea of what his equity in his house is.

Overall, it is very much a move in the right direction. It is something which is probably years out of date. People will probably say that, once again, this government is moving in the socialist direction and I can only applaud that when it results in helping ordinary Territorians to purchase their own homes and remain in the Territory. It does not really assist the construction industry in the short term. However, as the lag is taken up and as more people are able to purchase their own homes and we move beyond the current crisis, it should allow the upturn to be sharper and so get the construction industry moving again more rapidly.

Mr Speaker, I commend the overall program for the new Interest Subsidy Scheme. I would like to have any doubts about the 2 previous schemes cleared up in the minister's reply. I would ask him also to answer my question in his reply or possibly at a later date so that honourable members are able to advise their constituents accurately.

Mr SETTER (Jingili): Mr Speaker, one thing that the member for Stuart needs to know and know right now is that this government is not moving towards socialism. I can assure him of that. But, having said that, there is no doubt that this government recognises the need in the community for a fair and reasonable home loan scheme. We have always had such a scheme. In fact, when I first came to the Northern Territory in 1973, there was such a scheme in operation and indeed I took advantage of it. From memory, the amount was around \$15 000.

Mr Ede: Good old Gough Whitlam.

Mr SETTER: It had nothing to do with Gough Whitlam at all. It was the Northern Territory government.

Mr Smith: In 1973?

Mr SETTER: Prior to self-government, we had a fully-elected Legislative Council.

Members interjecting.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! When honourable members have finished their cross-Chamber chatter, I would instruct them all to address their remarks through the Chair.

Mr SETTER: Indeed, Mr Speaker, that is appropriate.

Mr Speaker, that scheme worked extremely well. The interest rate at that time was about 7%. We then saw the devastation caused by Cyclone Tracy. I believe that the post-cyclone scheme involved an interest rate of about 6% for people whose homes were destroyed and subsequently rebuilt. Since then, we have seen various schemes, including the scheme which will be superseded on 1 December. There is no doubt that this government has always offered support to the people of the Northern Territory in terms of housing.

The package which has been announced today is probably the best we have ever had. I do not think that there is any doubt about that. It has taken almost 12 months to put it together. It has been a very complex task requiring the juggling of numbers in relation to the package's affordability and in endeavouring to predict fluctuations in the marketplace, the cost and availability of money and so on. It has not been easy and it is not surprising that it has taken something like 10 months to put the package together. From what I have read today and heard in this Chamber, there is no doubt that these are excellent schemes.

The minister stated that there will be a first-home grant of \$1000 for people participating in the Interest Subsidy Scheme and that it will apply to the purchase of homes worth up to \$100 000. It will apply to people with incomes between \$300 and \$600 per week, and I will return to that minimum income level later during the course of my comments. The scheme provides for a subsidy so that the highest interest rate will be no less than 7.5% and the subsidy payable is on amounts up to \$55 000. That appears to be a considerable increase on the amount under the previous scheme which, I understand, was up to \$25 000.

Mr Smith: That is wrong.

Mr SETTER: If it is wrong, I am sure the minister will clarify it.

I was a bit disappointed when I heard the amendment moved by the opposition. Once again, it has failed to recognise a good scheme. Members opposite continue to be negative about almost everything that members on this side of the House present. They talk about how many home owners have been forced out of their houses before action was taken. They say that the government has taken no action to address the wider problems causing the housing crisis. Rubbish! Most of those were totally out of the hands of this government. They were a result of the policies of the federal Labor government.

The member for MacDonnell went on to say that the housing market in the Northern Territory, particularly in Darwin, is depressed. Of course, it has been depressed but I am very pleased to note that, in the last several months, it has taken quite an upturn. Why has it been depressed? The member for MacDonnell tried to imply, and a couple of his colleagues followed the same old line, that it was the responsibility of this government. Once again, that is absolute nonsense. The reality is that, if you go back 5 years to when the Hawke Keating government came to power, the housing market in the Northern Territory was extremely buoyant, as was our entire economy. After 5 years of hard Labor, we saw it in the depressed state that it has been in for the last 12 months or so. Nevertheless, the federal government tries to put the blame on us. It knows that, year after year for the past 4 years, it has slashed the funding of the Northern Territory and we have tightened our belts. It knows that full well. Indeed, our economy was buoyant 5 years ago, but right now we are hurting. I shudder when I see the way the balance of payments is taking a dive at the moment. I hear that there will be another mini-budget in May next year. I shudder to think about it. How many more notches can we take our belts in? Mr Speaker, you can see what is on the agenda for May next year. It will be another cut in the funding of the states.

Mr Smith: Tax cuts.

Mr SETTER: I do not doubt that there will be tax cuts. There will be tax cuts all right and they will be dropped on us just before the next federal election. That is sticking out a mile. But, they will not last long. Labor will go to the election with its tax cuts and everybody feeling warm, and you can bet that, in the next budget, bingo, the cuts will be gone. You mark my words, Mr Speaker, because that is exactly what it is about.

What do we see? We have seen interest rates for home loans skyrocket to where they are today - something like 14.5%. Gone is the control over home loan interest rates. At the same time, we have seen a continuing decrease in real wages. The poor wage earner, the person who is trying to scrape together a few dollars towards a deposit to purchase a home, is caught in this situation whereby increasing interest rates mean that he cannot afford the repayments. The average person in the community cannot afford to purchase his home. Indeed, only a week or 2 ago, we heard a federal minister commenting that, in this day and age, the average Australian really cannot expect to own his home, and that really he should be thinking about going into some sort of unit or housing commune. That has been the situation in the UK for the last century or so and everybody lives in little narrow flats, side by side. That is what the federal Labor government has on the agenda for Australians. No longer does it want Australians to have reasonable blocks of land with reasonable homes on them. Under the policies of this federal Labor government, that is to cease.

What did these people do when they came to power, Mr Speaker? Negative gearing, which had been so popular for so long and which supported private enterprise investment in the housing industry, was scrapped overnight. The result of that was seen in this very city when, again overnight, private investment in flats and houses disappeared completely. That happened throughout Australia and that situation existed for about 3 years. What happened, not only in this city but in all the capital cities of Australia? All around this country, we saw a decrease in investment in the private development of housing and home units, and that created an enormous shortfall. That is why in Sydney today there is a great shortage of private housing.

Some 12 or 18 months ago, negative gearing was reintroduced. Everybody has jumped back into the development market and they are all developing houses like crazy but, in the meantime, because of the shortfall, prices were forced through the roof. This, and the high interest rates, has meant that the average person has no hope at all in those major capital cities of ever purchasing a block of land and a house. That is the reality. That is Labor policy. It is not the policy of this government because we have seen today the details of probably the most generous home loan scheme that has ever been introduced in the Northern Territory.

In his earlier statement, I was very pleased to hear the minister comment that the people who took out loans under the previous scheme, the NTHPAS, will be given special consideration under this new scheme. If I may quote a press release that the minister issued earlier today, he said: 'The Housing Commission will reduce the principal on all NTHPAS loans by 10%. In addition, interest on the loans would be cut to 4% and increased from December 1989 at the rate of 0.5% a year with corresponding small increases in repayments'.

I applaud the minister for taking that action because, from the minister's statement, I understand that, regrettably, 1600 people who took out loans under that scheme have found that the market value of their properties has decreased because of the policy of the federal Labor government which created a depressed home loan or housing situation here. When that scheme was first introduced, the predictions were that the value of those properties would increase along with inflation. Regrettably, particularly in Darwin, that was not the case and, as we heard the minister describe earlier, some people found that the amount owing on their loans, considering the accrual of interest and so on, is now more than the actual value of the property. I am very pleased that the minister has taken that into consideration. Some people have spoken to me about their concerns and I have done my best to assist them. I have drawn those concerns to the minister's attention. I am exceedingly pleased that that will occur.

I have 1 question for the minister. I refer to the minimum weekly income of \$300 which is a requirement for any person applying under the new scheme. I understand that, under the previous scheme, it was possible for a person to take out a loan in spite of the fact that his income was probably less than the \$300 minimum that the minister mentioned. I ask the minister to clarify whether the provision that he mentioned, which will now be applicable to the NTHPAS, will apply to people on an income under \$300 who took a loan under the previous scheme. I think that is a very important point.

With those few words, I would like to compliment the minister on his statement and the introduction of this scheme from 1 December. I think it will receive acclaim in the community and I am quite sure that it will also address the issues in relation to the previous scheme that have been of concern to quite a number of people.

Mr MANZIE (Lands and Housing): Mr Speaker, it has been quite an interesting exercise to listen to the comments of honourable members and I am not too sure where to start. As the member for Stuart was speaking, I thought it would be better for us all if I commenced with his concerns because he was the only member of the opposition who seemed to appreciate in any depth at all what this new scheme actually is about. To some extent, I believe he appreciated the steps the government is taking in relation to the old scheme. I am pleased that he recognised the importance of providing assistance to Territory families to enable them to purchase their first homes. He recognised that the scheme will be of advantage to low- and middle-income Territorians.

Some of the problems that the member for Stuart raised indicated that he was a little confused in relation to previous situations in respect of low interest loans and subsidised interest loans from the government. All previous loans remain as they are with the exception of those under the Northern Territory Home Purchase Assistance Scheme. In respect of a loan under that scheme, there will be a 10% cut on the principal, the interest rate will fall to 4% and it will rise by 0.5%. In practical terms, it will mean that there will be no change or extremely minimal change to repayments that people will make. It will not mean a difference in the actual cash paid out per month or, if it does, it will be almost negligible.

What it means is that the invisible interest subsidy, which was tacked on to the principal and then interest charged again, will not be there. That disincentive will not be there to disadvantage people when they come to sell or transfer their mortgages or upgrade their homes. Previously, they were disadvantaged by the fact that this invisible amount of money suddenly became visible and bit them.

To clear up a misconception by the member for Stuart regarding the older schemes and the present scheme, all the earlier schemes were very good except in one respect: they required payment of money by the government. The government was the bank and the money that was provided for the purchase of accommodation was taxpayers' money. Before the change to the NTHPAS, the outlay of money from the Northern Territory Treasury was \$45m for home purchase assistance for Territorians. Because of occurrences in Canberra, we were unable to commit that amount of money from our Treasury coffers to home purchasers in the Northern Territory.

We had to make changes which brought the private sector lending authorities into the picture and enabled the money required by Territorians to be available. NTHPAS was designed to do that, and it was introduced under circumstances which were totally different from what we have today. Inflation was moving along at a steady rate, property values were moving at a steady rate and incomes were increasing at a steady rate. All the work done by the economists involved showed that, under those circumstances, that scheme would work quite well. However, no matter what the member for MacDonnell or the member for Nhulunbuy say, when the federal Labor government got into its stride with its economic policies, we saw deliberate moves to increase home interest rates and they have increased steadily. In the last few months, we have had statements by the federal Treasurer and by the Finance Minister constantly referring to the fact that housing interest rates must continue to rise. Unfortunately, too many Australians were trying to buy their houses. The federal government could not let that happen. It had to dampen the demand, therefore it raised the interest rates. It is a deliberate policy.

I am not arguing about the rights or wrongs of that. It is a fact. Nevertheless, the member for MacDonnell said that it is all the Northern Territory government's fault that things are not working here whereas everything is working well everywhere else in Australia. Obviously, that is not the case. I suggest that he do a little research and he will find that prices are rising through the roof in Melbourne, Sydney and other capital cities because government policies have not allowed appropriate amounts of serviced land to be turned off to enable houses to be built. The demand for housing far exceeds the supply and therefore values have skyrocketed out of the reach of ordinary Australian families.

The dream of every Australian family is to own its own home. That goal has been driven out of the reach of average Australians. The federal

Treasurer and the federal Finance Minister have made no secret of the fact that they do not consider that that is an important aspiration for Australians. They have said that Australians will have to cut their coats according to their cloth and will have to look at other ways of providing accommodation for themselves because owning their homes will be out of the question. That is the great socialist plan: to remove the right of individuals to achieve for themselves and to provide for themselves. The state provides everything and that begins with accommodation. That is why housing is not part of the socialist equation. In their minds, housing is not important because they are prepared to stick everyone in a unit. That is the way we are moving. Members on this side of the House do not think that that is a suitable circumstance for Australians. We definitely do not intend to preside over a Northern Territory that is moving towards that. We intend to do everything in our power to ensure that Territorians can purchase their houses.

For the benefit of the member for MacDonnell, I refer him to some recent comments by Bruce Bond who pointed out that property values throughout Australia, with the exception of the major capital cities, are falling. It is only in those areas where there is plenty of demand and no property that the prices are moving out of reach of ordinary Australians.

I will move on to some other comments the member for MacDonnell made regarding the turn off of land in Katherine. He implied that there was something shonky, illegal or illicit in the way that this government moved to ensure that the ability to turn off land meant that the price of the blocks of land remained as low as possible so that people could afford them.

I do not care what the member for MacDonnell thinks about the rest of the country but I will do everything in my power to keep the price of serviced land as low as possible so that the prices of houses and property will be within the reach of average Territorians. The honourable member can criticise this government for being innovative in trying to provide serviced land as long as he likes because the electorate knows that it is sour grapes. People realise that serviced land in the Territory is cheaper than elsewhere in the country and I am quite proud of the fact that this government has been innovative in working towards that situation.

The member for MacDonnell also deserves to be censured for his attempt to impute improper motives to or actions by the government in relation to the transfer of a mortgage by the previous member for Flynn, Mr Ray Hanrahan. The honourable member raised this matter in the press quite a few months ago. He did not ever raise it in this House because he knew that he was skating on thin ice. However, he became carried away today and he let the cat out of the bag. I want to place it on the record quite clearly that the previous member for Flynn did not have a loan under the Northern Territory Home Purchase Assistance Scheme. When she had been single and on a low income, his wife had been granted a loan under the Home Purchase Assistance Scheme. Upon her marriage, the loan was transferred. That is a normal mortgage transfer which is entirely within the rules of the mortgage transfer scheme approved by the Northern Territory government.

There was nothing dishonest or underhand in that transaction and no favouritism was shown by the government. Because he knows the truth, the member for MacDonnell's repeated attempts to imply that the government acted improperly are dishonest. He knows the rules of the mortgage scheme, but he cannot help himself. I am waiting for the day when the media finally depict him as he is - a dishonest broker of dishonest information who is interested only in gaining political points.

Mr SMITH: A point of order, Mr Deputy Speaker! I do not think I really have to tell you what the point of order is. In his excitement, the minister has cast aspersions on the good name and character of my colleague.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: I ask the Attorney-General to withdraw his remark.

Mr MANZIE: Mr Deputy Speaker, may I speak to the point of order?

Mr Ede: No. He has ruled.

Mr MANZIE: I withdraw, Mr Deputy Speaker. However, I draw the House's attention to the fact that the member for MacDonnell makes statements in this House which are not true but which imply truth. He does that constantly and such statements do no good to himself or his side of politics. On a number of occasions, I have challenged him to put up or shut up. He cannot put up but he cannot stop himself from making sly innuendoes. I hope that he will turn over a new leaf next year and attempt to conduct his business in this House with a little more dignity.

I will turn now to the comments of other members, Mr Deputy Speaker. The member for Karama ...

Mr Bell interjecting.

Mr MANZIE: Mr Deputy Speaker, the member for MacDonnell cannot help himself. When he reads the Hansard and realises that I intend to inform the Northern Territory community about some of the things he has said today, he will squirm. The member for Millner will squirm too because the people of Millner will not be too impressed with the member for MacDonnell's attitude towards the ability of Territorians to buy their houses.

Before I move away from the member for MacDonnell, I must refer to another matter. He actually sent chills down my spine when he said that he would approach his federal colleagues to see if they could persuade the Commonwealth to cut our funding by an amount equal to the amount which we are contributing through this housing scheme. That remark is recorded in Hansard. It sent chills down my spine because the last person to say that sort of thing was the previous Labor member for the Northern Territory who said in the federal parliament that the Territory was overfunded. What happened, Mr Deputy Speaker? We are still suffering. Ever since the election of the present federal member, we have had cuts, brought about by his party, the party of members opposite.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I will make this pledge. If there are any cuts to the Territory's funding along the lines threatened by the member for MacDonnell, I will personally follow him throughout the Territory to publicise his words. I shall also publicise them in this House and I shall ensure that all Territorians are aware, not only of his threats, but of the actions of the Australian Labor Party in relation to Territorians and their funding. The member for MacDonnell has made an abysmal threat and I warn him that, if any steps are taken to carry it out, both he and his party will be sorry that he was ever pre-selected.

Mr Bell interjecting.

Mr MANZIE: The government certainly will not be supporting the amendment moved by the member for Nhulunbuy. The questions raised by the member for Stuart, who was supportive of the government's thrust, are answered in detail in the statement and he should do some work in researching its contents.

The loan is based only on the breadwinner's income. The 20% or 30% income repayment is based on the benchmark of \$55 000. All other details will be handled by the banks. The government's only role will be in assessing the subsidy for which people are eligible. That amount will be paid to their bank accounts once their loans are approved by the bank. All other dealings relating to loan amounts and percentages of repayments will be matters for the banks. They will do the work. They are experts on finance and it is appropriate that they carry out that work.

Mr Deputy Speaker, the member for Stuart said that we are moving towards socialism. Not only is that not the case, but we are moving away from the Australian Labor Party's moves to socialise our country's accommodation.

Amendment negatived.

Mr COLLINS (Sadadeen): Mr Speaker, I am pleased to see that the government is taking a few steps in the right direction to help the little people in our community to own their own homes. I certainly do not agree that it has anything to do with socialism. When people own their homes, socialism fades away very rapidly. I wish the government all the very best with its initiative and I trust that people will take the opportunities offered and that many people who are really hurting will be assisted.

It is clear that, with rises in the cost of living and the continued erosion of our standard of living, people are finding it harder and harder to make ends meet. The bills are accumulating. This is causing a great deal of worry. It is breaking up homes and families as, under the constant pressure of trying to make ends meet, relationships are strained to breaking point. That is a very sad fact and I certainly welcome the government's move to assist people in this regard. I trust that it will work out well. I have not studied the full details of the scheme and I dare say it would take me some considerable time to get right across it but, certainly on the surface, it looks as though it will be quite an encouragement to people.

However, I would like to suggest that there are other things that the government could do. These are simply suggestions but possibly they could help people. Something that has worried me for quite a considerable time in relation to housing is that, on occasion, people have to sell their homes because they have lost their jobs and need to move to another area. I was pleased to have an assurance from the minister, across the floor of the House, that, if that occurs, the portability provisions of the scheme will come into play. However, when a person has to sell his home to move somewhere else, it is necessary for him to pay conveyancing fees to a solicitor. On an \$80 000 house, which is about average for a Territory home these days, the fees are \$555, according to the Law Society, plus disbursements which, from my experience in talking to people who have actually been charged, will raise them to about the \$800 mark. The government knows that there will be an opportunity before the House in a few days time to give people a choice in regard to this matter.

There is also the matter of the land agents. Recently, a family broke up as a result of financial difficulties and certain other factors. The family was purchasing a Housing Commission house. The woman came to my office. She used to do some nursing work at night whilst her husband looked after the 3 young children. However, when the family broke up and the husband moved out, she could not continue that because, naturally enough, she did not want to leave her young children at home on their own. She sought my assistance in finding out whether the Housing Commission could do anything to help her. As

soon as the breakup occurred, she very wisely applied to be put on the Housing Commission list but she had several months to wait. She told me that she had hoped that her estranged husband and herself would have a couple of thousand dollars between them after the sale which would give them something to try to pick up the threads of their lives again. However, they received a letter from their land agent saying it would cost \$3000-odd for the sale of the property. Add to that amount the conveyancing fees and the government imposed stamp duty and the cost of selling the property would be \$4000 to \$5000.

Mr Speaker, I have a suggestion to make about that. Clearly, if a person owns an \$80 000 home outright, \$3000 out of \$80 000 is not all that much. However, if the person has only a few thousand dollars of equity, the effect of these charges will be that he will be left with nothing. That is the situation that this woman has found herself in. Her hopes of having a few dollars with which to rent some private accommodation until she and her children were eligible for a Housing Commission house evaporated. She came to me in a terrible state. Fortunately, the Housing Commission will consider her case carefully to see what can be done. However, the commission does not enjoy unlimited funds and it has rules that it is required to follow.

There is a point that I would like to make regarding land agents' fees. Unfortunately, the Minister for Education is not here at the moment, but I can talk to him about it later on. Our TAFE institutes could provide short courses on how to purchase or sell a house. The process is not that difficult but there are some pitfalls. People could be taught about these pitfalls and would be able to make a decision as to whether or not they wished to involve a land agent. An agent will always claim that he will secure a better price. Naturally, that would be one of the aspects that could be discussed. However, people would have some choice and, having studied the course, they would be able to make an informed decision. The ability to save \$3000 by selling his property himself is very significant for the ordinary person. It would take the ordinary family quite some time to save \$3000. That money would be better in their hands than in the hands of land agents. I believe that the government should consider my suggestion seriously. I am not speaking about a course designed to qualify people to become real estate agents but a course designed to teach ordinary people how to sell their own property and avoid the possible pitfalls. I am sure that many people would welcome the opportunity to undertake such a course because it would enable them to save money.

It was pleasing to hear the member for Stuart and, in particular, the member for Jingili noting that many families in the community are struggling. I welcome what the government is doing to help those on lower incomes, in particular, to own their own homes, but there are other matters which the government could look at. No doubt, the government would not be very keen about lowering the stamp duty. Certainly, there would be pressure from the federal government to prevent it. The federal government requires that we have a reasonable fund-raising base and, in that regard, it has us in a vice. I am also concerned, as the honourable minister has said, that our good friends in Canberra - and may they not be there after the next election because that certainly would relieve the worry considerably - may use the scheme to say that we have too much money and that we are giving Territorians too good a deal. There could be a fear that some people might eventually own their homes and vote against Labor, and the federal government might decide to reduce the amount of money that we receive under the Commonwealth State Housing Agreement. Certainly, the minister highlighted that point and I am sure all Territorians will be watching rather anxiously to see what happens. I hope that, if the federal Labor government does that, Territorians will give it a resounding message at the next federal election. Mr Snowdon might have to look for another job.

Mr TUXWORTH (Barkly): Mr Speaker, I welcome the government's proposal because the plight of people in the lower income bracket making their home purchase repayments and the inability of many to be able to afford to purchase their homes has been becoming increasingly desperate over the last 12 to 18 months. I am sure that the minister would be more concerned than anybody else because he is the one that has had to deal with the foreclosures on mortgages and people who simply are unable to pay their rent to the Housing Commission.

I would like to go on record at this stage as saying to the minister that, in the cases that I have raised with him about the problems of people who were not able to pay their rent or who have had extenuating circumstances, his compassion was most appreciated. These are very difficult times and, quite often, people such as ourselves forget how hard it is for those at the bottom end of the salary scale. I wish the government well with the scheme. When you are dreaming up these schemes, there are so many possible variations and formulas that, no matter which one you pick, it will never be exactly right. It is, however, worth a try.

I would like the minister to tell me, either today or later in these sittings, how many sales he expects to occur after 1 December as a result of the introduction of this scheme, how many of those he expects to be from existing stock and how many he expects from new starts. The minister must have some notion of the amount of activity that he expects to be generated as a result of the scheme's introduction. If he has those figures to hand, I would be interested to hear them.

I would also appreciate an indication from the minister of how many dollars are likely to be paid out by the government in actual subsidies during each of the 10 years for which the scheme will operate. I ask for that indication because it is a very generous scheme by any standard. The minister's statement indicates that, on a loan of \$55 000 at 14.5%, the government's contribution after 10 years of subsidy will be \$22 536. That is very generous and I would be interested to hear whether the minister has any indication of how much he is likely to be paying out in that period. I would also appreciate hearing from the minister in relation to how much the write-down is in capital terms.

Mr Speaker, I do not say this in any negative vein, but it will be very interesting to note the response this scheme attracts because, despite its generosity, it will still be very hard for people to take advantage of it. Consider the example of a single Territorian earning \$335 a week. He will pay \$64 a week in tax, producing a net disposable income of \$1086 per month. After subtracting his housing repayment, he will have a disposable income of \$690 to \$700. I think it would be a pretty fair challenge for any Territorian today to survive on that, given that such costs as power, water, sewerage, rates, sometimes strata title fees, telephone, car and food have to be met. As the income rises from \$300 towards the maximum of \$600, the level of exposure also rises. People need a bigger house. Many have children or run more than 1 car. Everything is relative. Therefore, whilst I view it as a step in the right direction, I certainly will be watching it closely because I would like to see as many people as possible own their own homes.

Finally, I would like to ask the minister about consultation with the federal government. Given the generosity of the scheme, has the minister obtained any reaction from the federal government? It seems to me that, in establishing such a generous scheme, the government might be setting a benchmark which the Commonwealth and the other states would very much like to

emulate. It is quite likely that, at the next Housing Ministers Conference, the federal minister may find 6 state ministers climbing all over him seeking assistance for a housing scheme comparable to the one that is being put in place here today. In that context, I would have to say that, although we have an autonomous government in the Northern Territory, we are still heavily dependent on the gracious handouts of the Commonwealth. I wonder whether the government's generosity is likely to put us offside with the Commonwealth or whether the Commonwealth has advised the minister that his scheme is perfectly acceptable. I would be pleased to hear his comments on that.

Mr Speaker, I will conclude by saying that I will be very supportive of the scheme. I hope that it goes well and I hope that the issues which I have raised do not present problems for us in the days ahead.

Mr SMITH (Opposition Leader): Mr Speaker, I think the issues have been canvassed quite thoroughly here today. Certainly, the opposition's viewpoint has been put very thoroughly. We appreciate anything which will ease the plight of people who are experiencing real difficulties. However, as my colleagues have said, we certainly have some reservations about the total content of the package and how much it will achieve in resolving the problems of the Northern Territory.

As the Deputy Leader of the Opposition pointed out, one of the disappointing aspects of the package is that it will give no immediate boost to the construction industry. That may well occur at a later date but as long as it is possible to buy a house more cheaply than it is to build a house, which is the current situation, there will be no boost to the construction industry no matter what incentive ...

Disturbance in public gallery.

Mr Speaker: Order! Would the Serjeant-at-Arms please remove that gentleman from the public gallery.

Mr SMITH: There will be no such boost, no matter what incentives are offered by the government.

Mr Speaker, unfortunately the government's job has been made more difficult by articles on the front page of today's NT News which exemplify the problem that we all have from time to time in dealing with the press. In case the minister has not seen it, the front page contains 2 statements which, obviously, he will have to correct fairly soon. One statement appears in the article by Frank Alcorta when referring to the 1600 existing home buyers: 'They have been given a nice Christmas present amounting in most cases to more than \$5000'. If any of those 1600 people expect that they will have \$5000 extra in their pockets by Christmas, they will be in for a very very severe shock indeed. As the minister has pointed out, there will be no reduction whatsoever in the weekly, fortnightly or monthly repayments on these homes and there certainly will not be any cash payment to the 1600 people involved. The NT News also makes a couple of references to an interest rate of 4%. It says: 'The interest rate on the new package will be 4%'. I despair of such misinterpretations, as I am sure the minister does. He spoke about a real interest rate of 4%, and that is significantly different from the total interest rate which people will be paying.

Mr Speaker, there is somebody in this House who has a similar problem in working out interest rates. I refer, of course, to the Chief Minister. Can I say, on behalf of present and potential home buyers in the Northern Territory ...

Mr Perron: You speak on behalf of them all, do you?

Mr SMITH: ... how fortunate they are that the Chief Minister is not the Minister for Lands and Housing because, if he were, they would be receiving no interest benefits. That is because the Marshall Perron school of economics does not accept that there are any costs in repaying a loan, apart from the amount of the loan itself. To illustrate that, I will read from the transcript of yesterday's Territory Extra, in which the Chief Minister is recorded as saying: 'Now whether it is paid for in cash today, or whether it is drawn down over a series of loans over the next however long - 10, 20 or 50 years - it will still cost \$100m in today's values'.

Mr Perron: It is true.

Mr SMITH: He is still saying that it is true! Mr Speaker, try telling a person with a \$50 000 loan repayable over the next 10, 20 or 50 years that it will cost him only \$50 000. That is absolute nonsense! The reason why the Minister for Lands and Housing has put forward this package is because he recognises that there is a very real cost in taking out loans and, even under the previous Northern Territory government loan scheme, that cost led a number of people to fall behind in their payments. A number of people have not only fallen behind in their payments but have been forced out of their houses. As a result of the impact of those costs, the government has acted, quite rightly and quite properly, to redress the situation by providing an interest subsidy for new home buyers and relief for existing home buyers. It is unadulterated garbage to say \$100m now is \$100m, no matter how you fund it.

Mr Speaker, I conclude by saying that Territory home buyers, both now and in the future, are very lucky indeed that the Chief Minister is not the Minister for Lands and Housing because, according to the Marshall Perron school of economics, there is no need for any interest subsidy because interest is not something which has to be paid.

Mr MANZIE (Lands and Housing): Mr Speaker, I would like to thank the opposition for their belated support as expressed by the Leader of the Opposition. I suppose that it is indicative that obviously he is intellectually the most suitable person to lead the members of the opposition benches. Because of that, we must wish him well forever and a day in that position.

The member for Barkly asked how many sales are expected. Obviously, we cannot give a definite figure but, for the purpose of doing the sums, we worked on the basis of 600 sales a year. He asked how much it would cost over a 10-year period. It is interesting that this scheme is actually cheaper in dollar terms than any previous scheme that the Northern Territory government has been involved with. By the end of 1983 or 1984, the government was spending \$45m a year from Treasury for home loans. With this new scheme, I do not have figures for the first year. However, in the second year, it is expected to cost \$1.7m and, in 10 years time, with roughly 600 sales a year, it is expected to cost between \$10m and \$12m per annum. Thus, the actual outlay in cash terms is far less. The present budget has an amount of \$8.5m allocated for NTHPAS which, even though it involved a great deal of input by banks, still required quite heavy outlays from the Treasury. In this scheme, the majority of the funds are provided by lending institutions and the only contribution by government is to subsidise the interest. In cash terms, it is far less onerous and allows us to spend the money more effectively.

The member for Barkly asked also whether I had spoken to the Commonwealth. Obviously, I have not spoken about the details of the scheme but work has been done in relation to parameters for loans and assistance for housing. It fits within the parameters of the system. It may not be attractive to other governments. I do not think many of the other governments are actually involved in cash outlays in terms of providing home loan assistance whereas this government has always been involved in providing some sort of cash outlay as part of the expenditure of its housing funds.

Mr Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition reiterated that it was disappointing that it would not provide any immediate boost to the construction industry but that possibly it would do so in the long term. Obviously, we cannot expect an immediate boost to the construction industry. As the member for Victoria River pointed out, 300 RAAF personnel have left Darwin and there has been a slow down in building. Until such time as the demand increases, we will not have that movement in the construction industry. Certainly, I believe that it will start a movement which will transfer into the construction industry and that that will happen in the near future. I issue a word of warning to people in the construction industry to keep their finger on the pulse and to be in a position to ensure that there is no backlog of people waiting to move into houses. I commend the schemes to honourable members.

Motion agreed to.

STATEMENT
Meningococcal Meningitis

Mr DALE (Health and Community Services): Mr Speaker, following the widespread and generally positive publicity given to the recent vaccination campaign against the disease meningococcal meningitis in the Alice Springs and Barkly region, it is necessary to place before this House the details surrounding the real but unpredictable spread of and our control measures against this disease across central Australia. I will highlight the matters and the logic leading up to the decision to fund the massive vaccination campaign that has been implemented by members of my department so successfully in the last few weeks, including the excellent way in which coordinated support provided by them has enabled the various federally-funded, community-controlled health services to contribute significantly to this campaign.

I will also refute absolutely the extraordinary suggestion made by a Central Australian Aboriginal Congress doctor, on a recent television program, that my department had not responded to this disease menace in a satisfactory way or consulted with his organisation on the matter sufficiently well. This ill-considered suggestion was the one blight on an otherwise copybook example of how to approach a major community health threat systematically, responsibly and effectively in a coordinated and integrated fashion. Firstly, I will underline the dimensions of the recent outbreak of the disease which led to my taking the advice of my department on the decisions necessary to implement this vaccination program.

Meningococcal meningitis is a serious disease caused by a bacteria, not a virus, called meningococcus. Formerly, more than 50% of cases were fatal, but early diagnosis and prompt treatment has reduced this rate to less than 10%. Infection with a bacteria may produce no symptoms or may result in a throat infection. Less frequently, it enters the blood and may cause a rapidly fatal disease called fulminant septicemia or it may enter the meninges, the membrane

covering the brain, and cause meningitis. The mode of transmission of the bacteria is spread by discharges from the nose and throat of infected persons. However, only a very small number of people who have the bacteria in the throat actually go on to develop the disease meningitis. The conditions which foster this progression are not known. The diagnosis is confirmed by pathology tests examining either blood or cerebrospinal fluid. Treatment is with antibiotics.

We are not alone in having to deal with this particular disease. Infections with meningococcus are common in both temperate and tropical climates. Epidemic waves occur at unexplained, irregular intervals. They occur more commonly in children and in young adults living under crowded conditions such as in barracks or institutions. Large epidemics have occurred in hot dry regions. An area of high incidence has existed for many years in the sub-Saharan region of mid-Africa.

Areas that have been affected by large outbreaks in recent years include Brazil from 1974 to 1978, and Finland at about the same time. In Auckland, New Zealand, between May 1985 and December 1986, there were 214 cases of whom 16 died. Most of the cases were people under the age of 15. They occurred in the South Auckland Health District where there was a higher density of people per house with cases having an average of 6.3 people per residence compared with the average New Zealand household of 3 occupants. The report of this outbreak appeared in the New Zealand Medical Journal on 8 April 1987 and stated: 'The size of the present outbreak demands serious consideration of an immunisation program'. This was after they already had 214 cases and 16 deaths. The subsequent vaccination program covered approximately 130 000 children. A vaccine called Menomune A was used and occasional adverse effects were noted. We have been using a different vaccine and no adverse effects have been reported to date.

Let me now turn to what has happened with meningococcal meningitis in central Australia. Until mid-1987, few cases of meningitis were reported. From mid-1987 until early 1988, there were 20 proven or suspected cases in central Australia; 12 were treated at Alice Springs Hospital and 8 were treated at Kalgoorlie Hospital. All patients were Aboriginal. 18 came from an area in the north-west of South Australia and adjoining areas in the Territory and Western Australia. There are grounds for immunising children at risk and an estimated 95% of a large population of about 650 were immunised by Nganampa Health Council, a Commonwealth-funded medical service responsible for that region. All close contacts of victims are given a course of rifampicin to reduce the risk of infection, whether the vaccination is instituted or not.

It is important to note that there was a relatively small number of people at risk but, despite the 95% coverage, a further 2 cases occurred in the region, both in children not immunised. I should mention at this stage that the vaccination is not effective for approximately 10 to 14 days and lasts only 12 months. Many of the people immunised approximately 12 months ago may need to be re-vaccinated. I hope this decision will be left to the individual health authorities who are responsible.

Following this immunisation program, the outbreak appears to have been contained at this time. Widely scattered cases in the Northern Territory occurred from March onwards, with 1 case each from Stirling Station, Ali Curung, Areyonga, Lake Nash, Kintore and Napperby. There were 3 cases from urban Alice Springs, all within 1 extended family, between July and August; 2 of them lived in the Charles Creek town camp and the third lived in Alice Springs town. There have been 6 cases since the beginning of

October 1988, including 2 cases at Utopia, a 17-year-old male on 4 October 1988 and a 5-year-old boy on 20 October 1988 who, unfortunately, died in Utopia which is serviced by a Commonwealth-funded health service. There were 2 cases from Mt Allan, a community near Yuendumu, a 4-year-old boy on 8 October 1988 and a 6-year-old girl on 3 November 1988. The others were: 1 case from Wallace Rockhole, an outstation at Hermannsburg, being a 10-year-old girl, on 2 November 1988; and 1 case from Yuendumu, being a 10-year-old boy, on 13 November 1988. The latter had been vaccinated at Yuendumu on 9 November 1988. However, as I said earlier, it takes between 10 and 14 days for the vaccine to prove effective, and he developed the disease before this period had elapsed.

Recent cases of meningitis were seen in Oak Valley and the Yalata area of South Australia last month. We understand from the South Australian Health Commission that it has since vaccinated the communities at Yalata, Oak Valley and Maralinga. We have contacted our colleagues in Mt Isa but they have not seen cases of meningitis among their local residents. The child who had meningitis in Lake Nash was evacuated to Mt Isa Hospital in July.

Mr Speaker, it should be obvious that my department has been following the disease pattern very closely and was prepared to act when the medical indications justified it. Let me touch on the immunisation programs. The vaccine is effective in preventing the occurrence of this type of meningococcal disease. However, as I said, it takes about 10 to 14 days after it has been administered to confer immunity to the infection and it is considered to be effective for only 12 months. For this reason, the drug rifampicin is given to close contacts of victims to reduce their risk of infection whether immunisation proceeds or not.

In our recent program, the vaccine was offered first to children within the 2-to-15-years age group in Utopia after 2 cases occurred within 16 days. The program was extended immediately to the surrounding communities with which they had social interaction and also because some cases had been reported from them since May 1987. About 1400 vaccines were administered in these areas from 25 October to 3 November. Once this program was completed, single cases were reported from communities near Yuendumu and Hermannsburg. It was then decided to cover a wider section of the susceptible Aboriginal community and all the Walpiri communities at Yuendumu and outstations, Lajamanu, Willowra, Papunya, Haasts Bluff, Hermannsburg, Areyonga and the town camps of Alice Springs and Tennant Creek were included. Already, about 2000 vaccines have been administered in these communities.

In the Jiggalong area, where the vaccine was used earlier last year, only 1 case was reported within 2 weeks of that program. Apparently, there were no further cases. After the Nganampa region used the vaccine, 3 cases were reported from there. 2 of them were visitors from elsewhere and the third was a 19-year-old female, but it should be borne in mind that only children 2 to 15 years old were vaccinated. As yet, there are no publicised reports of the effectiveness of the vaccine in the New Zealand program.

When the first 3 cases were admitted to Alice Springs Hospital from the Nganampa area in 1987, there was immediate discussion between my department and their medical officer, Dr David Thomas, about the need to provide the antibiotic rifampicin to the immediate contacts of the cases. Rifampicin was sent from Alice Springs Hospital pharmacy to affected communities. At that time, discussions were immediately held with Dr Rob Moodie, then senior medical officer of Congress, and Dr Paul Rivalland of the Pintubi Health Service in Kintore to inform them of the potential of the spread of the

disease. Letters to notify all health services in the region were sent by Dr McDermott, Director of Rural Health Services with my department, on 24 November 1987.

Departmental officers had discussions with Dr Thomas about the need for the vaccine. He then sought further advice from Dr Scott Cameron of the South Australian Health Commission who referred him to Dr Ian Cook in Canberra who is with the Commonwealth Department of Community Services and Health. He recommended the vaccine for use at Nganampa area at that time. Once the South Australian services started their vaccination program, Dr Alex Hope from Congress Alice Springs, who was then responsible for medical services at Mutitjulu, discussed with Dr Dianne Houghton, Director of my department's Communicable Diseases Branch, the need to extend that program to the adjacent Pitjantjatjara communities of Mutitjulu, Nganampa and Docker River.

I make the point that consultation between the Congress clinical staff and my department's clinical staff on this matter dates back at least to November 1987 when a decision was made to maintain surveillance and gear up for vaccination if necessary. Sporadic cases do not constitute an epidemic. When meningitis occurred in a girl from Kintore who was boarding at Yirara College, a meeting was held with Dr Rob Moodie of Congress on 9 February to discuss implications and plans, and with Dr Paul Rivalland from the Pintubi Health Service at Kintore. Although a formal meeting was not conducted with Congress to discuss the cases until July 1988, they were kept informed continually by departmental doctors of all new cases as they were being admitted to hospital.

It was at the July meeting that written guidelines were developed to determine the indications for using the vaccine. These guidelines were ratified subsequently at regional and central level. When the first case from Utopia was admitted on 4 October 1988, Dr Andrew Gault from Urapuntja Health Service was immediately informed of our protocol and accepted our advice that we would vaccinate if a second case occurred within 1 month. It was as a result of our suggestion for active surveillance that Dr Gault suspected that the sudden death of the 5-year-old child might be due to meningitis and hence alerted us to conduct an urgent post mortem. Dr Mohamed Patel, community physician for the Alice Springs and Barkly region, travelled to Utopia the next day, a Saturday, to put the plan into action and 2 days later the vaccine was delivered to the health service.

Meanwhile, all other health services have been kept regularly informed of the new cases. The network includes Anyinginyi Congress at Tennant Creek, doctors from Nganampa, Kalgoorlie and Kalano and Katherine. We have been maintaining similar channels with colleagues in Adelaide, Yalata, Mt Isa, Brisbane, Port Hedland and the Kimberley region. The vaccination program has flowed very smoothly. We provided 300 vaccines to Anyinginyi Congress and 350 to Alice Springs Congress, and they have administered the vaccine to town camp children. We have agreed to fund Alice Springs Congress for the salaries of a doctor and health workers who were mobilised specifically for this program.

Dr Thomas, medical officer with Nganampa Health Service, forwarded a copy of its detailed report to Dr Hanna. Dr Jim Thurley of the Eastern Goldfields Health District also contributed observations and subsequently a combined report was published in the Communicable Diseases Intelligence of 15 August 1988. This bulletin is compiled and distributed by the Public Health Section of the Communicable Diseases Branch of the Commonwealth Department of Community Services and Health and is distributed free of charge to doctors and health services across the country.

Mr Speaker, I would like to review the campaign's achievements to date. A vaccine which provides protection against the disease has been administered to children of 2 to 15 years of age in Utopia, the Sandover area and Lake Nash, Ti Tree, Napperby, Stirling, Ali Curung, McLaren Creek, Epenerra, Elkedra, Murray Downs, Yuendumu and outstations, Papunya, Haasts Bluff, Lajamanu, Kalkaringi, Kalano, Hermannsburg outstations, Areyonga, and town camps in Alice Springs and Tennant Creek. We are continuing to vaccinate children at Ayers Rock, Finke, Santa Teresa and Docker River.

The cost of the vaccine is \$26.50 per child vaccinated. To date, we have already purchased 5494 vaccines at a cost of \$145 591. This will also cover the vaccines for all other rural communities that were classified initially as low priority but which will now be offered the vaccine. Costs for transport, travel allowance and overtime for staff are not available at this time. We have not yet received details on the additional staff that Alice Springs Congress Health Service recruited to complete the town camp program. Our long-term strategy for control requires careful surveillance for newly-identified cases in the region. Rural health staff have been briefed specifically on the clinical signs of the disease and have been asked to discuss any patients causing concern with their doctors. When new cases occur, immediate contacts must be given rifampicin.

As the high priority areas have now been virtually covered in the vaccination program, the decision has been taken to extend it to all other rural communities in the Centre. A meeting will be held with all relevant health services and community representatives to implement the program. The guidelines that have been used to initiate vaccination will be reviewed to facilitate plans for future outbreaks.

The critical need for maintaining surveillance of communicable diseases and the value of collaboration in the development of intervention programs have been highlighted by the experience. The need to extend this system beyond state and Territory borders must be emphasised, particularly to ensure uniformity of intervention measures. Poor domestic hygiene, overcrowding, poor nutrition and other adverse environmental conditions make children more susceptible to a range of communicable diseases. Changes in public health and community perceptions are essential to control the high incidence of communicable diseases. High priority must be given to addressing these issues in an appropriate manner.

Mr Speaker, I have outlined the details surrounding the insidious emergence of meningococcal meningitis in and around central Australia. I have described this government's strategy and commitment to curbing this disease and preventing its further spread. In addition to the very considerable funds which the government has committed, my department has gone to considerable lengths to inform, involve and fund the relevant Commonwealth-funded health services in delivering this campaign. The strategy I have put in place is the product of advice from some of the best qualified and most experienced medical practitioners in the field of communicable diseases, both in the Northern Territory and elsewhere in Australia. This strategy includes the continued close surveillance of all children, particularly those remaining groups of children for whom there are no immediate reasons to consider vaccination. Should there be the slightest indication that any of these groups are at risk, the vaccination campaign will be broadened to cover it. Both my department's medical practitioners and Congress representatives agree with this strategy.

Further vaccine has been ordered from Belgium in case it is required. By the way, the central Australian doctors and administrators involved in this

campaign are not expecting to vaccinate their own children. I trust that this outline of the meningococcal meningitis campaign has assured members that this government has acted responsibly in containing the disease and that the campaign is in the hands of experienced health professionals. Mr Speaker, I move that the Assembly take note of the statement.

Mr BELL (MacDonnell): Mr Deputy Speaker, I thank the honourable minister for this statement in relation to the problem of meningococcal meningitis. Let me say at the outset that, whilst the opposition has made some appropriate public criticisms of the program to which the minister has referred, for the most part we not only agree with the substance of the statement which he has delivered today but believe that he and his department have acted responsibly in responding to the recent crisis in central Australia.

On a more personal level, I should say that I am familiar with some of the individual cases to whom the minister referred. I was a personal friend of a man who passed away earlier this year as a result of contracting the disease. Suffice it to say that I have no desire to indulge in political point scoring on this matter of public health, which involves the life and death of individuals. Also on a personal level, I want to say that I was in Yuendumu last week and was concerned to hear that further cases had been reported there. That is a matter of great concern to that community.

I believe that there has been commendable cooperation between the Department of Health and Community Services, the Central Australian Aboriginal Congress and other independent health services. However, I would like to hear some explanation in relation to the timing of the vaccination program. My understanding is that the process of consultation and subsequent cooperation, to which the minister referred, has been more marked in recent months than it was previously.

Mr Deputy Speaker, you may be aware that I had drawn attention to the problem of meningococcal meningitis and that the media had also given it some attention prior to the commencement of the current vaccination program. Some 12 months ago, there was a perception that there were sufficient reported cases in the electorates of MacDonnell and Stuart to justify a vaccination program. To clarify that a little further, I will say that there was discussion about the possibility of all of the Pitjantjatjara country being involved in a vaccination program.

I noted that the Minister for Health and Community Services had some difficulty in pronouncing the names of some of the places and organisations in central Australia which suggested that he is perhaps not quite as familiar with that country, those communities and many of those people, as I am.

Mr Dale: Yes. That is a fair comment.

Mr BELL: Therefore I trust, Mr Deputy Speaker, that he will listen carefully to what I have to say.

The minister's statement does not give a clear indication of the reason why, in November 1987, it was necessary to vaccinate in the Nganampa Health Council area. For the benefit of the honourable minister, 'nganampa' is a Pitjantjatjara word meaning 'for us'. In other words, it is 'our health service'. Obviously, there is a great deal of movement between the Pitjantjatjara communities in northern South Australia and those in my electorate at places like Ayers Rock, Areyonga, Docker River, Imanpa, Mount Ebenezer and Finke.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I do not profess to be an epidemiologist ...

Mr Hatton: Don't try to be.

Mr BELL: I am not trying to be. I am trying to be a conscientious shadow minister for health and community services and I am endeavouring to give a balanced response to the minister's statement. Unfortunately, I am not satisfied with the explanation that the minister has given in this regard.

There was public dispute 12 months ago about the desirability of vaccinating in Pitjantjatjara country in the Northern Territory. The minister has failed to address that. He has given a history of the vaccination program at that time in Pitjantjatjara country in South Australia but has failed to explain why it was not carried out in the Northern Territory. I accept that there may be an explanation. The minister mentioned consultation at that time between officers of his department, some of whom are known to me, officers of the Central Australian Aboriginal Congress, some of whom are known to me, and officers of the Nganampa Health Service, some of whom are also known to me. However, I am not satisfied that he has rebutted the concerns expressed by Dr Alex Hope of the Central Australian Aboriginal Congress Medical Service.

I should say, in passing, that I am a strong supporter of the various independent medical services which have grown up in the Whitlam and post-Whitlam eras. I believe that they have made an important contribution towards providing health care services which are responsive to the needs of the Aboriginal community. Equally, I have gone on record in this Assembly as saying that the government's Aboriginal health worker initiatives, which have also involved the independent health services, have been positive.

The consultation process that the minister referred to in his statement has been a welcome shift. There has been a tendency for CLP governments and health ministers to display a distrustful, if not confrontationist, attitude towards independent health services. Indeed, that was the case when I first became a member of this Assembly, at which time the member for Barkly was the Minister for Health. It is very encouraging to see a shift in emphasis. However, I do not believe that that sort of consultation should preclude robust investigation of decisions taken, particularly when they impact on my constituents. I have no hesitation in offering that justification for the criticisms which were made 12 months ago and I repeat that I do not believe that the minister's statement has completely addressed all concerns in that respect.

Some other matters referred to in the minister's statement also require a response. At page 4 of his statement, the minister discussed the cases of meningococcal meningitis which occurred in mid-1987 and early 1988. He said that there were 20 proven or suspected cases in central Australia, 12 being treated in Alice Springs and 8 in Kalgoorlie. He went on to say that all patients were Aboriginal. I found that an odd sentence to inject into such a statement and I really wonder why it is considered relevant.

Mr Collins: It is true.

Mr BELL: Mr Deputy Speaker, to pick up the interjection, whether it is true or not is not a test that I am interested in. The test that I am interested in is whether it is relevant. If we have people with meningitis, it really does not matter whether they are black, white or brindle, Aboriginal, Caucasian or whatever. I am curious as to why the minister's statement included a sentence like that. When the honourable minister makes a

statement that does not involve Aboriginals, he does not mention ethnicity. I fail to see why that is particularly relevant in this context. If any Territorian has meningitis, that is a problem. It is not a big point but I think it is worth drawing to the attention of the minister or whoever writes his statements. I do not believe that, in this context, the relevance of that particular sentence was demonstrated. Equally, I fail to see how the comment that the Nganampa Health Council is a Commonwealth-funded medical service is relevant in this particular case. As I said, health problems of this sort do not stop at state boundaries. I do not resile from raising my concerns in that regard.

I should say that, after I commented publicly in respect of the decisions to vaccinate or not vaccinate over the past 12 months, I received a coy little copy of a letter with a 'With compliments' slip from the office of the Minister for Health and Community Services. In fact, it was attached to a letter from the member for Flynn who had sent a letter to the honourable minister saying that he was quite happy to cooperate with the vaccination program and he believed that the government had done the right thing. I found it a little difficult to work out why the Minister for Health and Community Services had bothered to send me a copy of the letter. I can only assume that he believed that I was not appreciative of the government's efforts.

Mr Ede: I got a copy too.

Mr BELL: You got one too? I think the honourable minister was trying to make a point that we were not in fact supporting the vaccination program. I have no hesitation in placing on record my support for the program. I think that much of the work that has gone into this program has been good. In fact, I was approached by members of the media when the minister issued his statement on 27 October. They were trying to stir up a story and I was not prepared to comment at that stage. If the honourable minister is not prepared to take my word for it, I will provide more convincing evidence. A 4-page press release was issued by the minister and a member of the media was seeking some comment from me, a critique of the government's vaccination program. At that stage, I was not in possession of the concerns that I have already expressed today. I said to that particular journalist: 'No, I will not be commenting because I believe the government is doing the right thing'. That is what I believed at that stage and I still do substantially. However, when the comments came to my attention, I had no hesitation in commenting publicly about those sort of decisions.

With that qualified support for the honourable minister's statement, I conclude. I believe the government's response has been essentially positive and characterised by consultation with the independent health services, for which the minister is to be congratulated and which I hope will continue to characterise the relationships between his department and the independent health services. However, I am concerned that the minister's statement did not address those concerns that have been raised by myself over the past few weeks.

Mr COLLINS (Sadadeen): Mr Deputy Speaker, a question has come to my mind as a result of the member for MacDonnell's concern at the mention that the people who had caught meningitis were all Aboriginals. I would like to know why the program was just for the Alice Springs town camps and why it was considered that it was not necessary for young children in Alice Springs to be immunised against this disease. It is a dangerous disease. As we know, it is a life threatening disease. I would like to hear from the minister exactly why it was considered that only children in the town camps needed to be immunised and not the rest of the children.

Mr EDE (Stuart): Mr Deputy Speaker, the member for MacDonnell informs me that, in the last week, 3 cases have been identified at Yuendumu in my electorate.

Mr Dale: He is about as accurate on that as he has been on everything else.

Mr EDE: It may not have been in the last week, but we will see. It highlights for me the major concern that we in the rural electorates have about this disease. I recall that in November or December last year - and the honourable minister will bear me out - I had considerable toings-and-froings with his office over this matter when there was an outbreak in the communities in the northern part of South Australia. At that time, I asked him about the possibility of extending the vaccination program into the Northern Territory because, as I told him, the annual round of ceremonial progressions from that area up through central Australia and out into the Walpiri lands was about to begin. At that stage, I was very concerned that the disease would be transferred by people during the ceremonial progressions and I felt that the minister should consider the benefits of going beyond the normal standard that the communicable diseases staff apply in these sort of matters and start the program last year. On advice, he decided not to do it, and I am not saying that the outbreaks are a direct result of his not doing that. Obviously that is completely unprovable.

I agree with the comment in the statement that the need to extend this system beyond state and territory borders must be emphasised, particularly to ensure uniformity of intervention measures. As I have said, I think more than uniformity of intervention measures is involved. It has also to take account of the fact that, from the western part of my electorate, there is considerable movement across to Western Australia. I hope that the honourable minister has already informed the people there of the outbreaks that have occurred here. If it is true about Yuendumu, it becomes more urgent that the Western Australian authorities take up the matter over in that part of that state.

The honourable minister has stated, and who can argue, that poor domestic hygiene, overcrowding, poor nutrition and other adverse environmental conditions make children more susceptible to a range of communicable diseases. Certainly, in this case, overcrowding is a major factor in the communication of the disease from one person to another as are poor water supplies and poor nutrition etc with a whole range of diseases. We all know the difficulties people experience in overcoming problems out in the bush and we know the federal government has put very substantial funds towards their alleviation in some areas across the board in recent years. However, the problems are still extraordinarily high and I hope that the government will do more than simply say that changes in public health and community perceptions seem to control the high incidence of communicable diseases.

There is a statement on the Notice Paper, dating back more than 12 months, which referred to the need for a program such as this. The opposition has highlighted the need for those in Aboriginal communities to get that message across with regard to nutrition and the people's self-perception. The government itself has to be involved in ensuring not only that those programs work but that the actual infrastructure on the ground is such that it will handle the changes to people's lifestyle that must be made to avert these diseases. In doing that, it is not sufficient simply to apply an urban formula to a rural situation.

Mr Manzie: That is right.

Mr EDE: Mr Speaker, I hear the Attorney-General saying that that is right, and I am glad that I won support on that angle.

What the government is doing with regard to water charges and electricity charges, for example, is simply applying in rural areas formulas and principles which were developed in urban areas. Given that the large percentage of people in those areas are on unemployment benefits and an extremely high percentage of those people are living way below the poverty line, it is not possible for them to be able to pay the electricity charges, for example, on top of their rents which are moving towards an economic rate, and now we hear stories about water charges being introduced.

It must be remembered, and I hope that the government will consider this as it makes that move, that the ramifications for health are very considerable. When it gets the user-pays bee in its bonnet again and starts saying that it will apply the same rates out bush as are applied in towns, I hope that government members will realise that, given the high cost of living there, the percentage of people's disposable income that is taken through these programs does not simply have a marginal effect on people's ability to give themselves adequate food and clothing etc. It makes it impossible for people to obtain adequate food and adequate clothing. As a result, people are maintained in a third world situation which means that illness and death from communicable diseases and the like is not simply something which is an occasional occurrence, about which not much can be done, but rather an actual fact of life in the community. The large number of deaths among young people from these areas and the low life expectancy of adults can all be linked to overcrowding, poor nutrition and adverse environmental conditions. I ask that the Minister for Health and Community Services, and the Attorney-General, who interjected a moment ago, both take a strong stand in favour of ensuring that these considerations are taken on board next time the government is talking about user-pays and increasing costs in the rural communities.

In conclusion, I would like to commend the Department of Health and Community Services. I have been doing quite a considerable amount of travelling around the eastern area of my electorate in recent weeks and everywhere I have found people praising the work done by the health staff, by the Urupuntja Health Service and by local health services in finding out where people have gone, tracing the movements of young children and ensuring that the vaccination program is undertaken in a complete and thorough manner. I would like to put on record my praise for the people involved in the program and my praise for the people who organised everything to ensure that we have a program that will nip the spread of this disease in the bud. With a bit of luck, we will bring it under control before it has the opportunity to cause a really bad outbreak next summer.

Mr DALE (Health and Community Services): Mr Speaker, to answer one of the queries raised by the member for Stuart, if we get electricity out to these communities, that might encourage all the people to sit in 1 room watching television. Certainly, that would not help in the prevention of the spread of meningococcal meningitis in that area. In fact, it would do completely the opposite.

I agree with all the things that he said need to be done in the development of health programs and health services in Aboriginal communities. I said that in a major statement that I made in this House some 12 months ago now. I assure the honourable member that we have a number of programs in

place, and other programs which are to be implemented in the not-too-distant future, that are certainly working towards that but, as I said in that statement, the fundamental fact is that the people will have to help themselves. I have challenged honourable members opposite on many occasions previously. They are representatives of a great number of the rural areas, which are populated, in the main, by Aboriginal people, and it is their duty to get out among those people and encourage them to manage their affairs in a proper manner and not set them up as victims of the opposition's efforts to score political points.

I must say that the member for MacDonnell has really outdone himself today. I have never heard, even from him, such a pious, sanctimonious stream of drivel as I heard today. I tried to inform the member for MacDonnell, both in the August and October sittings, and all honourable members will recall I referred to the fact that he did not put much intestinal fortitude or effort into his job as the shadow spokesman on health matters. I prompted him on at least 2 or 3 occasions to ask me a question about the difficulties that we were having with meningococcal meningitis in central Australia. However, he was a little weary that day and he did not want to strain himself too much. He had to save himself up for his run that night and therefore he did not bother to ask any questions. In fact, as I recall, I had to have one of my backbenchers ask me the questions.

Here he is now, a little weary because I am trying to educate him in how to do his job, and off he goes for his run. He has gone off for his run, Mr Speaker. What an incredible waste of effort this man demonstrates in terms of applying himself to this job. However, it is very pleasing indeed that, at least, I have been able to get him out of the place for 5 minutes because I am sure it will be a little quieter.

Let me tell the facts about his involvement in this situation from early November when the vaccination program was announced. He received the press release saying that everything was under way and I do not doubt that he had some difficulty handling the fact that it sounded pretty good, responsible stuff. It is true that a reporter contacted him. This particular reporter is noted for flying helicopters pretty close to the ground over Correctional Services installations in Alice Springs. This fellow went to him and said: 'Listen, Neil, we have a bit of a goer here. We can get Don Dale. We reckon that he should have made this decision 12 months ago, and here is our chance to kick his head in. Do you want to be involved in it?' And on came good, old, loyal, lazy Neil - hook, line and sinker. He jumped in with this irresponsible journalist who has his own little axe to grind with me and he became the little puppet on the string, dancing to the tune of this irate reporter. And then what happened? After that interview, he visited Dr Hope and asked him what was going on. Wasn't Dr Hope embarrassed, because guess who had been to see him just before the member for MacDonnell came to see him? The same little helicopter fellow had been round to do an interview with him.

Not only did I receive a letter from the member for Flynn, I also received one from the Central Aboriginal Congress Incorporated signed by Mr John Liddle, the Director, who said:

Dear Mr Dale,

Congress is concerned at the misreporting that occurred in the media yesterday and this morning implying that NT Health waited until a death occurred before embarking on the meningitis vaccination program in central Australia.

As I recall, those were the words the member for MacDonnell used. The letter continued:

Unfortunately, the part of the interview with Dr Hope in which he expressed our pleasure with the new-found level of cooperation between Aboriginal controlled health services and the NT Health was not broadcast.

The little helicopter driver has a pair of scissors as well.

We wish to clarify our position to you in the hope that it will enable continued good relations between the NT Health and Aboriginal controlled services to the benefit of public health of the entire community.

I have had 1 decision to take on this entire situation. A few weeks ago, when I was called to Alice Springs, I had to make a decision on whether the Northern Territory government would make available funds which could be in the order of \$0.25m. I had the situation explained to me and it took me about 2½ minutes to make the decision on making that money available. It was not a problem. That is the only time that I have ever been asked to make any decision in relation to this matter, and I believe quite rightly so. The fact is that, from time to time, this form of meningitis has been a problem in central Australia. There was a major outbreak there in 1971. Several of the health professionals whose names I read out during my statement had consulted on this issue and a decision was taken on whether they would vaccinate or not 12 months ago. The final decision was taken by Dr Kerry Kirk, who has had some 20 or 25 years experience in central Australia and a great deal of experience in relation to communicable diseases. In fact, he was in charge there during the 1971 epidemic.

Let me place on record here and now that I will not make a ministerial decision on a medical problem. That is a matter for the professional people involved and that is as it should be. I congratulate all the people who have been involved in the administration of this vaccination program. They are to be admired for the very professional and skilled way in which they have gone about their business.

There were a couple of questions. The member for Sadadeen asked why we did not vaccinate other kids. In fact, there has never been any evidence whatsoever that non-Aboriginal children, either now or in 1971, were under any threat whatsoever from this form of meningitis. The reason for using the words 'Aboriginal community' in the statement is quite clear. It refers only to Aboriginal people. The fact is that Aboriginal people have to be very aware of the steps that they need to take to help themselves and to help others to help them to combat this problem.

Motion agreed to.

STATEMENT Darwin State Square Development

Mr FINCH (Transport and Works): Mr Speaker, I want to spend some time today outlining the State Square project as well as dealing specifically with the deliberate campaign of misinformation that has been waged against the development.

The opposition to the State Square project has been a little like Shakespeare's assessment of life in his play Macbeth in that what we have heard has been 'full of sound and fury, signifying nothing'. What I have found most irritating about the opposition to the project has been the shallow, simplistic and shabby campaign aimed at gaining publicity for certain individuals. While the original din has died away, I welcome the opportunity to give those opposed to the project a hearing in this Chamber today. It is time to clear the decks and have it out on this issue.

The government has nothing to hide in relation to this project. We have entered into a project aimed at bolstering the Territory economy and we know that we are doing something of which we can be justifiably proud. The mischievous comments from opponents of the project are certainly nothing that they can feel proud about. It is important that the public be given the facts about the project rather than the simplistic and emotive diatribes produced by the voices of opposition. The opposition has to be given the facts yet again so that we will not have to suffer the cynical poor-fellow-me line that is so often used when it attacks government initiatives whilst claiming that it is only seeking information which it believes has been denied to it. It is important to make the facts available and that is what I intend doing in the time available to me. Despite offering a briefing on the State Square project 2 sittings ago and receiving only a limited response, we have had to endure a hit-and-run campaign conducted by individuals who, while continuing to snipe at certain aspects of the project, have proved remarkably unwilling to address the facts. Let us have this debate out here and now. Let us dispel the half-truths and innuendo and let us get on with the project.

Firstly, let us look at the reasons for the project. Whilst most sectors of the Territory economy have picked up in line with the recent national economic upturn, the Territory construction industry has remained sluggish. Not only has the hangover afflicting the building industry lasted longer ...

Mr Collins interjecting.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The honourable minister will be heard in silence.

Mr FINCH: Mr Speaker, the member for Sadadeen will have his chance and I will be more than delighted to hear his constructive contribution later.

Not only has the hangover afflicting the building industry lasted longer than that felt by other sections of the Territory economy, it has also been more acute. Recently released figures have served only to highlight how acute are the needs of the Territory building industry. Of course, no sector of the economy operates independently of the whole. Therefore, despite the general upturn in the Territory economy, our overall economic well-being would be greater with a more vigorous construction industry. There are other major projects in the pipeline for the Territory, but subcontractors and suppliers in Berrimah and Winnellie cannot be expected to survive on programs that will materialise in 1, 2 or even 3 years time. Honourable members need look only at the industry forecast figures released recently by the Master Builders Association to appreciate what I am talking about.

The Territory construction industry needs immediate assistance. This is not simply because a robust construction industry goes hand-in-hand with a healthy Territory economy but, more importantly, because of the men, women and children who depend on the construction industry directly and indirectly for their very existence. Would the critics of this project have the government not only turn its back on its long-term responsibilities to a major sector of

the economy but also renege on its social responsibilities to many hundreds of Territory families? If that is what they would have us do, if that is the depth of their contempt for the economy and if that is the depth of their contempt for the very people who pay their wages, they stand condemned.

In the public mind, there is probably never a right time to build a new Parliament House. However, it makes good sense to enter into such a project at a time when the economy stands to benefit most. Now is such a time. Not only will the construction industry receive a major boost but the taxpayer will derive maximum value because the current state of the building industry will ensure that highly competitive rates will be bid for the various trade packages. Somewhere along the line, the Territory would have a new Parliament House. It is only logical that the building should be built at a time when the construction industry and the taxpayer stand to benefit the most.

Mr Speaker, the case for a new Supreme Court building is a different matter totally. There can be no argument that Darwin needs a new Supreme Court building. Not only ...

Mr Collins interjecting.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! I warn the member for Sadadeen. He has interjected on several occasions. He will have his opportunity to participate in this debate later, if he so wishes.

Mr FINCH: Mr Speaker, not only is a new Supreme Court building necessary because of overcrowding in the existing building but because of the desperate need to upgrade the security arrangements for judges. The existing building was completed in 1964 when it housed 1 judge, 1 magistrate, the Commonwealth Attorney-General's Department, and the Commonwealth Police. Obviously, the building was not designed solely as a courthouse and, in that respect alone, it does not measure up to the security demands placed on a Supreme Court building in the latter end of the 20th Century. That building, which originally housed only 2 members of the judiciary, now has to cater for the demands of 6 Supreme Court judges, a Master and a Deputy Master, each of whom requires courtroom facilities. In fact, the accommodation pressures on the Supreme Court facilities have become so great that the Department of Labour and Administrative Services was forced recently to negotiate a 3-year lease with the TIO for space in the old Darwin Police Station in Mitchell Street.

As you know, Mr Speaker, the old police headquarters now houses 2 additional courtrooms, chambers and associated offices for use by the Supreme Court. This less than adequate arrangement highlights the critical nature of the Supreme Court's accommodation problem. I defy anyone to argue effectively that this is a satisfactory arrangement. Not only will the business of the court continue to grow but the TIO intends to develop that site at a later date which, of course, makes the current Mitchell Street annexe, at best, a stopgap measure. Furthermore, a review of Supreme Court facilities and the demands being placed on them found that extensions to the existing Supreme Court building would provide only a short-term solution to the current cramped conditions.

With the likely expansion of Supreme Court business and the fact that a Northern Territory Court of Appeal has now been created, there is only 1 way to ensure that the long-term needs are met and that is to construct a new Supreme Court building. There is simply no other way around it. It should be emphasised that the NT Bar Association has taken the most unusual step of publicly endorsing the construction of a new Supreme Court building. Although

normally unwilling to enter into political debate, the Bar Association, through its President, Mr Dean Mildren, said in a letter to the NT News on Friday: 'The government's decision is unquestionably correct'. This support vindicates the government's decision. The old Supreme Court building has outlived its usefulness and it would be impractical and expensive to consider further renovations on a building which is costing vast sums to maintain.

I turn now to the project's history and its development. The design and conceptual work on the State Square project, like that on any other development of comparable size, has been a long time in the making. It took a sizeable team of people more than 14 months to reach the stage where the scheme was ready for town planning approval and before the hoardings could be erected across the road to allow preliminary site work to begin. What began as an extensive project highlighted by avant-garde architecture has been scaled down in its physical and financial dimensions. As most members would know, we are now looking at a project with an upper limit of \$100m, involving the construction of 2 buildings - a Supreme Court and a Parliament House.

Mr Speaker, as is so often necessary with major developments, the State Square project has been through several major conceptual changes. One of the major changes of direction taken has been the decision to retain the majority of the existing buildings in the government precinct. The Ward Building, which is being demolished at this time, and the Legislative Assembly itself are the only buildings definitely earmarked for demolition. I would like to add that, during the demolition and construction phases, we will ensure the preservation of sites of historic significance such as the old post office wall in the existing Assembly. A decision on whether or not the Nelson Building will be retained will be made when the New Parliament House Committee makes its final recommendation on the actual size and location of the floor plan for the new Parliament House.

Some 14 months and many thousands of man-hours after work began on the project, it now meets with the Territory's architectural, physical and economic requirements as well as meeting the government's balanced assessment of its objectives. It is the extensive work that has been put into this lengthy and costly process which has earned Tipperary Developments its \$1.75m developer's fee. It should be remembered, however, that a good portion of this money will be paid out by Tipperary Developments to consultants that it engaged. This money was not, as certain politicians would have the public believe, a spotter's fee. The term 'spotter's fee' is deliberately misleading. I would ask those with lingering doubts about the developer's fee to contact some major developers and ask them what it costs to get projects of this magnitude up and running. I can assure honourable members that those inquiries will produce 1 result: both the developer's fee and the project manager's fee being paid to Tipperary Developments will be shown to be quite reasonable.

This point is borne out by a brief examination of the fees for the development, project management, head contractor and consultants when weighed against the level of fees paid on projects of comparable size. We will be paying \$1.75m for development costs. Of that, 3.75% will be for project management, 3.3% for the head contractor and 8.85% for various consultancies. This makes a total of about 17.75% of the cost of the new Supreme Court building and Parliament House. On an equivalent project, the head contractor could expect 6% to 7%, consultants' fees would be 11% to 12%, meaning the percentage cost would total at least 17% to 19%. And let us not forget that the agreement we have entered into with Tipperary Developments will see the project manager carrying the risk for any cost overruns. There is no room for

the payment of hidden costs to either project or construction managers in the government's equation. Clearly, the fees being paid for the State Square project are comparable in price, if not cheaper, than those which would be paid on an equivalent project.

Before I move on to other aspects of the development, I would like to touch on the very important aspect of car parking because I can understand that people are very concerned about this topic. The government recognises its obligations to meet normal town planning requirements in respect of parking. We are looking at a range of long-term parking strategies, including the construction of a major car park at the existing intersection of the Esplanade and Bennett Street. A number of options to meet the car parking requirements of the area during the construction phase are under consideration and I hope I can put the minds of city office workers at ease by saying that, despite the rumours being spread by an irresponsible group, neither the government nor the city council intends taking away all free car parking inside central Darwin. The parking needs of the city workers have been a major consideration in the project plan. The realignment of the Esplanade will mean the closure of the car park beyond the existing Legislative Assembly but we are working on contingency plans for this area also.

I turn to the matter of Territory involvement. As honourable members should appreciate by now, the conceptual design phase has been long and detailed. The overall design work for the project is scheduled to continue until June of next year. While, in its initial design work, Tipperary Developments used a Melbourne firm, Meldrum Burrows, it was agreed relatively early that it was essential to employ local knowledge to ensure the project's success. The Top End's unique and extreme weather conditions made this decision imperative. A Darwin firm, MLE Architects joined Meldrum Burrows and, in fact, MLE's Roger Linklater became the coordinator of the design team. Since then, another 2 Darwin architectural firms have become involved in the design work. The design team has developed a close liaison with the Department of Transport and Works through the project coordination and control mechanisms which have been put in place.

The details surrounding the proposed high degree of Territory involvement in the project, like other facets of the State Square project, have been subject to a campaign of misinformation and innuendo. Let us not lose sight of the fact that the major reason that the State Square project is going ahead is because of the obvious need to stimulate the local construction and supply industries. This project is all about local involvement. Let us face it, when it gets right down to the bottom line, politically, the government cannot afford to have anything but the vast majority of works going to locals. Understandably, however, the government has a responsibility to ensure that it derives value for the taxpayers' dollars which means, of course, that local industry must be competitive. This was the case in the selection of the construction manager. It was the most competitive bid which won the day. The successful bid of Multiplex was many hundreds of thousands of dollars cheaper than that of the next best firm or consortium. It was as simple as that.

It is totally misleading to suggest that taking on Multiplex as construction manager in some way destroys the government's commitment to local involvement. That argument does not stand up even to the most cursory scrutiny. The job of construction manager means the employment of perhaps 10 to 15 people which is hardly labour intensive anyway. When we consider that the on-site work force of the State Square project at the peak of construction will be nearly 500 people, it becomes pretty obvious that the local-content argument being used against the choice of Multiplex has about as

much credibility as a Pakistani cricket umpire giving an lbw decision. This line becomes even more flimsy when you realise that a Darwin firm, Norbuilt, has entered into a joint agreement with Multiplex which will see locals taking up a number of positions involved in the construction management team.

In speaking of local firms, I would like to touch briefly on the public campaign conducted by a consortium of major construction companies opposed to the selection of Multiplex as construction manager. Between them, the members of this consortium have virtually dominated the local construction scene for some time and naturally they are concerned when another major firm appears on what they regard as their patch. I appreciate that consortium members would be concerned at the prospect of another competitor arriving on the scene. However, the unusual publicity campaign raised by the consortium over the selection of the construction manager highlighted the group's commercial sensitivity to the arrival of Multiplex on the Territory construction scene.

We did not arrive where we are today with this development simply because someone had a whim, a mere flight of fancy that he thought could earn him a quick buck. As I have explained, the idea has been worked and reworked to such an extent that it has the approval not only of the Territory government, but also of the federal government. I will deal with that point in more detail later.

The State Square concept was not simply lifted from the Department of Transport and Works design list, as has been suggested. It was a concept put together and worked through by a developer in the same way developers elsewhere do when putting development proposals to government and the corporate sector. While many such development concepts never see the light of day, the State Square project was proposed at a critical time - a time when the Territory government was looking for an answer to difficulties facing our construction industry.

And yes, Mr Speaker, in answer to another question, Transport and Works could have done the total design package on this project in the same way that teams of government architects and engineers could have drawn up the plans on any of a host of major or minor Territory developments in the past decade. But, the CLP government is free-enterprise oriented. Consequently, our policy on the design of government developments has long been aimed at maximisation of private sector involvement. On the construction side, the government has been steadily increasing the level of private sector project and construction management on major construction developments in recent years.

It is not surprising that, on the State Square project, we are employing the same tried and proven methods centred on maximum private sector involvement along with some additional requirements aimed at further consolidating local involvement. What is surprising, however, is that we have had to put up with an ill-considered chorus protesting the application to the State Square project of the same previously unquestioned principle of maximum private sector involvement in both the design and construction phases.

Again, on this aspect of the project, the opposition message has been deliberately simplistic and deliberately misleading. A voice prominent in this cacophony has been that of a former Chief Minister and now leader of a party supposedly promoting the cause of small business. Conveniently, the member for Barkly has forgotten about the interests of his chosen constituency on this issue. But, selective amnesia is nothing new to him. After all, he once had a problem remembering the location of his principal place of residence. History, of course, shows that this problem cost the member for

Barkly dearly. Now, apparently,, because he feels that he is back in from the cold, we have that same honourable member attempting to tell other politicians how they should be handling taxpayers' money.

To ensure the government's aim of maximum local involvement in the project is achieved, we have put in place a 6-member project control group. The group is made up of 3 government representatives, of which 1 is the chairman who holds the casting vote, plus 3 representatives from Tipperary Developments, as project manager. To add additional breadth to the group, the Industrial Supplies Office has been given observer status at control group meetings which, of course, is of major assistance when it comes to the significant matter of local supply capacity. This is the first time that a major government project in the Territory has been closely scrutinised for local content. The project control group also ensures taxpayers will receive maximum value for their money. As the effective decision-making body and the body of approval for the project, the project control group has responsibility for: monitoring of design and time schedules and costs against defined time and cost limits; approving trade packages to be put out to tender to ensure they are of a suitable size for local industry; deciding, in association with the Industrial Supplies Office, the firms to be selected as tenderers for various packages; approving variations to the work as required; and resolving management and technical problems.

Mr Speaker, as you can see, the government has worked to ensure that the various subcontract packages will be let in such a way as to provide local firms with a realistic opportunity of bidding successfully for them. The various construction packages will not be so big as to pose difficulties for local firms. It has always been recognised that the size and content of construction packages would be an important factor in ensuring that local firms are provided with a realistic opportunity to bid for work on the State Square project.

As most members would know, expressions of interests were called from local firms, both construction and supply, wishing to register for the project. This has allowed the Industrial Supplies Office to draw up lists of local companies and their capacities in the various construction and supply areas so that those firms are informed of tenders as they become available. Naturally, other local firms which did not initially register their interest in the project will be taken into account for tenders as they become available. The first local firm to benefit from this tendering approach was Darwin company, P.W. Baxter, which has won a \$179 000 contract for the demolition of the Ward Building, plus minor electrical works. In addition, the local firm, R.U.B., has won the subcontract for the relocation of services. Work on this package is already under way.

There have been major changes made also to the specification for works from the basement to the ground floor slab, which will see increased local involvement over a range of trades. The move away from the almost total use of reinforced concrete in this area to a range of concrete and steel construction packages will mean a major increase in concrete and steel erection works as well as an increased fabrication of steel in Darwin.

As honourable members will have learnt by now, the project will be funded as part of the Territory's normal semi-government borrowing program. The fact that we have secured Loans Council approval indicates quite clearly that the project is acceptable to the federal Labor government. A project must be regarded as contributing positively to economic development before a government gains Loans Council borrowing approval. If a project has Loans

Council approval, it must also have the approval of the federal Treasurer. Thus, Paul Keating's assessment of the project is clearly not that it is a waste of taxpayers' money but a development well worth supporting. Given the view generally accepted in Labor circles that Paul Keating is the world's greatest Treasurer, it becomes rather difficult for the Territory opposition to question either the financing of the project or the worth of the State Square project itself. If the Leader of the Opposition questions the financial aspects of the State Square project, in effect, he is suggesting the federal Treasurer has made an error in judgment. I ask whether the Territory Labor leader is questioning the judgment of Paul Keating.

After considering the options over several months, the Territory Treasury has decided that, by making the financing part of our normal cash and debt management process, we will be able to achieve maximum flexibility in securing finance for all of the Territory's needs under the most favourable terms and conditions possible. To achieve the important objective of keeping interest costs to a minimum for a given level of cash requirements, some of the borrowings will be undertaken by the issue of promissory notes with a term of 30 to 180 days. Some will be obtained for medium to longer terms by issue of Northern Territory inscribed stock for a term of 2 to 10 years. The issue of capital indexed bonds is also under consideration.

However, the precise mix of financing will be determined in the light of market conditions prevailing at the time. Because of the additional cash needs of the project, the Territory plans to borrow \$20m this financial year and, on present estimates, about \$40m in 1989-90. The bulk of the remainder will be raised in 1990-91, but the precise requirements in each year will be determined as the project proceeds. Once the project is completed, and after the interest is paid during the construction phase, annual interest payments will stabilise at an estimated \$13m to \$15m per year depending on the prevailing interest rates on semi-government loans over the next 4 years.

Already, the State Square project has been added to the 1988-89 capital works program and members will be able to monitor progress of the program in Budget Paper No 5 each year. It is important that members realise that this project is additional to capital works and other borrowings that the Territory would otherwise undertake. This additional borrowing will provide a substantial stimulus to the Territory economy. I would like to stress that borrowing money for a major capital works project, as we have done on this occasion, is hardly unusual for an Australian government. Governments borrow money regularly for a range of capital works projects.

As is the case with other capital works borrowings, the government has had to assess its capacity to repay. There have been attempts made by some of the less formidable economic minds in the Territory to run the simplistic line that we should not be building the project now if we are not going to pay for it now. The argument goes: 'Don't burden a future generation with a debt'. What a load of rubbish! If this government or any other were unwilling to borrow, we would have but a fraction of the infrastructural development that we take for granted here in the Territory and elsewhere in Australia. Did the federal government build Canberra's new Parliament House using cash? No. Quite correctly, it borrowed the money.

While on the topic of the construction of the federal parliament, I want to stress that the fixed-price arrangement being applied to the State Square project will ensure that we do not have to endure major cost blow-outs such as those that occurred during the building of our national parliament. The building will undoubtedly stand for more than 100 years so why shouldn't

future generations of taxpayers contribute? As I have stressed, borrowing is the normal way of going about this sort of project. However, it should be remembered that the government's capacity to repay will increase with time in much the same way as a private individual's capacity to repay a housing loan increases over time. We are talking about a fixed-price project with a maximum cost of \$100m in 1988 dollars. It should be appreciated also that the government's overall schedule of repayments will change over time.

Mr Smith: The Marshall Perron school of economics again, is it?

Mr FINCH: Just listen.

Certain borrowings that the government has been paying off since self-government will be paid off during the 1990s.

I believe that I have outlined this project in sufficient detail to satisfy the House. Having provided the members of this House with what is, in effect, their second detailed briefing on the State Square project, I feel now that I can do little more than answer any further questions that they might have about the project.

Mr Smith: I hope you do.

Mr FINCH: If there are those who have decided they simply do not like the project, I invite them to take their complaints to the men working on the site across the road to explain to them why they dislike the way they are earning a living for themselves and for their families. I am sure those who took that option would meet with a fairly interesting reception. Mr Speaker, I move that the Assembly take note of the statement.

Mr SMITH (Opposition Leader): Mr Speaker, what a load of absolute nonsense we have heard from the honourable minister in what he says is a definitive statement, laying it all down, on the State Square project. No wonder the government has deferred bringing this statement on until 4.45 pm. It was 4.45 pm before the government brought on a debate on what it is telling the public is the flagship of the rejuvenation of the government's economic policy. The government is so scared about it, and so frightened of the debate that will ensue that it has brought it on late in the afternoon in the hope that nobody will be listening. I can tell you, Mr Speaker, that people out there are listening. People out there are talking about this particular project and people out there are concerned about this particular project. Of course, it is for those reasons that the government has attempted to hide this particular statement until so late on this day.

Mr Speaker, if you want proof of the contempt in which the public holds this particular project and the contempt that they have for the government's operations on this particular matter, I challenge the honourable minister to walk down the Mall with me tomorrow and we will ask people what they think of the State Square project. The honourable minister opposite has already rejected a challenge to debate the matter on the 7.30 Report tonight. That is how much confidence he has in his ability to present the government's case on this matter. He cannot present the government's case for the simple reason that he does not know what the government's case is because Warren Anderson has not told it yet. That is the bottom line, Mr Speaker.

That is why people in the community hate - and that is not too strong a word to use - this particular project. It does not matter whether they live in Darwin or Alice Springs or at a place previously called Mongrel Downs or

Nhulunbuy or Jabiru or Tennant Creek or Katherine. Wherever you go, Mr Speaker, and my colleagues from out of town can tell you this, people say that the State Square project is on the nose. People think that this is the most useless, god-awful waste of money that this useless, god-awful government has ever lumbered them with. That is what people out there think. We are not talking about professional protestors. We are talking about a noisy minority of pretty close to 100% of the Territory's population who hold this particular point of view. They do not want the project now, they do not want it next year, they do not want it for \$100m, they do not even want it for \$10m, they do not want it with a flexible financial package, they do not want it with an innovative tendering process - they do not want it at all.

Who does the government listen to? Who do members opposite talk to? They are supposed to be members of parliament. They are supposed to be talking to people in the community. They are supposed to be talking to their constituents. Equally importantly, Mr Speaker, who are they listening to because the message we are getting loud and clear from the people that we talk to is that they do not want it. With \$100m, the people know that they could get free electricity for every Territorian for 1 year, free water and sewerage charges for the next 5 years and library books for the next 100 years. We could build 1300 new 3-bedroom houses for Territorians. One-seventh of the cost of the Alice Springs to Darwin railway could be funded with this \$100m. Think of the jobs that would be created at the end of that project and contrast that with the jobs that will be created at the end of this project.

With \$100m, we could refund payroll tax for 2 years. Consider what a positive effect that would have on industry. We could establish 1000 km of extra tourist roads. However, instead, this government chooses to construct 2 buildings that no one in the community wants and that will not create any long-term economic or social benefits to the Territory at all.

Members interjecting.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! All honourable members have the chance to participate in this debate. I advise the Minister for Transport and Works that he has an advantage over other members because he has right of reply. I order them all to remain silent during the Leader of the Opposition's speech.

Mr SMITH: Thank you, Mr Speaker.

The people do not need a reason to tell the government to dump the project but, as a matter of fact, they do have a reason and it is a good one. They do not think that lawyers and politicians deserve priority over the poor, the homeless and the underprivileged in this community and, if they are not poor, homeless or underprivileged themselves, over their own legitimate needs and aspirations. Mr Speaker, it is no good the government telling them that it is doing it for their own good because, frankly, they do not believe it. And that is the basis of the problem that this government has.

What has been forgotten in all of this catastrophe is how it all began. What has been forgotten is that the whole box and dice was originally flogged by the previous Chief Minister, who lost his job over it, on the basis that it was a to be a privately-funded, privately-financed, private development. It was flogged as the Anderson project because, when it was first introduced, it was Mr Anderson's project. What we have presented to us here, in mark 75, is a publicly-funded, publicly-financed, public project. What the people want to know, and what they cannot understand, is why it is still being managed and controlled by Mr Anderson when it is a publicly-funded, publicly-financed and public project.

That is the bottom line question. Why is Tipperary Developments still involved in this project, when the original concept has changed so dramatically and so completely? They want to know why Mr Anderson is getting \$1.75m up-front, and what he has done to deserve it. I would have expected the minister's statement to answer that question, but it has not done so. They want to know why Mr Anderson obtained the key project development role without any tendering process whatsoever. I would have expected the minister's statement to supply an answer to that question, but it did not. They want to know why Mr Anderson's constant partner in development somehow just managed to tip out a consortium of the Territory's leading construction companies. I would have expected the minister's statement to answer that. But no, that answer is not there. They want to know how Mr Anderson's company managed to obtain half the seats on the controlling body of a government project. But no, there is no answer to that either.

Mr Speaker, this government has stuffed up a number of projects, but this is the numero uno, premium grade, 5-star, heavyweight stuff-up of stuff-ups. It was botched on day 1 and it has kept on being botched.

Mr HATTON: A point of order, Mr Deputy Speaker! I would have thought the phrase 'stuff-up' hardly constituted parliamentary language.

Mr Smith: Oh, you poor innocent little flower. You poor little shrinking violet.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: There is no point of order, but I ask the Leader of the Opposition to be a little more selective in the choice of his words.

Mr SMITH: Mr Deputy Speaker, in deference to the sensibilities of the member for Nightcliff, who obviously services a very sensitive and upper-class electorate if he has never heard words like that, I promise not to repeat the dreaded phrase. I hope that he is not upset by the word 'botch' which has the same meaning as that phrase which I will not use.

Let us look at the history of this particular botch-up. It started in December last year, when the now disgraced former Chief Minister and delicate shrinking violet announced the demolition of the government precinct and its replacement by a Parliament House, a Supreme Court building, a 20-storey office block and water gardens to cost \$300m. At that stage, he said that work was to start in February 1988. By 13 February, no work had begun but we were told that the tower block would be 17 storeys instead of 20, that the project would create 400 jobs and that the Deputy Chief Minister had reservations. I will give him some credit for that. In having those reservations, he was joining the other 99.9% of the population who have reservations. It is a pity that he did not act on them in Cabinet.

On 14 February, the now disgraced former Chief Minister announced that the project was actually worth \$150m rather than \$300m and that the tower block would not go ahead. In the midst of all this, we received a rare comment from Mr Anderson of Tipperary Developments. On 28 February, he said: 'This is like a Christmas gift to the Darwin economy ... It is my stamp on the Northern Territory'. I will come back to that second phrase.

On 30 March, Cabinet approved - wait for it - a \$110m project to bulldoze the law courts, the Legislative Assembly, the Nelson Building and the Wells Building and replace them with a Supreme Court building and Parliament House. A second stage was also flagged. On 31 March, we were given the anticipated costs for this particular project: \$20.5m for the Supreme Court building and

\$30.5m for the Parliament House. In 8 months, those costs increased by \$8m and \$16m respectively.

Mr Dale: Whom are you quoting from?

Mr SMITH: My source is the NT News, Mr Speaker, which was used extensively by this government to float balloons throughout the process.

In early 1988, we had the first talk of the fixed-price contract with Mr Anderson. Tipperary Developments was to take all risks. By 2 June, we had come down to a \$100m project which was being finalised with the developer so that it could go to the next Cabinet meeting. By the end of June, however, we had a new financial arrangement which involved development rights over the precinct. By that time, the cost had risen to \$155m. On 28 June, the now disgraced former Chief Minister announced the go-ahead on the project - and everybody will remember this - with a price ranging between \$100m and \$150m. Those were ballpark figures indeed. Job projections were estimated at about 250 on-site and 250 off-site. On 12 July, the then Chief Minister resigned and, on 30 July, we were told that the project would go ahead regardless.

Mr Speaker, we all know what has happened since then. We have had continuing questions about the cost and how the project would be paid for. We have had continual questions about who would raise the money, whether it would be Tipperary Developments, as in the original proposition, or whether it would be the government through semi-government loans. To top it all off, we had the Chief Minister, the principal of the Marshall Perron school of economics, saying on last Monday's Territory Extra that '\$100m is \$100m, whether you pay for it now or whether you raise it by loan borrowings'. I suppose that caps off the incredible history of the State Square project: an indication by the Chief Minister that he does not understand the first thing about it. That history is important in demonstrating to people that the matter has been a botch-up from day 1 to the time of the Chief Minister's statement last Monday. The government has never been in control of this project. It has never known where it was going and, even today, it does not know where the bottom line is, a matter which I will address very shortly.

Mr Speaker, let us look at what today's statement said. The responsible minister said that it is important to give the public the facts. He then read out a 31-page statement which contained no facts that people were not already aware of, despite the incredible range of questions which have been asked. At page 5 of the circulated copy of his statement, the Minister for Transport and Works admitted that there was no pressing need for a Parliament House. He said that it was simply a convenient time to build it. There is no pressing need; we are doing it only to stimulate the economy. I can tell the minister that people inside and outside this parliament agree with him. There is no pressing need to build a Parliament House. They are saying that, if the government wants to spend \$50m, there are many other ways of benefiting Territory taxpayers, creating long-term jobs and generally boosting the economy. That is what people are saying and I am sure that they will be pleased that at least the Minister for Transport and Works has the courage to say that there is no pressing need for the project and that it is only proceeding as a matter of convenience. He is halfway home. Perhaps he has been listening to some of his constituents. It is a pity that he did not go all the way and listen to their compete message.

The minister's statement revived the old furphy about the fixed-price arrangement. At least he had the courtesy to mention it only once, at page 30. It is not a fixed-price agreement and everybody knows that. Even

now, nobody knows what the price will be. The price will not be known for many months. The so-called fixed price will not be known until all the tenders are in. In that respect, this project is in no way different from any other government project. The fixed-price arrangement is a fiction. If it existed, we would know the price now - at the start of the contract - and the public would expect us to know. That, however, is not the case.

On an associated point, Mr Speaker, if there will be no cost overruns to be paid, why is it that one of the tasks of the project management group is to approve variations to the work as required? Let us not forget that Tipperary Developments provides half the membership of that group. It is not possible to believe that the group, having been given that task, will not approve payment to cover variations. If that does not create an enormous potential for cost overruns and if that is not the way that cost overruns normally occur on buildings, I would be very surprised indeed.

Let us look at what the statement says - or does not say - about Territory involvement. Where are the guarantees? There is not a single mention of any guarantee that is worth a pinch of salt in terms of the extent of Territory involvement. Perhaps the contract between Tipperary Developments and the Northern Territory government contains a requirement for a percentage of work to be done in the Northern Territory by Territory firms, but the minister's statement did not mention it. Let us have an answer in relation to that.

At this stage, I might mention the consortium companies in the Northern Territory. As the minister says, those companies have been responsible for most of the major development works in the Northern Territory over the last 15 to 20 years. All they wanted in this project was a fair go, but they had to kick, scream and shout, and place a full-page advertisement in the NT News before they got even so much as an interview. And what were they told at that interview?

Mr Palmer: Well, what were they told?

Mr SMITH: They were told by the Tipperary Developments representative that Warren Anderson preferred to work with Multiplex. That is what they were told, Mr Speaker. They did not get a fair go. Is that how the government wants to treat firms that have been responsible for most of the development work that has occurred in the Northern Territory over the last 15 to 20 years? That is why they were upset and that is why they took out a full-page advertisement. That is also why permanent damage has been done to their relationship with the Northern Territory government.

Let us have a look at the issue of private enterprise development. I know the government has a policy of putting as much of its work as possible out to private enterprise. We do not necessarily object to that, but the bottom line of this particular project is that it meets the government's usual criteria in terms of the 'design and construct' approach which it has been using on some projects lately. It is a 'design and construct' job. We have no problems with that. Of course, John Holland Constructions was screwed with that on the marina when it had the idea but did not get the job. However, the problem that I have with the 'design and construct' process with this particular job is that we are not talking about an office block. We are not talking about a school. We are talking about 2 of the fundamental buildings that determine the democratic country and the democratic Territory that we are: our Supreme Court building and our Parliament House. We are saying, in what must be a world-wide ...

Mr Perron: You said they were useless things before - useless and unwanted buildings.

Mr SMITH: They are indeed. In what must be a world-wide first, we are saying to a private developer: 'You can design our Supreme Court building and our Parliament House and then you can build them'. That is a concept that I find staggering, particularly in respect of the Parliament House. The parliament is the democratic voice of the people of the Northern Territory and yet, in putting this project together, we have seen one of the most anti-democratic exercises in terms of government buildings undertaken by any government anywhere in the democratic world.

Mr Perron: Do you want Territorians to build it themselves?

Mr SMITH: No, I want you to tell me why we spent \$100,000 on a Parliament House competition, got a design that was recognised Australia-wide as being absolutely outstanding and then it was cast off? Mr Speaker, tell me why we go through a democratic process, obtain a winning design and then decide not to build it? Tell me, Mr Speaker, on what basis that was done? The answer to that question will be very interesting.

Let us have a look at the federal Treasurer. If Paul Keating supports this project, I have no hesitation in joining the rest of the Territory and saying he is wrong. He is wrong. Can I contrast the manner in which the federal government spends money in the Northern Territory with the way this government throws it away? At Tindal, it spent \$200m and created 500 permanent, long-term jobs. On the State Square project, \$100m will be spent and not 1 permanent, long-term job will result.

A member: We will have to employ more gardeners or something.

Mr SMITH: That is right. I accept that we might have an extra couple of gardeners.

Then, to fill out the speech and spread it over 31 pages so that it looked impressive, the details of the financial package issued by the Chief Minister on Monday were reiterated. We sent this to an independent expert whom we consulted from outside the Northern Territory. He is a high-flier in the financial world. We sent this to him and he said, and I will have to withdraw this word, he said it was 'nebulous bullshit'.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! The honourable member will withdraw that word. It is unparliamentary.

Mr SMITH: Mr Deputy Speaker, I withdraw the word, but that was his description of it because it does not provide any information whatsoever. It does not say how much raising the money will cost, and that is the problem that we have. This statement does not lead us anywhere. How much will it cost us? According to the Marshall Perron school of economics, it will cost us \$100m. Under any other school of economics, how much it will cost us will depend on the interest rates that we will obtain for the loans. We cannot have a detailed financial package until the loans have been put together. Then people can be told what the interest rates are and how much it will cost us to repay those loans.

Mr Deputy Speaker, have you ever noticed that, when the Chief Minister knows nothing and, it is quite obvious that that occurs quite often, he sits there with a vacant and glib smile. Look at him now, Mr Deputy Speaker. He

has a vacant and glib smile on his face because he has made an idiot statement that \$100m is \$100m now or in 10 years time, and he has issued an idiotic press release which supposedly provides details of the financial package and it is described interstate as nebulous BS. That is the problem and, unfortunately, it is this sort of nonsense from the Chief Minister and Treasurer that is causing harm ...

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

Mr EDE (Stuart): Mr Speaker, I move that an extension of time be granted to allow the Leader of the Opposition to complete his speech.

Motion agreed to.

Mr SMITH: Mr Deputy Speaker, I thank the House.

Mr Hatton: More nebulous figures coming up.

Mr SMITH: It is all right, shrinking violet.

Mr Deputy Speaker, we are faced with a situation where, after 11 months and after 31 pages of ministerial statement, we do not have answers to the basic questions. I have some basic questions that I want to lay on the Table now. I accept the invitation of the Minister for Transport and Works to ask my questions and I hope that tomorrow, when we ask them in question time, we will receive some answers.

Question No 1: When will the minister table the agreement between Tipperary Developments and the Northern Territory government on the construction of State Square?

A member interjecting.

Mr SMITH: To answer that interjection, to name one, there was a comprehensive tabling of hundreds upon hundreds of pages of agreements that established the Yulara Development Corporation and the other associated corporations. They were tabled in this parliament.

Mr Perron: All you have done is criticise. You could not comprehend the first page of it.

Mr SMITH: That is all right. I will do a deal with you. If you are prepared to accept that \$100m now is not \$100m in 10 years and join the rest of the educated world, I will be prepared to go through the Yulara documents with you, 1 by 1, and see who gets more of them, right?

Mr Perron: Is that right?

Mr SMITH: Yes. Are you prepared to do it? Why don't we do it on TV one night? How about you, instead of the minister, debating the subject with me on TV tonight? You cannot, because you are scared.

Mr PALMER: A point of order, Mr Deputy Speaker! At the least, the Leader of the Opposition has to refer to the Chief Minister as the Chief Minister, not just as 'you'. Also, he is required to address his remarks to the Chair.

Mr LEO (Nhulunbuy): Speaking to the point of order, Mr Deputy Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition was provoked by interjections from the other side of the Chamber.

Mr Coulter: It is the quality of the debate on the State Square project.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order!

Mr LEO: Mr Deputy Speaker, if he is not protected by the Chair, he has little choice but to respond to those interjections.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: There has been a considerable amount of cross-Chamber chatter and interjection during the last few moments. I ask all members to address their remarks through the Chair.

Mr SMITH: Mr Deputy Speaker, in the spirit of glasnost, I invite the Chief Minister to take the place of the Minister for Transport and Works who is obviously busy tonight and cannot debate the matter with me on the 7.30 Report.

Mr Finch: Why don't you give us a few facts first. Give us something to chew on.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order!

Mr SMITH: Question No 2: when did the government agree to pay the developer's fee to Tipperary Developments, what was the basis of this agreement, and have the claims for payment been audited? Will the minister table that information? Question No 3: why is Tipperary Developments still involved in the project since, first, the original concept has changed so dramatically and, secondly, a development fee has been paid?

Question No 4: has a fixed price for the contract been arrived at? I think the answer is no. If it is yes, what is it, and if it is not, at what stage of the development does the minister expect a fixed price to be arrived at?

Question No 5: does the agreement contain any meaningful clauses relating to local involvement in the project? Question No 6: what is the format that was used to calculate the \$3.75m developer's fee? These questions will do for a start. There are more to come, but these will do for a start a start.

Mr Finch: Keep going, baby. Get them all out.

Mr SMITH: The honourable minister opposite has a limited capacity. We know that, and we do not want to overstretch him. Let him handle those for a start.

Mr Hatton: Put the rest out now.

Mr Finch: I have a limited capacity for tolerance, but that is about all. But carry on. Put them all out.

Mr SMITH: And ability, Mr Deputy Speaker, and ability.

The situation is this. In the last 2 days, we have had 1 press release and 1 detailed statement in this House. The press release was supposed to provide the details of the financing package. The 31-page statement was supposed to lay it all out so that we did not need to ask any more questions. That has failed. We have still to pick up answers to 2 questions. We do not know how much it will cost because a fixed-price contract has not been arrived at. We still do not know how much the semi-government borrowings will cost

because the Northern Territory government will not tell us. Those are 2 of the serious and genuine concerns that people in the community have about this project.

If the government is so proud of this project, as I have said, one can only ask why it brought on this debate at this late hour and, if the government is so proud of this project and it is all kosher, one can only ask why it will not provide the public of the Northern Territory with the information that it needs.

Mr Anderson or Tipperary Developments is not funding the project. Tipperary Developments will not have to live with the project and the results of the project but, by some tortuous and totally unexplained process, that I do not understand and that people in the community do not understand, Mr Anderson and Tipperary Developments remain in control of the project.

Mr Finch: Not in control: You did not listen.

Mr SMITH: I did listen, and I repeat my invitation: do you want to come down the Mall with me tomorrow and we will ask people who is controlling the project?

We want to know the facts and we are not getting the facts. The government is not in control of the project but, then again, it has never been in control of the project from day 1. Chief Ministers have come and gone, but the government has never been and still is not in control of the project, but it is in control of the aftermath, and the aftermath is the biggest electoral disaster that this Territory has ever seen.

Mr PERRON (Chief Minister): Mr Speaker, I really did think that, after all his huffing and puffing in the media over the days and weeks leading up to this occasion, the Leader of the Opposition would have had something of more substance to present to the House today than the straight politicking that he has undertaken. I guess that is to be expected. We are all politicians and the opposition is using its usual tactic of trying to squeeze as much mileage as it can out of this project because it knows that the Northern Territory government will proceed with it, notwithstanding the snide criticisms from the sidelines. I guess members opposite see it as an opportunity to squeeze a bit of mileage in the press and, no doubt, they will continue with that over the next few years whilst this project is under construction. We know that because the tactic is not new and it is not surprising. We have heard them criticise, fairly severely and regularly, other efforts of this government to create employment in the Northern Territory and to get on with economic development. The Trade Development Zone is one of their favourite targets.

The Leader of the Opposition mentioned Yulara during his speech. Yulara is one of the great success stories for the Northern Territory. It was one of the great initiatives of the CLP government in years past which has been very successful, is very successful today and will be equally successful tomorrow. But, all we have had over several years from the opposition is criticism about Yulara. It has been called a 'tourism funding disaster'. That is 1 phrase that I remember very clearly and it is recorded in Hansard. There have been repeated attacks on what the government has done at Yulara. Indeed, I think there has been one within the last 7 or so days by the Leader of the Opposition. He made a derogatory remark about the government's backing of Yulara. I use that as a typical example of their denigration.

The bringing of 5-star Sheraton Hotels to the Top End and Alice Springs is another favourite target because it is costing taxpayers' dollars to assist those projects to keep their doors open in the initial few years when such projects usually face a very difficult financial time. We put up the money because we believed we needed them and, indeed, the Sheratons are helping us carve out the place in the world tourism market that we see rightly there for the Territory.

Even the pipeline was criticised. We recall that the phrase 'a pipedream' was used by an ALP politician in the early days of the pipeline. Even earlier, Mr Isaacs, a former ALP leader, ridiculed the project very severely.

We have a situation in the Northern Territory - particularly in Darwin where 50% of the Northern Territory's population lives - in which the construction sector faces a difficult period over the next couple of years. Indeed, it has been in difficulties for a year or more. It is unfortunate that we do not have a project of this magnitude well under way. If we had commenced a year or so ago, perhaps we would be in circumstances quite different to those we are in today. However, the government will stick to its guns that this project is very desirable at this stage of our progress in the Northern Territory. It is very timely now to bring such a substantial project on-line and keep many people employed.

The Leader of the Opposition has remarked constantly that the buildings will not be productive. He says that neither a Supreme Court building nor a new Parliament House building is productive. I think he said also that they were almost useless buildings. The implication was that we should not be wasting money on these 2 buildings. Of course, if we want to run that line in respect of a few other buildings that governments build, we could say that museums are useless buildings as far as straight productivity is concerned. No product comes out of their doors that earns us big export dollars. Archive buildings are pretty useless as far as productivity is concerned. It could almost be said that hospital buildings are non-productive, and perhaps it could be said that police stations are not productive buildings either. Nothing comes out of their doors that you could take overseas and sell.

Does the Leader of the Opposition propose that we stop building such buildings because they are non-productive, that we simply do without them entirely? Privately, he would admit that it would be an absurd proposition to suggest that we should stop building courthouses and that we should never have built them in the past because they are totally non-productive. In fact, the Leader of the Opposition is on record in the transcript I have of 1 radio program acknowledging that there is a case for the construction of a new Supreme Court building in the Northern Territory. He has not quite conceded that point yet in relation to a new Parliament House although, when we were debating the construction of a new Parliament House some years ago in this Assembly, he acknowledged the fact that this building was certainly well past the end of its economic life.

What better time to replace both buildings than now? Surely it would be unwise to build such buildings at a time when the construction industry was booming, when the local resources were stretched and prices forced up as a result. It would certainly be the wrong time to divert government funds into such buildings. Now is an ideal time to take this opportunity of constructing buildings which are required and which will assist very significantly a construction sector which desperately needs major work. Indeed, I hate to think what would face the construction industry in Darwin and the population of Darwin over the next 2 or 3 years if this project were not on the drawing boards at present.

The Leader of the Opposition said that we could use \$100m in a number of other ways. Some of them would sound fairly attractive to some people. He said that we could build 1700 houses, we could have a 2-year payroll tax holiday, we could have 1 year's free electricity or we could pay for one-seventh of the railway line. He could not do it with this \$100m, I can assure him, because he would never obtain Loans Council approval to spend \$100m on such projects in the way that this project was required to be put forward for approval. His trotting out of those alternative uses of \$100m was really quite facetious because he knows that we could not take this \$100m of borrowing capacity and finance a payroll tax holiday for 2 years. That is absolute nonsense. What is the point of building one-seventh of a railway? I cannot quite comprehend his logic there. He did not tell us which end of the Territory he would start from. Perhaps he would be better off using his efforts to try to coerce the federal government into undertaking the railway project itself, as it once had promised us.

It was interesting to note from the radio the other morning that, in fact, the Leader of the Opposition picked up his idea of spending \$100m from the taxi driver who took him to work. I thought that was an interesting way to form Labor Party economic policy - get it from the taxi driver on the way to work in the morning.

Mr Collins: You were a taxi driver once.

Mr PERRON: I was a taxi driver once but I am sure that, in those days, I did not consider myself of the standing to be an economic adviser to the Leader of the Opposition, who has his own economic adviser on his staff yet still needs to go interstate to receive advice on how government projects are funded.

I move on to the subject of loan raising and the funding of the State Square project. I start by making a statement which will infuriate the Leader of the Opposition. I ask him to reflect on it for a while, perhaps overnight. Perhaps he could even talk to his taxi driver about it on the way to work tomorrow morning. The cost of the State Square project will be up to \$100m. I say 'up to' because it is a government estimate. We have always said that it is an estimate of the cost of the project in the same way as we estimate the cost of the next high school, police station or 50 houses. It will cost up to \$100m in 1988 dollars. That is really the end of my statement.

Let me put some more words around that. If a person took \$100m today and put it in the bank, it would earn him interest at about 14% per annum on current semi-government rates. It would earn that \$14m per annum forever. The important thing is, if we did that, the project which will cost \$100m today will not cost any more than \$100m in today's value.

Mr Ede: So let's put it off.

Mr PERRON: It is a very important point. No, it is not off. What we are doing is borrowing money to build an asset today for which we will have to meet finance charges because we are using someone else's money. But, the cost of the project today is still \$100m, and that is exactly what it will cost to build the State Square project.

I point out to the Leader of the Opposition the way that Territory semi-government borrowings work. From documents that he has seen, he will recall that, at self-government, we inherited a debt of \$193m. In an agreement with the Commonwealth, we took over Stokes Hill Power Station,

various water and sewerage works and some housing, and we agreed to pay off a loan of \$193m. Up until 30 June this year, that had grown by \$1114m to \$1307m which is the total borrowings of the Northern Territory government to date. Those figures are clearly spelt out in the recent budget documents. Every dollar of the \$1114m increase over the original debt that we inherited at self-government was borrowed with the approval and, indeed, the backing of the Commonwealth. As honourable members are aware, the Northern Territory government is guaranteed by the Commonwealth for all its loan raising.

Alongside that debt of \$1307m are assets to the tune of about \$4000m. The Territory has many more assets than that \$4000m. That is primarily assets which have been constructed and inherited. It does not include assets such as land, to the extent that the Territory government still has land to use and to sell. It does not include assets such as minerals which, as honourable members will be aware, belong to the Crown - with the exception of uranium - and are very substantial. In physical assets, however, we have in the order of \$4-worth of assets for every \$1 of debt. In fact, the figure would probably be much more than that if the value of roads in the Northern Territory were included.

In this financial year, our repayment on the \$1307m will be \$130m, in principal and interest repayments. Honourable members will realise that that represents an interest rate of roughly 10% at present. That comes about because of the mix of loans, which vary substantially both in interest rates and in respect of the periods for which they have been taken. Undoubtedly, the figure of 10% will increase if interest rates stay high and as the earlier loans mature and more recent loans at higher interest rates predominate. Therefore, the figure can be expected to increase.

Originally, this year's budgeted loans program was in the vicinity of \$65m, plus an additional \$20m for the State Square project. We had the capacity to borrow an additional \$10m, over and above that, for the Darwin Airport. Following the federal budget and the decision to hand the Darwin Airport terminal project over to the Federal Airports Commission, the Territory government agreed to hand \$10m of its global borrowing limit to the Federal Airports Commission so that it could get on with the terminal. Indeed, it is a major worry at present that it is not getting on with that project. However, our borrowing capacity this year is approximately \$85m. We are, in fact, out in the market now. Treasury informs me that we have recently borrowed some \$15m which matures in 1998. We borrowed it at a rate of 12.5% per annum, which is a pretty attractive rate and the lender gave us an option to borrow more on similar terms. We are considering that option.

I return to the fact that, with the exception of income-producing assets such as powerhouses, the Northern Territory government's loans program is really a pool of funds. In the case of projects like the Channel Island Power Station, we make a specific allocation of loan funds to the authority concerned, in that case the Power and Water Authority. The loan is on its books. It built the power station. It is a revenue-producing organisation which will repay the loan to Treasury, at an agreed interest rate, over a period of many years. The balance of the loan raisings for the Northern Territory are in a pool. Those funds are used, together with funds from Consolidated Revenue, for the entire program of government capital works which includes roads, schools, police stations, hospitals, museums, child-care centres and so forth. Every year, a vast array of buildings is funded by a mixture of funds from our revenue budget and from loans.

Page 44 of the 1988-89 Budget Overview contains a table which lists new borrowings and capital outlays for each of the last 5 years. That table shows that, during the last 5 years, our capital outlays have approximately doubled the loan raisings. It is therefore quite reasonable to assume that, at present, we are funding about half of our capital works program from loans and that the other half is being funded by revenue generated from within the Northern Territory.

In fact, it can be argued that long-term assets should be funded by loans. It is the citizens of the future who will enjoy the benefits of parliament houses, courthouses, roads, bridges and schools, facilities which will exist for 20 or 30 years. It can be argued that today's generation should not pay for those things in cash, just as the Sydney Harbour Bridge should not have been paid for in cash at the time it was built. It is only fair that the motorists who used that bridge over 50 years should contribute to that capital project, as they have done. However, during the last 5 years, in the Northern Territory, we have been funding 50% of our capital works projects in cash.

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

Mr COULTER (Leader of Government Business): Mr Speaker, I move that so much of standing orders be suspended as will allow the Chief Minister to complete his speech.

Motion agreed to.

Mr PERRON: Mr Speaker, I will conclude my remarks with a few more words about the pool of funds which comprise the \$1307m of debt that the Northern Territory has incurred to date. The loans have a range of interest rates and they mature at different times. Some - promissory notes for example - are raised on a short-term basis. In my press release on the State Square project, I stated that we had raised some funds because it was attractive to do so at that time. Those are Northern Territory government loan raisings of the usual type. Honourable members will be aware that, from time to time, we endeavour to raise \$20m or \$30m from the public, through subscriptions to Northern Territory bonds. These have been fully subscribed and, indeed, over-subscribed in the past. Also, we borrow funds through private negotiations with banks and recognised financial institutions. Of course, there is a list of approved persons to whom we can go to borrow funds. As is the case with the states, the Commonwealth contributes to our capital funds. That occurs under a specific financial agreement. The pool of funds used for capital works comes from a whole range of sources. If honourable members would like a little more detail in relation to this, I refer them to pages 65, 66 and 67 of the Treasurer's Annual Financial Statements which contain schedules listing current loans raised by the Northern Territory government. I mention these matters because they are fundamental to the cost of financing the State Square project.

It is probably impossible to put a specific figure on the amount. I will leave members of the opposition to speculate with their own figures, which they will certainly do irrespective of what I say. The fact is that, this year, we will add \$20m to our loan-raising program for the State Square project. Current plans are that we will borrow about \$40m next year. We will borrow that money at the best possible market rates. It is likely to be borrowed in a number of discrete amounts rather than in 1 or 2 large sums of \$40m or \$20m. We have people in Treasury who are expert at monitoring the market and picking up money when and where the interest rates are most attractive. The funds for this project, therefore, are part of the normal

government capital works loan raisings. At present, we pay an average of 10% in interest on those loans and the interest rates on amounts we will borrow in the future will vary. Some loans will expire, others will be rolled over and new loans will be taken up.

For the benefit of the Leader of the Opposition, I return now to my original point. The cost of the State Square project, in 1988 dollars, is \$100m. If we had \$100m in the bank today and received 13% interest on it this year, 16% next year and 18% the year after, or if we did not have the \$100m and went out and borrowed money at those prevailing market rates, the discounted cost of the State Square project, in 1988 dollars, would be \$100m. Mr Speaker, I ask honourable members to dwell on those words and think about what I have said. If they really want to know what the cost is, it has been spelt out for them very clearly. If they cannot read it, I feel sorry for them. Perhaps I might try to explain it to them again on another occasion.

Mr COLLINS (Sadadeen): Mr Speaker, while the Chief Minister's comments are fresh in my mind, I will say that I am contemplating buying a new motor car. Its price is \$26 800. That is what I will pay to the firm which is selling the vehicle. However, I will have to obtain finance for this vehicle. I am in the fortunate position of knowing that it will cost me about \$40 000, all up, when it is paid for.

We have been talking about a fixed price of \$100m. There is some woolliness about that, and most members have admitted that. Until we have the contractor's and the subcontractors' prices, we will not really know. However, we have that ballpark figure of \$100m. From what the Chief Minister has said, I can appreciate that he intends to borrow money at different stages. There is no point borrowing money until it is actually needed. His \$20m for this year can be broken up into \$15m borrowed tomorrow, \$10m in 4 months time and \$5m at the end of the financial year, if those are appropriate times to borrow to keep the interest payments down. However, there is nothing surer in all of this than that Territorians, now and in the future, will pay a darn sight more than \$100m just as, with my vehicle, I will have to pay ...

Mr Perron: I am talking in 1988 values. That is the whole crux of the matter.

Mr COLLINS: I know what I am paying for my vehicle in 1988 dollars. It will be \$40 000 if I go ahead with it.

Mr Perron: In that time, your salary will double.

Mr COLLINS: I would not like to guarantee that in this particular place.

Mr Perron: In today's values, it is the same.

Mr COLLINS: No, it is like buying a house. You bought yours, Mr Speaker, and I bought mine. You bought it at a particular price from the Housing Commission. You paid a certain price for it and, if you had to finance it, you know that, over the years, you will pay a darn sight more than the place is worth. I think that mine will cost at least 3 times what its value was. Of course, inflation does help. I dare say that is one of the reasons why governments get away with inflation. Inflation is definitely something which governments create by producing more pieces of paper called money when they have not increased the value of goods or wealth. They devalue every piece of paper because it represents the same quantity of wealth.

This whole business of the State Square project leaves me very cold. I must confess that, when I was told that the former Chief Minister had resigned and that the member for Fannie Bay would take over as Chief Minister, I breathed a very hearty sigh of relief because I thought that the State Square project would be dropped. That was the feeling of many other people in Alice Springs who did not support the project. Much to our dismay, the Chief Minister has decided to go on with the project, though I suppose we have to be grateful for the small mercy that it is to be in a rather modified form.

In my home town of Alice Springs, I find no support for it. Even some of the strongest members of the CLP, people who have benefited from the CLP, have been extremely annoyed and angry at the whole project. Sometimes, I have heard arguments which one could say were rather parochial. I have heard the former Chief Minister accuse me with the suggestion that, if it were happening in Alice Springs, I would be happy as a lark in spring. I do have a few more principles than that. As far as I am concerned, and I have said it here before, the whole project is non-wealth-creating. To try to compare it to the Sydney Harbour bridge is nonsense.

Mr Perron: What about a police station?

Mr COLLINS: Let us take the Sydney Harbour bridge. Do not attempt to divert me from the matter.

Mr Palmer interjecting.

Mr COLLINS: You get back in your seat.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The honourable member is right. Interjections are generally frowned on and they are absolutely forbidden from a member who is not in his place.

Mr COLLINS: Mr Speaker, the Sydney Harbour bridge has been the sort of project which governments become involved in. I agree totally with the Chief Minister that that bridge should have been paid for over many years. I believe Premier Greiner has just made the final payment on the bridge. It is wealth-creating. Think of the time saved and how it has facilitated business and brought people together. It was a magic project that has been wealth-creating.

I totally support the Chief Minister when he borrows money for the roads which people will share and which help us create wealth. They encourage tourists and allow our commerce to flow. Terrific! However, for the life of us, neither I nor the people of Alice Springs can see that, apart from the jobs that will be created over 3 or 4 years - 500 I think is the Minister's figure - there will be much benefit from this project. We will be paying for it for a long time. All Territorians will pay for it.

Mr Dondas: We built your police stations and your Sadadeen High School.

Mr COLLINS: Sadadeen High School is wealth-creating. Education provides the skills which one might be able to use to get a job.

Mr Dondas: Courthouses are job-creating. Prison guards, prison cells.

Mr COLLINS: They create jobs for the jail guards if that is what you are on about.

Mr Speaker, if you have been listening to the people in Alice Springs, you will know that there is virtually no support for this. I have not found one person in Alice Springs speaking in support of it.

Mr Poole: I could support it myself.

Mr COLLINS: Mr Speaker, I think that is to the credit of the honourable minister opposite. I know he was rolled in Cabinet on the matter. I know he is in touch with the people down there and knows that it is not supported.

On many occasions when people have started to grumble in a somewhat parochial manner, I have supported the fact that Darwin does need an injection of funds. I am lucky enough to be up here often enough to know that Darwin has been hurting badly. The point that I object to is that this project is non-wealth-creating in the long term. It will create a few jobs. Quite a few will go interstate. We have Multiplex coming in. We have had Tipperary Developments brought into the whole matter.

It was interesting to attend that first so-called detailed briefing that the minister gave us. He did not have the answers to anything. He did not know how much it would cost apart from his ballpark figure of \$87m. It has grown a bit. He apologised pathetically to us and said: 'You might question why Tipperary Developments is to be the project developer. It has drawn a few plans. You might not like it, but there it is'. We had a load of secondhand information from the minister there. He could not tell us how it would be funded. He raved on about some special set-up that Anderson had come up with. There was absolutely no detail. It was all ifs, buts and flamin' maybes. Nevertheless, he claimed today that it was a detailed briefing.

About a fortnight ago, I recall hearing the minister announce proudly that he had signed the agreement for the State Square project. The next question was how much it would cost. His reply was: 'I don't know'.

Mr Finch: I did not say that.

Mr COLLINS: Mr Speaker, how many of us, as individuals, or the minister himself if he were dealing with his own money, would sign a contract and not know how much it would cost?

Mr Perron: \$100m.

Mr Finch: Maximum.

Mr COLLINS: Hah! \$100m? Yes, plus the interest! How many years will it be paid off over?

Mr Speaker, there is only 1 thing that is really certain in the whole matter and that is that it will be paid for eventually by Territorians over many years - a non-wealth-creating project. It is a bit like Keynesian economics which this world is finally beginning to understand. You have a bad time. Things are rough in Darwin. It is agreed that something must be done about it and, in consequence, the government borrows a large sum for a non-wealth-creating project. It is like a drunk who gets a bit tanked and feels a bit better for a while. For 3 or 4 years, while the jobs are available and the spin-offs are occurring, there will be some advantages for Darwin but, once the drink wears off ...

Mr Dondas: What about Yulara?

Mr COLLINS: That is wealth-creating. You will never understand.

Mr SPEAKER: Order!

Mr COLLINS: Mr Speaker, once the project is finished, it will be hangover time. It is Keynesian economics.

Mr Dondas: What about the airport?

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The member for Casuarina can participate in a formal manner in this debate if he wishes to, but his interjections will cease.

Mr COLLINS: Thank you, Mr Speaker.

In 3 or 4 years time, if this government is still there, it will be in another trough and we will have to borrow a little more and so, like an alcoholic, the government will continue to be caught in the grip of the whole thing. If this government cannot come up with projects of a smaller nature which would be wealth-creating, then it has lost its touch. It has had some pretty good ideas in its time. Now, I have a feeling that its time is about over.

As for Mr Keating's involvement, it was interesting to hear the Leader of the Opposition suggesting that Mr Keating was wrong. I agree with him, in economic terms, as far as the Territory is concerned. But, he certainly was not wrong politically because I sense dynamite waiting in the community for this government. It will not listen to what people are saying. They do not support the project. I believe that the people would be persuaded by the argument if the government became involved in projects which would create wealth and which would help to pay for themselves. The railway has been suggested. I agree that it would not make much sense to build one-seventh of a railway. What a pity we did not take up Mr Hawke's offer of 40% and put him on the line to see whether he was really fair dinkum. I would like to see the federal government fund 40% for the railway line. With that behind us, we could obtain 60% from the private sector and have a private railway line, because the private sector would hold the controlling equity.

Mr Coulter: Would you do that?

Mr COLLINS: It would certainly be much better than what we have at the moment.

Mr Coulter: How much would it cost to run the railway? What would be the debt in running the railway, and what would it be at the end of the day? Don't you worry about that?

Mr COLLINS: You have produced studies from Canadian Pacific which you have said ...

Mr Coulter: They have been tabled in this Assembly. You have read them.

Mr COLLINS: I know that and I am quite happy to quote from them. They said that, if it were not commercially viable, certainly it would be economically viable, because of the savings on the Stuart Highway. That was only on traffic coming northwards. There was no assessment of the traffic going southwards. On many occasions in this Assembly, I have raised the possibility of Darwin being a huge port where the container ships could berth and from which the containers could be transported to the south. I was

roundly condemned and told that that would be totally unworkable. The minister said that timber was coming in quite nicely and that we were obtaining a great deal on that by transporting it by road from the ships. I have no doubt that, if the will were there, the railway line could and would become a great economic benefit to this Territory.

Suffice it to say that the government ought to know Darwin better. It ought to be able to recognise the projects which, if not wealth-creating in their own right, would allow people to create wealth. That is the sort of project that it should become involved in. I have argued strongly along those lines to the people in Alice Springs. The Territory is not simply Alice Springs and Darwin with the Berrimah Line in between. We are all in it together. We have to consider the people of Darwin and the needs of the people of Darwin and the economy here, but it should have been done so that, with a bit of careful planning, and perhaps a series of much smaller projects, the people of Darwin could have been much more fully involved. There would have been greater empathy for the government. All the government has done in this business is create enemies all along the line.

I was interested to hear what a particular businessman in Alice Springs said to me the other day when I asked for a donation for Life Education Centres. He did not give a donation. He said he had been pressured very hard by a particular group of people in the Territory because they were very short of funds, and he made the rather wistful comment that he wished that he had not flaming well contributed to their funds. I can well understand why. Given the topic that we are debating, a little thought will enable some of the locals to realise whom I am talking about. Of course, I have no intention of giving his name either here or anywhere else.

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH (Koolpinyah): Mr Speaker, I find it impossible to rise to support the minister's statement in relation to the State Square project at the moment. Perhaps some future time, when our economy is buoyant, would be the time to build a new Legislative Assembly and a new Supreme Court building, but I think that this is not the right time to spend money on a non-productive exercise such as that. I believe that, for some reason, the current Chief Minister - possibly because verbal or written contracts had been entered into by the previous Chief Minister - had to continue with this project. People in the community who do not support this project in any way have told me that they believe that, given a free rein, the current Chief Minister would not have much support for it either. They believe that his hands are tied.

I have news for the Chief Minister, Mr Speaker. I do not know whether he talks to his CLP members and I do not know whether he talks to those CLP members who are reasonably high up in the hierarchy but there are not many of them who are in favour of this project. If he cannot convince his own members, particularly those who have been in the party for many years, I find it extremely interesting that he is trying to convince us and the general community of the good sense of constructing these buildings.

At page 31 of this statement, the honourable minister said that he had given 2 detailed statements regarding this project. Perhaps I have had my eyes closed or perhaps I have been asleep but I am darned if I can remember when the second detailed briefing was given. I did avail myself of the opportunity extended by the honourable minister to attend an informal briefing in this precinct during the last sittings. It was quite interesting as far as it went. I will not be so hard on him as was the member for Sadadeen, but I did not gain a great deal of information from the briefing although I appreciated his making his time available. If that was called a detailed

briefing and this was the second detailed briefing, it does not make very good reading when I believe the government has an uphill battle trying to convince the general community of the rectitude of the proposal.

I presented a petition from quite a number of my constituents and others at the last sittings, the contents of which spoke against building a new Legislative Assembly and a new Supreme Court building at this stage. The people who expressed that view would much rather have seen smaller buildings, which would be work-generating for a number of years, being built throughout the Northern Territory. They may not have been as grandiose as these buildings. Probably the name of the Chief Minister or whoever is to open these buildings would not have appeared on brass plaques in front of the buildings, but people would have preferred the construction of buildings to accommodate the downstream processing of primary produce throughout the Territory. That would have done much more for the development of the Northern Territory than these 2 completely non-productive buildings will do.

It is true that the construction industry is in the doldrums at the moment. Nobody would deny that. Job opportunities for people in the construction industry are limited. No sensible person would deny that, but the construction of buildings for the secondary processing of primary produce throughout the Territory would provide jobs for that ailing industry. Construction industry jobs would still be available but they would be available to people in Katherine, Tennant Creek, Alice Springs and even in the rural area that is part of my electorate. If smaller projects were built to support primary industry and other industries, not only would construction jobs be available at the time of building but jobs would be available to the local people in the future and, instead of migrating out of the Territory or to the cities for jobs, the population, in particular the young people, would stay in those areas to work on those projects.

What I deplore about this whole State Square development is the secrecy surrounding it and the arrogance of the CLP government in not presenting details not only to the general public but to members of this House who do not belong to its party. I have not seen very much at all on this project. I have seen this statement and it is the first such statement that is detailed in any way, but there are certain deficiencies even in this. I deplore that and I believe that the New Parliament House Committee is failing in its responsibilities because it has not presented any report to this House on the deliberations of that committee. No doubt, it should or would be contributing something on this project but, to date, we have heard absolutely nothing. Members of the committee have buttoned their lips completely about it. I would like to know when the committee will present a report to the House on the matter because, when it does, it will make very interesting reading.

I would like to raise another subject and that is land ownership and the actual boundaries of the precinct of the Legislative Assembly. In reading through the pertinent piece of legislation, I have found what appear to be anomalies if one considers the plans of the previous Chief Minister with regard to where the precinct of the Legislative Assembly was to be. If the precinct is to have its existing boundaries, certain anomalies in the legislation will have to be attended to. An obvious example is that, to my knowledge, the Nelson Building, although considered part of the precinct of the Legislative Assembly, is not legislatively part of that precinct. If I am wrong, Mr Speaker, perhaps you will correct me and tell me when the Nelson Building was made part of the precinct of the Legislative Assembly.

The previous Chief Minister had some very grandiose ideas. I think he was carried away with his own importance for a while, when he talked about skyscraper towers and the project as it was to proceed under his leadership. Although no other honourable members have said this so far, it was this project - together with certain other deficiencies, I suppose - which contributed to his downfall. I hope that the present Chief Minister will bear that in mind when he considers his own future political survival.

Mr Speaker, the Minister for Conservation might be interested in this question. Is there a link between the management of the State Square project by Tipperary Developments, the Berry Springs Wildlife Park and developments at Tipperary Station? I will not say any more but the honourable minister will know what I am alluding to.

Mr Manzie: What has the zoo to do with it?

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH: If you do not know, I will enlarge on the rumour which has been doing the rounds. I must hasten to add that I did not hear it from anybody in the Conservation Commission.

Mr Coulter interjecting.

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH: The Leader of Government Business talks about rumours. When the minister and others on his side of the House do not give us facts, we only have rumours to work on. The rumour is that \$2m is tied up with preferential rights to the project developer in this precinct. I do not know whether that is tied up with the previous chairmanship of the Berry Springs Board of Management, with the promise of \$2m to the Berry Springs Wildlife Park or the promise of developer's rights for a certain block of land in the Darwin area near this precinct.

A member interjecting.

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH: Well, I would like the honourable minister or you to tell me.

Mr Manzie: There is no \$2m coming to the zoo, Noel.

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH: Not now. That is quite obvious. I know that.

Mr Manzie: Deny the rumours next time.

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH: The honourable minister said that there were other major projects in the pipeline. It would be interesting to know when we will receive information about those, if this is the second of what he calls 'detailed statements'.

He said that the construction industry needs immediate assistance. I would agree with that, but not in the form that the government is planning at the moment. We know that the existing Legislative Assembly building needs repair from time to time. The cost of those repairs is on record. The building may not have the oak panelling and stained glass windows which we would all like and we may be making do with a building which could be considered to be rather past its prime. However, I believe that parliaments in other parts of Australia were built in times when economies were buoyant, not in times like those which we are experiencing now.

The Minister for Transport and Works said that the present Supreme Court building was completed in 1964. I can well remember the opening of that building because I attended it. He then said that it was not designed solely as a courthouse, that it is outmoded and that that is why a new Supreme Court building is needed. If that argument holds and if the new Supreme Court building also lasts for only 24 years, we will be paying for it well after it has outlived its usefulness, because the minister has said that we will be paying for it for much longer than 24 years. Will we build a new Supreme Court building every 24 years?

The Minister for Transport and Works said that accommodation pressures on Supreme Court facilities forced consideration of a new building. That is not the information which I heard very recently from somebody reasonably senior in the courts hierarchy who works in the Supreme Court building every day. I understand that there are positions for 6 Supreme Court judges, 5 of which are presently filled. I understand also that the new Supreme Court building will have accommodation for 16 Supreme Court judges. I have not had time to check this information. I am only repeating what has been told to me and I assume that my informant has some inside knowledge of the situation. I am not saying whether that person is male or female or where he or she works because that would not be fair. This person said that those who worked in the courts at the old police headquarters considered that to be quite adequate. There was a certain amount of crowding in the Supreme Court building, but that was taken care of when the police headquarters courtroom was utilised.

The minister said that the TIO intends to develop the site. That must be the site of the courthouse where the old police station was in Mitchell Street.

Mr Coulter: No, it is next door to that again, where the courthouse is now.

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH: That is what I said. You were not listening.

Mr Speaker, I sincerely hope that the honourable minister does not have responsibility for the TIO. I sincerely hope that the TIO will not build any more offices because, as I understand it, the vacancy rate in offices is still pretty high. More offices in a market which is already flooded will not help the situation at all.

In support of his argument to construct a Supreme Court building, the minister said that the President of the NT Bar Association was in favour of it. I would find that a rather weak argument. Of course the President of the Bar Association would be in favour of construction of a new Supreme Court building. Could I suggest that there might be more than a smidgin of self-interest in that statement?

Under the heading of 'Project History and Development', the minister's statement says that it took a sizeable team of people more than 14 months to reach a stage where the scheme was ready for town planning approval and the hoardings could be erected across the road. He said it has taken 14 months to get the project off the ground. That probably is so, but I am still waiting with bated breath for all of these plans to be made public so that not only the general community but other MLAs can look at them. Does the minister intend to keep them under his wing until the building is built and then show them to us?

Other honourable members have spoken about their concerns in relation to the financing of this project. This is a major issue which the government has to address if it wants honourable members to present its point of view to their constituents. I am happy to do that if the point of view is reasonable. I am independent. I listen to information and, if a point of view is reasonable, I will present it to my constituents when they ask. So far, however, the deal has been shrouded in secrecy. The Leader of the Opposition issued an invitation to the Minister for Transport and Works to visit the Mall with him tomorrow and see what the general public thinks of the project. I am inclined to agree with the Leader of the Opposition's prognostication about what such an encounter with the public would reveal. I am sure that the outcome would be similar if the minister asked people in the rural area about their views.

In conclusion, I suppose one has to be thankful for small mercies such as receiving a few crumbs from the rich man's table. That is all that the government has offered in this statement. It is not enough. We do not have enough information about the project. I believe that the government's money could have been spent to better effect in other places in the Territory, supporting primary and secondary industry, stabilising our population and supplying jobs in the construction industry in a way which would bring more benefit to the Northern Territory economy.

Mr EDE (Stuart): Mr Deputy Speaker, I move this Assembly omit all words after 'that' and insert in their stead:

the Assembly expresses its concern that the government has failed to protect the interests of the citizens of the Northern Territory in the manner in which it has conducted negotiations on the State Square deal in that:

- (1) the government has not established the need for the development;
- (2) the government has refused to provide information on the deal;
- (3) the government, by not following established tender procedures, has failed to ensure that the Territory has got the best deal for the project;
- (4) the government has failed to establish that the project has any long-term economic or social benefits; and
- (5) the government has consistently and repeatedly failed to provide the costs of the project.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I am amazed and incredibly disappointed. I hope that I can change the situation by what I have to say because, once again, we have a state of affairs which stinks to high heaven. The poor old Minister for Transport and Works has been lumbered with this project. He has to put a brave face on it because his position in the ministry is so dicey that it is only comparable to that of the member for Victoria River. He has put a brave face on it, and the Chief Minister has said a few words as well.

Usually, in debates in this House, each side provides alternate speakers with the government having a couple of extra speakers. However, on this occasion, we have seen a repetition of what occurred when the member for Araluen faced the gun and was left almost totally without support.

Mr Coulter: Get on with it.

Mr EDE: Mr Deputy Speaker, what do we have? Interjections - that is what we have!

Mr Coulter: Tell us something.

Mr EDE: I will tell him something, Mr Deputy Speaker. For the last 3 years, he has taken no notice whatsoever of what his electorate has been telling him. He has taken no notice whatsoever of what the people of the Northern Territory have told him and he has taken no notice whatsoever of what members of this House have told him. Another group of people have also been telling him a few home truths recently. The Palmerston Branch of the CLP sat him down at a recent branch meeting and gave him what-ho. They told him that, the way he was going, he would come third in the next election because he had stopped listening to anything that they ...

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! I ask the member for Stuart to address the subject matter of the statement or his amendment.

Mr EDE: Mr Deputy Speaker, as I proceed with my comments, I hope you will see the relevance of my comments about the failure of the Deputy Chief Minister, among others, to listen to the people of the Northern Territory, the members of his own party or the parliament. I am sure that the minister will take them to heart.

The Chief Minister tried to compare the State Square project with Yulara. How ridiculous! Yulara has brought tourists to the Territory. It has created jobs and it has created wealth.

Mr Coulter: Have a look at what members of your party said about Yulara.

Mr EDE: You can talk about that afterwards. Just keep quiet for a moment now.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I will tell the Deputy Chief Minister what his boss said just a few minutes ago. He said that the State Square project compares with Yulara. I am amazed that he had the gumption to mention the 2 projects in the same breath. To do so is to totally misinterpret the economic facts.

The Chief Minister said that the Leader of the Opposition had intimated some doubts about the value of the State Square project. Mr Deputy Speaker, let me tell him that I have no doubts whatsoever about the value of this project. It has none. We can talk about the lack of facilities in this parliament building. Let us compare them with the House of Commons where not even a quarter of the members can find seats in the House. Does the British government respond by tearing down the House of Commons and replacing it with a high-rise building? No, it does not. In this building, we all have seats to sit on. We have tables and chairs. We have air-conditioning. We have offices upstairs, an Opposition room, committee rooms and a library. Certainly, we do not have a dining room. The facilities in the strangers' bar are not quite up to scratch and we only have 1 television set. If those are the shortcomings which have led the government to decide to spend \$100m on a new Parliament House, I would have to question its priorities very seriously.

The Chief Minister talked about raising \$20m in 1988-89, \$40m in the following year and another \$20m in the year after that. He went on to give an explanation of how the \$100m cost would remain \$100m. I really cannot

understand what he was trying to say. Was he talking about the opportunity cost? Was he talking about a discounted net present value? Is he confusing the discounted cost due to inflation over a period and trying to bring it back into current dollars? Is he forgetting about the real interest component which is added to inflation to give the nominal effect? Is he forgetting about arbitrage and its effect? Is he totally confused? Not only was he incoherent on radio the other day, he waffled on here for about 30 minutes without giving any indication of what he was on about. I think that he just does not know.

Why is this important, Mr Deputy Speaker? I will tell you why. The other day, I did an exercise on the subject of the capital-indexed bonds that the Chief Minister spoke about the other day. I looked at the years from 1970 to 1987 because I had the figures on nominal interest rates, inflation and real interest rates for that period. I gave myself 2 sums. In the first sum, using an amount of \$100m in 1970, the capital-indexed bond rate and the actual inflation rate of the day, I found after allowing for indexation that the real interest rate would be only 3%. In the second sum, I used the figure of 12.75% as nominal interest. Although the nominal interest rate was actually 6.86%, I decided to set it at the higher level. The difference in the amount to be repaid at the end of the period was in the vicinity of \$200m in the case of the indexed bonds, rather than the 12.75%.

Mr Perron: Discount it back to 1970 values.

Mr EDE: Mr Deputy Speaker, I started with \$100m in 1970 and I ended up with a \$200m difference in 1987. That is an extra \$200m, even with the purchase of the bonds referred to by the Chief Minister. I worry about his inability to understand the business of the \$100m.

An item in tonight's news illustrates the importance of this matter. Mr Milatos has said that it is possible that his \$40m project will have to be deferred to some future date. He said that there are 2 problems, 1 of which is the development of the airport. In a previous sittings, I told this government that it had the option of using some of its loan funds to carry out the airport redevelopment. The other problem referred to by Mr Milatos was that the local economy is in incredible strife because the Northern Territory government is so tied up with the State Square project. He says he cannot get anybody from interstate to invest in the Northern Territory. That shows how the \$100m being spent in 1 area is creating problems elsewhere in the economy, indeed, so much so that a \$40m project has been lost.

During the August sittings, I challenged the Chief Minister to debate this issue on the hustings in the Flynn by-election campaign. It seemed that he would take up my challenge but he went to water because he realised, even then, that this project has no economic or social benefits.

Mr Perron: That is drivel.

Mr EDE: Mr Deputy Speaker, if he wants to say that, fair enough.

For a project to be worth while, it should either create some wealth in the long term or contribute to the welfare of the people of the Northern Territory. Mr Deputy Speaker, I put it to you that a new Parliament House will do neither. As the member for Sadadeen said tonight and as I have said before, it is like a drunk going to the bottle for a bit of short-term glee, irrespective of the long-term hangover that will result. The Chief Minister said that some of the alternative projects which have been mooted would not

stand up to Loans Council requirements. I am quite sure that the flood mitigation scheme in Alice Springs would stand up under the council's guidelines, and that would have cost us only \$39m.

Let us go on a bit further and look at the cost of servicing this loan, because that is an opportunity cost of the project. The amounts which will have to be used to repay this loan could be used for other development around the Territory. Let me give you a few examples of that, Mr Deputy Speaker. Some of the funds could be used to develop new export crops based on our natural bush foods. With the assistance of genetic engineering, we could be extending horticulture into the desert areas and making this place the food bowl of Asia. We could be setting up infrastructure for cartage and storage and tackling the problems which our horticultural industry faces in supplying the Asian market. The money could be used to develop onshore facilities to process the whole of the northern fishery's product instead of allowing the vast bulk of it to go overseas. We could redevelop our capacity to slaughter our own beef in the Northern Territory and to process the by-products. The money could be used to establish a tanning industry, not only for cattle hides but also for crocodile skins, and to assist the industry to utilise the leather in the footwear and fashion industries. There are many areas in which the money could be used to support projects which would have very real long-term economic and social benefits.

If we particularly wanted to target construction, we could use the money to house every unhoused person in my electorate. We could house something like 1400 people. That would be possible because we have not utilised our total drawing rights under the Commonwealth State Housing Agreement in the last year. Instead of using the money to provide houses to Territorians, we decided to hold back and put it into the State Square project. It is disgusting!

Mr Collins: It is a house, I suppose.

Mr EDE: Yes, it is a wonder that the government did not apply for \$1-for-\$1 funding under the Commonwealth State Housing Agreement and call it Aboriginal housing because my honourable colleagues happen to sit in it for 25 days a year.

I ask myself why the project is proceeding. Is it because the new Chief Minister found that the government was somehow locked into the proposal and that there was no way of getting out? If that is the case, why doesn't he come clean and let us know? Has he made commitments to other people in the Northern Territory or newcomers to the Northern Territory, people who have hundreds of millions of dollars to invest in other proposals? Is this some sort of trade-off? Are we paying for trade-offs? Or is it simply that members opposite are so arrogant, uncaring and full of themselves that they really believe that they can get away with anything?

This project will show that members opposite cannot get away with it. It will show them individually. That is one of the reasons why I want some more government members to rise in this debate. I have not heard from members who represent marginal seats. I want to hear some members from the northern suburbs stand up and speak so that we can circulate their remarks in their electorates.

Mr Coulter: Where does the Minister for Transport and Works come from?

Mr EDE: The minister may be able to get around it by saying that Cabinet forced him to act. That is the only way he will get around it. I want to hear from the member for Jingili and the member for Wanguri. Let them defend the project. I would like to hear them try to justify the expenditure so that I can circulate their comments in their electorates.

At page 26 of his statement, the minister says that 'federal Treasurer Paul Keating's assessment of the project is clearly that it is not a waste of taxpayers' money but a development well worth supporting'. What a load of bloody rubbish, Mr Deputy Speaker!

Mr Dale: A point of order, Mr Deputy Speaker! I ask that the honourable member withdraw that word.

Mr EDE: I withdraw, Mr Deputy Speaker.

It is a load of absolute rubbish, Mr Deputy Speaker. Basically, the federal government said: 'It is your decision. If you want to go ahead with it, you will wear the political cost. It is up to you'. That was the effect of what was said. The federal government did not want to hear the CLP government screaming about how its hands were tied and how the awful federal government would not let it get the economy going. It simply took the position that the Northern Territory government could take its decision and wear the consequences. Even if the federal Treasurer had supported it, this opposition certainly would not have done so. It is a bad project.

It is a scandal that, while thousands of Territorians lack adequate housing, while thousands of Territorians suffer through meeting exorbitant electricity charges and while businesses labour under the same charges, we sit around in this Chamber and talk of spending up to \$100m on our own comfort. The CLP will wear this scandal. Every member opposite knows that and the people in the community know it. They will extract their pound of flesh because they know the other side of it too, which is that they will wear it, and not only in terms of the repayment costs. When honourable members go outside the Northern Territory to seek investment funds for development, to argue that we need a fair go and that we require higher per capita funding, the first thing that will be thrown back at us is: 'You only need it so you can build yourselves another \$100m white elephant'. We will all wear it and I will ensure personally that every member opposite wears it to the fullest extent. I tell the Minister for Industries and Development that he personally is wearing it in his own electorate. He will wear it right through until the next election, after which he will be back to washing dishes.

Mr TUXWORTH (Barkly): Mr Deputy Speaker, there are some who say that this will go down as one of the infamous projects of the Northern Territory but I will give it a little more decorum than that. I think I will call it a 14 carat joke. One needs to put it into its whole perspective to really understand why it is held in such disdain in the community. Honourable members would recall that, 10 or 11 months ago, this project was mooted by the Chief Minister as a \$300m Parliament House, Supreme Court building and tower office block with gardens with hot and cold running wallabies in the bushes - you name it and we had it. To propose, at that stage, a project that would offer up to 20 storeys of office space in a town that is awash with office space was enough to make everybody cringe. It was proposed as a project that we should build because Mr Anderson would pay for it. All we had to do was pay it off. It was simple for us.

However, when anybody tried to find out how much we would pay, over what period and what the interest rates were likely to be, the shutters came down. There was absolutely no information made available on how much would be paid. There has not been any information made available in the past. 31 pages of bumf have been served up to the House today and there is nothing in that to indicate how much the people of the Territory will pay over the duration of the project. Whatever the honourable members opposite think, the facts are that people expect to know.

Mr Deputy Speaker, 9 months down the road, 1 Chief Minister has been sent to the cold showers for the way that he was handling the project and we still do not have any information that will enable members to say to people in their electorates or to the business community or to people around Australia: 'This is what is happening. It is a good deal'. I ask honourable members opposite how many of them would put the 31 pages that were served up today in an envelope and post it around Australia to all the investment houses, the bankers and the business people who are likely to come to the Territory and say: 'This is the type of project we are undertaking in the Territory. Why don't you join in and get a piece of the action'. No one in his right mind would put a 'With Compliments' slip on it to let them know where it came from.

It has been reduced now to a project that has no office block and no private funding - a \$100m Supreme Court building and Parliament House. To give an idea of the sort of tar and cement you get for \$100m, the Beaufort and the NML Building in Cavenagh Street would be about \$100m-worth of real estate. The Sheraton and the TIO together would be about \$100m. There is no way that we can justify to the people in the community \$100m-worth of tar and cement for judges and politicians. You can paint it in any colour you like and they will still think that it stinks. As some honourable members have commented, and we spoke about it this morning in the housing debate, many people are doing it tough in the community. They cannot pay their rent and their electricity bills. They are not the least bit interested in hearing about politicians and judges who want to have splendid accommodation to the value of \$100m.

The minister complained that people like me - I accept the responsibility and I will keep it up so he had better get used to it - have misled the public and have caused confusion. No one has misled the public. You cannot mislead the public because you cannot get the information from the minister. I would like to read into Hansard a diary note that I made on 24 August 1988:

A briefing was conducted by Fred Finch on State Square and the Anderson project. Present were Denis Collins, myself, Wes Lanhupuy and Noel Padgham-Purich. The meeting started at 8.30 am. The minister stated that Mr Anderson had submitted a number of plans for the project, however none was ever accepted. The project has been accepted in principle with the total cost of \$87m for the buildings and fittings. The construction period will be over 4 years with structural developments and with outfitting of the buildings. These figures do not allow for inflation. The figures were arrived at by Mr Anderson with Transport and Works and are being reviewed by the Parliament House Committee.

The Supreme Court is to start immediately and will be located near the Administrator's office and will involve the demolition of half the Ward and Brennan Buildings. Mitchell Street is to be closed. Parliament House is to start construction between the end of 1989 and the beginning of 1990. Tipperary Developments will be the project

manager and will receive about 10% commission for the total project. The minister has undertaken to make a statement on the matter at the next sittings.

Mr Deputy Speaker, the next sittings have come and gone. Here we are in the last sittings of the year and we have had 31 pages of nothing more than what is in that briefing note of 24 August. However, there have been a few throwaway lines. The Chief Minister went on ABC radio and said the project will be for \$87m and the landscaping will be \$13m, which will bring it up to \$100m. If you want to put the fear of God into the community, go out and tell people that the government is embarking on a \$13m landscaping project for a Parliament House and a Supreme Court building. The minister might have a very clear vision of exactly what is to happen but he appears to be the only person in the Northern Territory who has it. When the Chief Minister says things like that on radio, it frightens the living daylights out of people.

There was no information available earlier in the year and there is still none available today. We have no plans or specifications. We do not even have a pretty model that we can look at. There has been no formal tendering process and there is no supervisory role by the government in this project. The role of Transport and Works has been compromised pretty easily. It is now on some project committee instead of fulfilling the normal role that it would have in supervising a project so that the government's interests are protected. It has had its fingernails well and truly pulled out.

The role of locals in the project still has not been satisfied. It is not enough for the minister to say that it is in the government's political interests for the locals to have a piece of the action. I was one of the people who had the opportunity to meet the 5 construction companies who put in a bid to be the project managers. What came out of that meeting was very interesting. I expected them to be all gung-ho for the project but they think it is a joke. They know the Northern Territory cannot afford it and they do not know what the government thinks it is doing building it. I asked them what they were doing in there. Their response was: 'We are not stupid. If the government is silly enough to throw away \$100m, we will take it off it'. It becomes a pretty futile exercise in the end.

However, the government cannot complain about the fact that it is being hammered about this project because the facts are that there is no information that would satisfy even the scantiest inquiry. The building industry in Darwin is very sore about the way the T10 project was developed and how outside interests dominated the supply of goods in relation to that project. What people in the business community are saying is that it does not matter a damn what the government says about who will get the work, it will go to whomever the contractors want to give it to. It happened with the T10 project. The government owns the T10 and it could have said that it wanted local content.

I would like to put in a word for the people south of Berrimah. We all accept that Darwin would like an injection to give it a bit of a lift. That is fair enough, but just about every community in the Northern Territory is suffering the same pain that Darwin is suffering and they too would like to have a bit of a lift. They would enjoy the benefit of some capital works or some ongoing government funding to see little things happen in their community that would make their business sector a little stronger, the future of their community more viable, their tourist industry expand or whatever. They are not stupid. People south of the Berrimah Line can see that this is one great rip-off. Everybody in Darwin will see this project constructed - some will

enjoy it - and people south of Berrimah will spend the next 30 years paying for it even though they will not get a thing out of it.

Members interjecting.

Mr TUXWORTH: The facts are that the taxpayers pay for all the projects in the Northern Territory. It is not an unreasonable expectation on the part of the people south of Berrimah that, if there is \$100m to be borrowed and spent, it should be spent right throughout the Northern Territory. However, we will have 101 excuses as to why we should not do that.

If honourable members think that that is not an issue, they should cast their minds back to the by-election in Flynn. I doorknocked every house in Flynn with the member for Flynn and listened very closely to what the people were saying. If the government members think that the Anderson project is not an issue south of Berrimah, I urge them to think it, enjoy it, revel in it and make it last the distance. It is alive and well south of Berrimah and any member who walks around the Territory will tell you that you do not have to ask people what they think about the project. They barrel up to you in the streets to tell you. They cannot get at you quickly enough. The honourable minister said that we should make inquiries of industry and ask the workers over the road what they think. We do not have to ask anybody. People cannot stop us quickly enough to see what we are doing about stopping it. They ask why it is going ahead and why something is not being done about it.

The honourable minister said that the Multiplex bid was some hundreds of thousands of dollars cheaper. That may well be the case but there was no tender process and no one believes it for a minute. If the honourable member wants to peddle that sort of nonsense, he should realise that is exactly why the community is so up in arms about the project. He went on to say that local builders were concerned at Multiplex arriving on their patch. The builders to whom I spoke were not concerned about Multiplex coming. There were 5 of them in town and competition was tough. Their view was that they have been here for 20 years. Between them, they have a capital investment in the town of a couple of hundred million dollars. They employ up to 400 or 500 people between them and sometimes more when things are very active. They felt that the least they could expect was a piece of the action or a chance to have a go. They were not even going to get that and that was made plain to them at the meeting.

I would like to touch for a moment on the right of Mr Warren Anderson to conduct this project. It has been stated that Mr Anderson is receiving \$1.7m. The minister was concerned that it was being called a spotter's fee. Mr Speaker, you can dress it up however you like but Warren Anderson is receiving \$1.7m for very little because those 2 projects, the Supreme Court building and the Parliament House, have been on the government's forward program since at least 1984 for one of them and 1985 or 1986 for the other. It is very hard to convince people in the electorate who are aware of that fact that somebody came along in the middle of the night on a white horse and said: 'I have a brand new project for you. It will cost you only \$100m and I will not make very much out of it. I am really doing it because of my commitment to the Territory'. Pigs will fly to the moon, Mr Speaker.

The electorate is most suspicious about the whole arrangement. There is absolutely no reason for Mr Anderson to be involved in this project at all. We now find that he has no money in it. We are borrowing money in the normal course of events to fund the project. Why in the name of goodness Mr Anderson is involved in this project at all beats anybody's imagination. I say to the

honourable minister that he can give Mr Anderson as much of a wrap as he likes in the community, but I would like him to understand that there is no one in the community who believes he has any prior right to be in it at all. If there are to be 2 buildings built, and we are to spend \$100m that we will borrow in the normal course of events, let us have an open tender. Let him take a 'design and construct' approach if it makes him feel better, but he cannot get away with trying to convince people that Mr Anderson thought of some fantastic deal that will save the Territory's economy.

Another thing needs to be explained and it cannot be explained by the minister at this stage. It will be explained only when piles of documentation have been put on the table. How will the fixed price be guaranteed? No one believes that. If the government members think that the community is swallowing that, then let them think it, but the public thinks it is a rort. Various statements have been made about rise and fall. The minute I read out a moment ago said that the project did not cover inflation. That is not a fixed-price arrangement, and people want to know exactly what the arrangements are. If the minister does not want to make details of the arrangements available for the public to satisfy themselves, then he will continue to be beaten up pretty regularly in respect of the paucity of information surrounding this project.

There is 1 last thing that I will say before my time expires. The honourable minister mentioned that the financial arrangements had not been settled and that the government was looking at 30-day to 180-day promissory notes. That suggestion has already gone through the business community. It went through like an electric current going from one end of their bodies to the other: borrowing short and lending long. This country has a history of debacles where people borrowed short and lent long. No one knows what the minister means by that, and I would simply say that it is not a bad time for him to give a pretty clear indication of exactly how this project is to be funded. There are so many unanswered questions now and there are so many thousands of people in the community who are opposed to the project that it is time we got the answers out on the table so that everybody can be satisfied that the project is squeaky clean.

Mr COULTER (Industries and Development): Mr Speaker, I will not take up much time in this debate. I cannot understand why the member for Barkly should be so upset. If this project will bring about the downfall of this government, if it is so unpopular, why is he protesting? He is a long-term planner. Why isn't he rejoicing in the streets? I will tell you why, Mr Speaker. He knows what this project will do. The jobs that they are talking about in terms of accommodation for the 25 of us or for the judges is not the issue. It is for the concretors and the suppliers of the materials. He knows exactly what this will do because there is no greater multiplier effect than that created by the construction industry.

It involves the plumbers, painters, plasterers, tilers, landscapers, concretors, aluminium window fixers and furniture suppliers. When times are tough, there is no project that can provide the multiplier effects that the construction industry can, and he knows that. He knows what will happen at Winnellie. That is the reason why he is protesting about our going ahead with it. If it will see us thrown out of government, he does not have any worries at all. Why does he stand up and can it constantly? Why isn't he saying that this is the greatest thing that ever happened to the Territory Nationals? Because he knows what it will do for the Territory economy, that is why. He does not need that, and that is why he is in here today. I have been through the Parliamentary Record shelves this afternoon. They are full of the sort of statements that we have just heard from the member for Barkly.

The Leader of the Opposition mentioned Yulara, and we heard the interjection from the Chief Minister. Let me read into Hansard again from a debate. The speaker is the member for Millner:

You may remember, Mr Speaker, that the government hid those commitments through various inflated payments for the assorted range of government buildings and responsibilities in the Yulara village. From memory, the government was paying in the vicinity of \$2m in rent for the police station premises at Yulara. The opposition discovered that the total government commitment to Yulara, in its first year of operation, was in the order of \$7m last year. We heard a report from the Chief Minister which indicated ...

At that point, Mr Perron interjected saying that the Yulara agreements had been tabled in the Assembly. The member for Millner went on to say:

Yes, the Yulara agreements were tabled but it was not possible to determine from the information the extent of the government's commitment. We spent hours ...

Mr Perron interjected: 'Ask questions'. The member for Millner went on:

Here we go again. In every debate on this particular matter, like Pavlov's dog, the honourable minister says 'ask questions'. That is his normal response in this sort of debate. I will give an example of the effectiveness of asking questions. Let us look at the series of questions that the Leader of the Opposition asked the Chief Minister on the subject of government finance, overseas trips undertaken by office-holding members of the Legislative Assembly.

Mr Speaker, have you heard this before? It was reported on Wednesday 26 March 1986. The same conversation took place in this Chamber today. Nothing changes and, as I said, the public record is full of it.

In terms of providing jobs, let us go back to 16 November 1983. We talk about tourist development providing meaningful full-time employment. This is from a transcript of the ABC News:

The Prime Minister, Mr Hawke, is expected to announce in Darwin on Friday plans for the new tourist development in parts of Kakadu National Park in the Northern Territory. The tourist development is expected to create jobs for about 1300 people and take 5 or 6 years to complete.

That was 1983 and, 5 years later, that development has not even started. Debates of this kind have been held in this Assembly time and time again. The fact is that the government is getting on with the job. Let us hear the argument then from the small traders once this project starts.

Mr Collins went on and said that the development proposal for Kakadu, involving expenditure and tourist infrastructure of \$40m, was a significant breakthrough in the Territory economy.

And it did not happen. This will happen because we have the commitment to it and we will do it. We will do it and, regardless of what the member for Barkly says, it will happen, it will create jobs and it will stimulate the Northern Territory's economy.

I am sure that most of the information that the member for Barkly contributed to this debate will be answered by the honourable minister when he rises to his feet, but let me tell the honourable member that his generalities, such as that \$100m for the Sheraton and the TIO building combined together, are nowhere near the mark. They are not even ballpark figures. The Beaufort Hotel ran out to a considerable amount of money. Originally, it was set up at about \$30m and there were huge cost overruns. But the NML Building and the Beaufort together, \$100m? Nowhere near it. I hope that, when the honourable minister rises to his feet, he will address all the other inaccuracies that the member for Barkly put to this House this afternoon.

Members of the opposition have talked about infrastructure. They are on record many times as saying that they support capital works. Unlike the CLP government, they have said that the ALP will create many capital works programs because infrastructure is required in the Territory. They said that in their last policy launch speech. Today, they run away from it at 100 mph, as they did in relation to the railway, the pipeline, the Sheratons and everything else that we have ever done. There is nothing new in this, as the debate that we have witnessed in this House today and the interjections between the Chief Minister and the Leader of the Opposition have demonstrated. In 1986, they were saying the same thing, and they will be saying it from the opposition benches in 1996, whereas we will be doing it and we will be getting on with it.

History is full of this type of thing. On 18 November 1983, we heard: 'The Territory ALP team successfully pressed for the new Darwin Airport terminal'. At the moment, Mr Collins is on record with Mr Snowdon saying: 'The airport will be built'. Ask them when it will be built, Mr Speaker. The federal government is not doing it and yet we are being condemned because we have the conviction to get out there and do something. That is what Territory development has been all about and we on this side of the Chamber are proud of it. There is nothing new in the contributions members of the opposition make to debates of this kind. They have said the same thing time and time again, and they will continue in that vein. As I said, we will be getting on with the job and we will be carrying out this major infrastructure development. From it will flow the greatest multiplier effect that can be obtained to stimulate the economy.

There are many projects proposed for 1989. Mr Speaker, talk to the building industry about proposals for further infrastructural development within the TDZ. Look at some of the things that are happening in the mining industry. In fact, tonight the Chamber of Mines is holding its Annual General Meeting. Look at the way the Northern Territory government has turned this public-sector-led economy into a private-sector-led economy. Have a look at the gasfields and the oilfields and what is happening out there. We need some interim, stabilising effect on the Territory economy and this project will provide that.

I would love to stand in Palmerston against the member for Stuart and see whether he or I came third. However, that is irrelevant to this debate. What the people in the community want is crunchiness. They want people who will take decisions and stick by them, not people who will stand up on any street corner and fight against any issue that happens to come along simply for the sake of knocking that issue. That is what the people want and what they respect, and the CLP government will provide it to them.

Mr FLOREANI (Flynn): Mr Speaker, like the previous speaker, I will not speak for very long. I do not intend to cover the areas that other speakers have spoken on. However, I think it is important that we have the Alice Springs perspective presented again. As you will realise, I have knocked on a great many doors in the last few months and, in the entire Flynn electorate, I do not recall 1 person who was in favour of this project. I would like to highlight one of the questions that government members will have to face when they are in the outlying areas. For instance, the sum of money that the government intends to spend is very large yet the minister's statement indicates that there is no real, pressing need to spend this money.

The statement indicates that the prime reason for this development is that the construction industry is suffering. I would like to inform the minister that the Alice Springs industry is suffering also. His first reaction, no doubt, will be disbelief but I will tell him a few things. We had 2 steel suppliers in Alice Springs, but BGJ Steel has closed down. We had 3 hardware places and we are down to 2 now because Banner Hardware has closed down. Let the minister talk to ABM and the concrete suppliers and he will find that tonnages are down dramatically. Where is our share? What does he intend to do for Alice Springs? That is the question that he will have to answer.

Mr Perron: If that is your argument, then that is fine.

Mr FLOREANI: All right. There are other questions. The Chief Minister cannot even give us a bottom line figure. He says it is \$100m. Why doesn't he give us some indication? Surely his experts can give us an indication of the total cost and over what period of time.

Mr Perron: \$100m.

Mr FLOREANI: Come on! \$100m plus interest. What is the bottom line? What is the end result and what is the end payout? Then let us ask the Chief Minister to explain how he came to pick Tipperary Developments? What happened to the tender process? No one has even raised that. No one has answered it. My reaction is that, because of the lack of information, the whole project sounds like a hick turnout. It really does.

I reiterate that I have spoken to a great many Alice Springs people and I have not found 1 supporter of the project. There is no way that I could support the project.

Mr HATTON (Nightcliff): Mr Speaker, I rise to support the statement presented by the Minister for Transport and Works and to oppose the amendment proposed by the member for Stuart. In doing so I note that, having made 1 of their rare contributions, Bugs Bunny and the Salami Kid have now left the Chamber. Mr Speaker, I suppose they will return at some stage. Maybe tomorrow they may grace the Chamber during question time.

Mr SMITH: A point of order, Mr Speaker! I have no idea who the honourable member was referring to but obviously it was a member of this House. To refer to any member of this House as 'Bugs Bunny' is unparliamentary and he should withdraw it.

Mr COULTER: Mr Speaker, I would like to speak to the point of order. The Leader of the Opposition was not even in the Chamber at the time.

Mr Smith: I have eyes and ears everywhere.

Mr COULTER: To trapeze in and out of here and make such judgments is hardly his right.

Mr SPEAKER: Could the honourable member advise whether he used such language in referring to other honourable members?

Mr HATTON: The term 'Bugs Bunny', Mr Speaker?

Mr Smith: Yes, and what was the kid?

Mr SPEAKER: The member for Nightcliff will withdraw that reference.

Mr HATTON: Yes, Mr Speaker, I withdraw the reference to Bugs Bunny.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The member for Nightcliff will withdraw the reference without comment.

Mr HATTON: I withdraw, Mr Speaker.

Mr Speaker, the only way one can deal with the nonsensical, repetitive distortions emanating from the members opposite is by developing one's sense of humour. Quite frankly, were one to do otherwise, one would end up with ulcers caused by the frustration of trying to present information and facts to people who have absolutely no intention of listening to them. Even if they listen to them, they have every intention of working their best to distort them. We have heard further examples of that tonight. I will let the Hansard record speak for itself in relation to what the Leader of the Opposition and the member for Barkly said about the history of the project. For months, we have had discussion and public comment about confusion and secrecy in respect of the project. One of the problems we have had with this project is that, at each stage, we had the audacity to tell the community what stage the discussions had reached. In the process of evolving the project, situations changed. Obviously, the opposition thinks that was totally wrong. We should have kept it to ourselves until we had the final picture for presentation to the community.

The member for Flynn asked where Alice Springs' share was. I would ask the member for Flynn to have a look at the number of initiatives that have been put in place this year in central Australia in respect of work at Yulara and Kings Canyon. In Alice Springs itself, there has been upgrading of housing and the construction of a new police centre to try to assist industry in Alice Springs. The suppliers to whom he referred can and should benefit from any works in the Centralian region if they are prepared to chase the market. The extra housing construction at Yulara, for example, is being built by a good Alice Springs building firm which, I am sure, will use local suppliers and subcontractors from Alice Springs. The firm does a great deal of work in the Top End but it is based in Alice Springs.

It does not matter what you tell the member for Barkly. His answer to anything that you tell him is: 'I do not believe you'. You waste your time talking to the member for Barkly about anything because he simply scoffs, gets that funny look on his face and says: 'I do not believe it and neither will anyone else'. We can discount whatever he says. I find it amazing that he is talking about tendering procedures. I ask him to explain why he did not go to public tender in relation to the construction of the gas pipeline. That is being paid for totally by the taxpayers of the Territory via the price we are paying for the transportation of the gas through electricity charges. That was not put out to public tender. A consortium was brought together, step by

step. I am not saying it was wrong. I am simply saying that the approach of the member for Barkly is hypocritical.

The Cullen Bay proposal also was not put to public tender. It was a direct sale. There is a proposal for a public ferry terminal that will be built within that project. It was not proposed that that would go to separate public tender. Certainly, the government will ensure that its interests are protected. There are a multitude of similar examples of projects throughout the Northern Territory with which the member for Barkly was actively involved as a decision maker in his past life when he was on the good side. At that time, he thought that it was totally proper and argued that case in this Chamber many times.

Mr Speaker, I would like now to deal with some of the more specific issues that were raised. According to the member for Stuart, the \$40m Milatos project is being lost because the Northern Territory government is trying to raise \$100m for the State Square project. That is balderdash, Mr Speaker! The reason it is not going ahead now is that room rates and occupancy rates, and market development will not justify the construction of a hotel until 1990, and they never did.

Mr Ede: That is not what he said.

Mr Smith: Never did?

Mr HATTON: Not in my view, Mr Speaker, and I have never said otherwise. I have said also that, if somebody wants to build a hotel and take the risk himself, that is a matter for him. If the project generally is good, we should not stand in its way. I never believed that it would go ahead before 1990 because I did not believe that the market growth justified construction before that date.

Airports are vital projects for Darwin and for Alice Springs. As other honourable members have said, I would love to see those constructed. It would provide a major stimulus for Alice Springs and Darwin. As they have always been, they are responsibilities of the federal government. All I am asking is when the FAC will do something about both of those projects. They are needed.

We heard about one-seventh of a railway line. We would have a \$100m railway line to Ti Tree. We would need a major expansion of the grape industry in Ti Tree to fill up the train.

Mr Smith: Knock, knock, knock!

Mr HATTON: Mr Speaker, whilst I certainly have nothing against Ti Tree, I really cannot see the federal government approving semi-government borrowings to be spent on one-seventh of a railway line or on houses that people will not live in.

The Leader of the Opposition talked about the removal of payroll tax for 2 years. That would be fine for 2 years. We would have to pay it off and we would have nothing to show for it. Within the next 5 years or so, we would have to build a new Supreme Court building and, certainly within the next 10 years, we would have to build a new Parliament House. That capital works injection is needed now. If we frittered the 100m away now, where would we get the next \$100m to do the job?

We can do it now when there is a downturn in construction activity and a need for a stimulus to the Darwin economy to fill the gap between now and 1991 when the defence build-up begins. If we have this project now, we will be able to hold in place the existing infrastructure and not see it dwindle away. Surely the opposition must support activity that will keep in place the business infrastructure until the defence build-up of the 1990s. The opposition knows that no construction is proposed on that before 1991.

What will we do between now and 1991 for major construction work in Darwin? The Leader of the Opposition says that we should hold off until the 1990s when there will be plenty of work around as a result of the defence build-up etc. By the time that all happened, we would have let everything fall to pieces because we stood on our hands over an argument about \$100m today. Unlike the member for Stuart, I was in the room when the federal Treasurer accepted and recognised the need for that stimulus for Darwin. He supported the project and semi-government loan global limit approval was given to enable this project to proceed. In that respect, the federal Treasurer recognised the importance of providing some fiscal stimulus now. At least, he recognised the reality of what was being proposed.

A Supreme Court building and a Parliament House are important public buildings just as museums, hospitals and schools are important public buildings. It is very easy to grab short-term political capital by saying to the community that this money is being spent for 25 politicians to sit for 30 or 35 days a year. It is great political capital but it is irresponsible. They are not arguing about its price or its size.

A parliamentary committee of this Assembly is determining the size, shape and design of the Parliament House. Honourable members opposite ought to remember that these 2 buildings will not be the result of some fancy 'design and construct' development whereby tenders are let and the prettiest design and lowest price is chosen. These are important and symbolic public buildings. This parliament reserves the right to approve the design, the size and the style of its building through the New Parliament House Committee. There has been ongoing development of the design with the developer and his architects and local architects and consultants. There has been ongoing consultation with the New Parliament House Committee. If a precinct is to be developed, there needs to be a similarity of design and style between those 2 buildings and Government House and the other historic buildings in the precinct area. Considerable time and money was invested in this project prior to any commitment being given. The \$1.75m referred to by the honourable minister recognised that time and cost when the decision was taken to go ahead.

I refer the member for MacDonnell to page 12 of the circulated statement. The costs on this project in percentage terms, when compared to normal project costs proposed by Transport and Works, indicate quite clearly that the costs are well within reasonable bounds. We are talking of 17.75% as compared to 17% to 19%. That is developer's fees, consultants' fees, head contractor's fees - the whole lot - and the costs are comparable. We have a control over the costs.

There are 2 unique aspects to this project. First, because of the project management group, for the first time in the history of the Northern Territory, we have injected a process that is ensuring real local involvement beyond the head contractor. It is beyond the Civil and Civic contractor who claims he is a local but does not give support to the local subcontractors and the local suppliers. That was one of the complaints about the TIO building. We wanted

to ensure that that did not happen. There is a process to ensure that that cannot happen.

Secondly, we are working to fix the price. The price cannot be finally agreed and the documentation signed until the New Parliament House Committee determines the final design. It is very easy to ask where the price is when everyone in this Chamber knows the New Parliament House Committee is still going through the process of finalising the design for the Parliament House. When that is determined, provided the government - and that includes this parliament - does not turn around and change the design criteria for Tipperary Developments, any cost overruns are at the risk of Mr Anderson or his company. Unlike the situation with the new Parliament House in Canberra, where costs blew out from \$250m to \$1000m-plus - and the principal reasons for that were excessive wage claims, demarcation and slowdowns on work - all that is the responsibility, in this case, of the developer. He wears that risk. We do not wear any of that. We do not wear inflation or escalation risks. The only changes will come from conscious decisions taken by ourselves to change the design in the middle of construction. We should wear those costs if we do not have that finalised and fixed because it would be unfair to change our minds and give the developer new instructions that add to his cost without reimbursing him for that.

Beyond that, Northern Territory people are protected against the sort of inflationary costs that have always followed long-term contracts of 2, 3 or 4 years duration. It is not proposed that any rise and fall clause be built into these contracts. That is what is meant by 'fixed price', and that is where this is fundamentally different to general contracting provisions.

Mr Smith: That is why it is so expensive. They should have sorted out all these contingencies right at the beginning.

Mr HATTON: Yes, that is right. We have to work that out so that we know in advance exactly what we are paying for and fix it.

Mr Smith: Windfall profits coming up.

Mr HATTON: Mr Speaker, that is it: he will try to find a hole in that now. You can hear him whispering: 'Can I use the term "windfall profit"?'. We rely on expertise within the public service, within Treasury and with our own independent advisers, quantity surveyors etc, to advise us on the justification for the price being put to us to ensure that we are securing the best price that we can for the Territory people.

This has been a process of evolution and, at every stage of decision making, the people have been kept informed. That has given an opportunity to members of the opposition to generate confusion, uncertainty, doubt and distaste for this project in the minds of the community, and they have taken that opportunity. Shame on them for that. Plenty of documentation has been circulated in this House. There is this document which was presented in the budget. Other documents and briefing notes were circulated to the business community in May and June this year. There has been plenty of documentation explaining why we are undertaking this project, what the fiscal stimulatory role of this project will be and what we have been doing to obtain a project that was affordable. It is something that will have to be done at some stage. If it is put in place now, it will fill the trough in the construction industry and maintain the infrastructure here to enable other projects to proceed with local involvement in the 1990s.

Mr BELL (MacDonnell): Mr Speaker, the member for Nightcliff referred to the former life of the member for Barkly and I was delighted by that particular reference because it supported what has been the view of some commentators: that the member for Barkly has fortunately gone through a reincarnation and emerged as the leader of the Territory Nationals. Unfortunately, the member for Nightcliff is still in purgatory and is yet to undergo reincarnation.

That speech was extraordinary and not only for that particular reference to the member for Barkly. It was extraordinary because there are few people who arrive in purgatory and then feel obliged to defend the cause of their downfall, because that was exactly what the member for Nightcliff was doing. It really was a gallant effort and I must admit that, since the member for Nightcliff has been relegated to the backbench, he has been behaving like the best No 8 batsman that I have ever seen. He is always there. Week after week, the team might only bat down to No 6 but, when he has a chance, he gets in there and has a go. I think that is highly commendable. But, by golly, it must be a bitter pill to swallow for him to have to get up in this Assembly and defend quite so strongly exactly the cause of his demise. There is no doubt in my mind, and I do not think there is any doubt in the minds of the electorate, that it was this very project that was the cause of the demise of the former Chief Minister, the member for Nightcliff.

The Leader of the Opposition spelt out at great length the various - I think he got up to mark 75 - forms of the Anderson project that have been presented to the Northern Territory public over the last 12 months. There can be little doubt that, finally, the Country Liberal Party backbench sniffed the wind, worked out what the electorate was thinking and decided that Steve had to go, and go he did.

In spite of the efforts of the new Chief Minister to transmogrify the Anderson project into the State Square project, I am afraid that, once again, the member for Barkly is on a political winner. The member for Barkly knows well and truly that the punters do not like it and the punters happen to be right. Let me tell you, Mr Speaker, that it is very interesting that the whole project has been hand-balled across to little Freddy. I withdraw that, Mr Speaker. It has been hand-balled across to the Minister for Transport and Works by a Chief Minister who has found it a little bit too hot to handle.

If they were in any doubt about that, those people who are viewing the 7.30 Report will be able to convince themselves by the fact that neither the Chief Minister nor the Minister for Transport and Works was able to attend to defend their comments in quite the fulsome and fulminating manner that the Minister for Transport and Works is able occasionally to effect in this House.

The fact is that this project is ill-conceived. It is a botch. It will do the Northern Territory no credit whatsoever. I find it absolutely extraordinary that the federal Treasurer has been dragged in as an argument. The humour of Paul Keating being dragged in in defence of this project, I do not think will escape even yourself, Sir. That has occurred in 2 debates today which indicates the hegemony of the economic argument in modern political life. In no fewer than 2 debates today, we have heard reference to the performance of the federal Treasurer. Mr Speaker, you will recall that, in the housing debate this morning, the federal Treasurer was pilloried. He got absolutely nothing right. He was said to be responsible for the Australian economy going down the tube and he was deemed to be personally and directly responsible for the demise of the Northern Territory housing market. I am sure that this evening, in Canberra, the federal Treasurer is thinking:

'Thank heavens that Perron, Coulter and Finch have given me a reprieve. At least this evening, they have given me the imprimatur of success'. In the Anderson project debate, against the instincts of 2 years of Commonwealth government bashing, they have decided to pull Paul Keating in as a defence. This simply indicates how thin they are on justification and how thin they are on argument to defend this extraordinary project.

I will turn now to a couple of comments in the statement itself. I always like the written statements that the Minister for Transport and Works reads in his fulsome fashion and that he fulminates about. He inclines you to believe that he actually believes what he is saying. He referred to the need for a Supreme Court building. He referred to a letter which I read in the press over the last few days from Mr Dean Mildren QC of the NT Bar Association, and a very well written letter it was too. He may indeed have some points about the need for a Supreme Court building. To use a phrase that Mr Dean Mildren will understand, and perhaps the Minister for Transport and Works will understand it, the justification of the need for this Supreme Court building can be described as being ex post facto. It is a justification after the fact. The Northern Territory government was talked into this project ...

Mr Coulter: It has been on the capital works list since 1984.

Mr BELL: I will pick up on that point in a minute.

It is a justification after the fact. After Warren Anderson came along with his beaut idea, they decided to hunt around for some justification for getting rid of the Supreme Court building, and now they have found it. They found the justification after the proposal was put forward.

I would point out also, and I referred to this during the budget debate, that we have never had a thorough-going explanation of why we need a new Supreme Court building, let alone why we need a new Parliament House. We have never had that explanation presented in a cogent, logical fashion by any government minister. As far as I am concerned, until this government can present to this Assembly a justification for those 2 capital works items against the various other competing needs right around the Northern Territory, I will not be satisfied. I did not applaud the comments made by the member for Flynn for idle reasons. Like other members in this Assembly, I do not live in Darwin, although my family sometimes thinks I do. I do not live in Darwin, but I will give this credit to the member for Barkly. At least he moves around the traps and finds out what is happening, and not only in the northern suburbs of Darwin with the occasional expedition to this little peninsula which seems to characterise the only peregrinations of government members in this Assembly. We have an understanding of the breadth of the needs in the Northern Territory, and that is one of the reasons why this government is going down the tube. Government members commute between the Chan Building, their homes and their electorate offices, and they imagine they know what is going on. There is not a more dramatic example to indicate that they do not know what is going on than the absurd 30-page statement that emanated from the Minister for Transport and Works today.

The only other comment I want to make in support of the amendment moved by my colleague is in relation to the \$1.75m payment to Tipperary Developments. The minister sought to justify this on the basis that it was common practice for a developer to be paid such sums. I would be very interested to hear of some other projects in which this has occurred. In this case, a private developer has come to the government with a series of projects and, after playing around with the ideas for 12 months, the government has decided that

he should have priority over all the other needs in terms of capital works. Having told the government that those projects are needed, the developer is then given \$1.75m for his efforts. I can see no justification for that whatsoever.

Mr Coulter: Have you ever made a quid in your life? Have you ever been in business? Do you know what it is like?

Mr BELL: Mr Speaker, what a cheap shot. I am quite happy to take that on board. I do not need to have been in business to be in a position ...

Mr Coulter: Have you or haven't you? That was the question.

Mr BELL: Mr Speaker, if the honourable member would like me to respond, I am more than happy to. The fact is that members of the opposition have done a great deal of work in assessing the pros and cons of this project.

Mr Coulter: I am not interested in that. I want to know whether you have been in business or not.

Mr BELL: Mr Speaker, whether I have been in business or not is not all that important. The fact is that I can add up and quite a few of the members on the government frontbench cannot, including the former Treasurer who is so busy interjecting. This project does not stack up and, as far as I am concerned, it is another one in the long historical list of Northern Territory shonks.

Mr FINCH (Transport and Works): Mr Speaker, the member for MacDonnell, having rushed back into the Chamber all hot and flushed and literally wet between the ears, has great difficulty in understanding what this project is all about, as do his colleagues. This project is about jobs for many people. For many families, it is about survival. It means survival to them at a time when the construction industry in Darwin, as opposed to other places in the Territory, is at an all-time low. During this year's budget session, I went to great lengths to explain to members opposite the comparative capital works programs in each regional area. In Darwin, that program was down by more than \$20m when compared with the figure 2 years ago. For the benefit of the member for Flynn, I will make my next remark slowly, because he made great mileage from the issue during his election campaign, as did the ALP candidate. The capital works program for Alice Springs has increased. The member for Flynn talks about BJG Steel going out of business. That shows how much the champion of small business knows. BJG Steel has amalgamated with another business in Alice Springs. I believe that I would probably spend more time on the ground in Alice Springs than the members for Flynn and MacDonnell combined.

Mr SMITH: A point of order, Mr Speaker! I draw your attention to the state of the House.

Mr DONDAS: Mr Speaker, if a member calls attention to a lack of quorum and there is a quorum, that member is being frivolous and should be suspended.

Mr SPEAKER: When the Leader of the Opposition drew my attention to the state of the House, there was no quorum. A quorum is now present. The Minister for Transport and Works.

Mr FINCH: Mr Speaker, as I was saying, the construction industry outside Darwin is at least in a holding position. That applies to Alice Springs where

a local construction firm recently won a contract for work at Yulara. Work worth \$12m will go to subcontractors and suppliers in Alice Springs, compared with \$5m worth of work 2 years ago.

Without the State Square project, Darwin's regional program this year would have been worth \$18m. On a per capita basis, and on a subcontractor and community basis, Alice Springs has done very well and I am sick and tired of hearing lies about the discriminatory activities of this government. The Berrimah Line does not exist and never has existed. People south of Darwin have always been looked after very well by this government, and quite justifiably so. I would ask members from Alice Springs to spend more time informing their electorates about the programs of this government rather than bagging it on the basis of some mythical Berrimah Line.

Unfortunately, I could not appear on the 7.30 Report tonight and I trust that the ABC will give me the opportunity to do so at a later time. However, I was interested to see the Leader of the Opposition arguing that it is reasonable for the construction of the Supreme Court building to proceed and stating that his main problem was that people would object to both projects proceeding together. For his benefit, I repeat that the 2 projects will proceed almost 1 year apart, spreading the works over some 4 years to provide a sustained impact on the construction industry.

I turn now to the opposition's amendment. The opposition's first argument is that the government has not established the need for the project. However, subsequent to the moving of the amendment, the Leader of the Opposition stated that the Supreme Court building and the Parliament House were the centrepieces of democracy in the Northern Territory. That in itself is an endorsement of the need to provide appropriate facilities. Throughout this debate, I have heard arguments against providing plush places for judges and politicians. The Supreme Court building will provide not merely a physical amenity but a level of security appropriate to the need.

In looking at the situation which would apply in 2 years when the TIO building would be demolished, there were only a small number of options. One option, which was discarded logically and on good advice, was to extend the existing Supreme Court building. That would have entailed the demolition of the Nelson Building and the addition of a brand new, up-to-date, appropriately secure building to an out-of-date building which was beginning to cost a great deal in maintenance and operation. To take that option would have been most inappropriate, as I am sure most members would acknowledge.

The Leader of the Opposition argued that almost 100% of the population is opposed to the project. I too make my way around the community, including the Leader of the Opposition's electorate and those of other members opposite. I have made a considerable effort to talk to all sorts of community groups, business groups and other organisations. I have placed advertisements in places of public recreation, including hotels, and have talked to people explaining in practical realistic terms what this project will mean to them. I would even be prepared to volunteer to attend a meeting of the Leader of Opposition's own local ALP branch. That is how confident I am of being able to sell the real merits of this project on a person-to-person basis rather than imitating members of the opposition in their reliance on cheap grabs in the media.

The opposition talked about the provision of information. We have listened to a profusion of misinformation. The fact is that the project has been defined through the normal processes of the Department of Transport and

Works, with client departments laying down the specific requirements leading to what is called the design brief. During the developmental stage, Tipperary Developments is assisting with those design briefs. The budgets have been appropriately provided and checked by the Department of Transport and Works to ensure that the figures are realistic prior to making any agreements with Tipperary Developments.

The opposition's third point was its claim that established tender procedures had not been followed. Much was made of the development fee which, as I said earlier, is not a spotter's fee. It is a fee that is most appropriate in this sort of development. Such fees are quite normal in the commercial world and, if members of the opposition were to check with developers and people involved in putting together projects of this nature, they would learn that the normal fee is between 1.5% and 3% of the total value of the work. \$1.75m fits very comfortably within that range. It is not a spotter's fee. It relates to the work itself and to the high cost of putting the proposal together.

I am aware of a project in this town which involves some \$30m-worth of construction and possibly another \$70m-worth of subsequent buildings. The actual cost of work done on the development proposal by architects, engineers, soil testers, legal people, economists and all the other members of the development team is in excess of \$1m. That is the actual cost of preparing a proposal for a development worth \$100m. There are practical costs. As I said, Tipperary Developments does not pocket the \$1.75m. It has to pay for thousands of man-hours of work carried out over 14 months by the consultants. In fact, the government has negotiated reasonable fees through my department, both in terms of the developer's fee and for project management. The percentage fee charged for project management covers both profit and the actual cost of providing management control throughout the entire 4-year process.

The cost controllers and quality controllers required to ensure the proper completion of the program will be paid for out of that 3.75%. That is quite normal. It is not a windfall profit, as some would say. The upper limit of what Tipperary Developments can make out of this total project, even if the project management services were to cost it nothing, would be 3.75%. There will be no windfall profit. Tipperary Developments is taking the risk and, if everything goes right, the most it will make is a couple of per cent. In any normal proposal, profits would be much greater. In fact, the Territory government has secured an extremely attractive deal on behalf of the taxpayer.

The opposition's fourth argument concerned the long-term economic and social benefits. One of the very interesting things which is emerging as this project proceeds is the attitudinal change among consultants and contractors in this town. The localisation of building projects in the Northern Territory will receive a profoundly positive effect from this single project. Already consultants, designers, architects and engineers are being put to the test to ensure that they can design to suit local conditions, local supplies and local construction capacity. This time, we will not have a design to suit windows supplied from Adelaide or tiles which will require that steel construction work be done in Brisbane. This project will set the pace for the next 2 decades of construction in this town. There have been some very sorry tales in relation to the way some major firms have looked after locals.

Mr Collins: Yes. The poor old subcontractors.

Mr FINCH: Mr Deputy Speaker, the acute attention which this government is paying to localisation of subcontracting and supply is unique in Australia.

Mr Collins interjecting.

Mr FINCH: Mr Deputy Speaker, the member for Sadadeen treats this as a joke. I should not waste my time on him.

The subcontract packages that have gone out indicate that there is absolute involvement of Territory companies. Those companies do not have the option of flogging their part of the work to people interstate. They are required to define where their labour is coming from, to establish their bona fides as active local companies and to advise on where their supplies are coming from. All of those matters are critical in determining whether they will have even the chance to bid and, in the final analysis, they will be vital in determining whether or not they win contracts. As far as the economic effects of this project are concerned, the fourth part of the opposition's amendment is absolute nonsense. The economic effect will be profound, and it will be long term. It is a matter of survival. We cannot starve people of work for a year or 2 and expect them still to be around to meet the construction commitments that the Territory will face during the next couple of decades. As for the broader benefits, I think honourable members are well aware that they will spread throughout the entire community. They will not affect the construction industry only, they will spread to people who rely on selling television sets and sandwiches etc.

In terms of the social benefits, it is clear that we cannot put off the Supreme Court project until the bulldozing of the old police station in 3 years time. We would then be stuck with 4 courts whilst possibly needing as many as 7. Quite justifiably, people would then be screaming that the government had not planned properly. Although one might prefer that things like police stations and jails should not be classified as social benefits, and that society did not need such things, that is an optimistic scenario which is hardly likely to eventuate anywhere in the world.

The opposition's amendment states that the costs have not been fully detailed. To put it quite simply, the upper-limit costs that have been established are realisable. They form part of the agreement with the project manager, and they come within the ambit of the monitoring role of the project control group. I have no doubt that the project will come in on budget or under budget. The actual costs will be determined as each of the subcontract packages goes out to tender. When those subcontract prices are added up, the fixed price will emerge.

Mr Deputy Speaker, the opposition's amendment is an absolute nonsense, as have been all their contributions to discussion on the State Square project.

The Assembly divided:

Ayes 10

Noes 15

Mr Bell	Mr Coulter
Mr Collins	Mr Dale
Mr Ede	Mr Dondas
Mr Floreani	Mr Finch
Mr Lanhupuy	Mr Firmin
Mr Leo	Mr Harris
Mrs Padgham-Purich	Mr Hatton

Mr Smith
Mr Tipiloura
Mr Tuxworth

Mr McCarthy
Mr Manzie
Mr Palmer
Mr Perron
Mr Poole
Mr Reed
Mr Setter
Mr Vale

Amendment negatived.

Motion agreed to.

MINING AMENDMENT BILL
(Serial 152)

Bill presented and read a first time.

Mr COULTER (Mines and Energy): Mr Speaker, I move that the bill be now read a second time.

The Northern Territory Mining Act came into operation on 1 July 1982. It was the third comprehensive Mining Act formulated specifically for the Northern Territory and was regarded at the time as the most progressive mining legislation in Australia. Unlike the 2 previous Mining Acts, the 1903 Mining Act introduced by South Australia and the 1939 Mining Act of the Commonwealth, the Northern Territory Mining Act broke new ground. For the first time in Australia, it introduced new concepts such as exploration retention leases, to create a progressive link in tenure between exploration licences and mineral leases.

We expected that, after an initial period of preparation, any deficiencies in the act would make themselves apparent and any areas of its operation in need of finetuning would become clear. It is an indication of the act's high standard that it has taken 6 years of operation under conditions of intense mining activity for those areas in need of adjustment to become quite apparent. In response to the need, I am now in a position to present to this Assembly a bill containing about 100 amendments. More than half of these relate to very minor matters that come under the heading of finetuning. These include such things as inserting a number of cross-references in the act to ensure that applicants for mining title are aware of all the provisions that apply to them, requirements that licensees and lessees include their expenditure in their annual reports, amendments that would allow the refusal of applications that would fail due to clear legal deficiencies or lack of available ground without the time and expense of having to be advertised and follow the subsequent administrative path.

Among these finetuning proposals are amendments to increase the maximum size of mineral claims to 40 ha. Experience has shown that 20 ha is an inadequate size for mineral claims and applicants are having to peg many claims to get the area they need. The proliferation of pegs in the ground is a nuisance to pastoralists and presents an extra workload to the applicants and the department that can be dramatically reduced by increasing the maximum allowed area of claims. The same applies to exploration retention leases which, by the way, are also to have a change in name to the more appropriate classification of exploration retention licences. Increasing their maximum area of 1000 ha to 4000 ha will reflect more closely the practicable size for a mineral lease that may eventually be granted should a viable mining operation become possible.

I wish now, to draw attention to 8 matters of a more serious nature that require attention. Miners have been able to utilise 4 procedures under the act which are covered by sections 15, 18, 25(c) and 178. These give an opportunity to gain priority of application for exploration or mining tenure. These courses of action are to be closed.

There is at present no provision for miners to sell extractive minerals such as gravel and rock which are produced as a by-product of their mining activities. An amendment is proposed to make this possible.

At present, where a mineral claim or exploration retention licence is inadvertently marked out partly over land that is already held, I have no discretion to grant it over the remainder of the area where there is no conflict. I am bound to refuse the application if it encroaches in the smallest degree on land that is not available. This can lead to an enormous waste of time and resources, both for applicants and the department. An amendment is proposed that will allow me to grant the tenement over the land that is available and exclude unavailable portions.

Holders of extractive mineral permits often produce from several permit areas but prefer to stockpile and treat their product in a central area, especially where their production areas are inaccessible during the wet season. Currently, no extractive mining title exists for the exclusive purpose of stockpiling and treating material. The bill proposes an amendment to allow extractive titles to be used for these purposes.

The repeal of section 116 is proposed. This section prevents the transfer of extractive mineral permits. Even though these titles are of short duration, experience has shown that they represent a significant feature of an extractive miner's business interests that he may wish to transfer or sell on retiring from the industry or moving elsewhere.

A serious deficiency of the act has been the reliance on the Warden's Court to hear offences under the act of a criminal nature, such as illegal mining. Once again, experience has shown the need for change. The act will now clearly direct that such offences will be dealt with in a court of summary jurisdiction.

The formation of the Gold Squad has emphasised the need to strengthen the jurisdictional powers under the act. This will be done by providing suitable powers to police and inspectors and by dealing with offences of this nature.

A recent case in the High Court has alerted us to a potential problem concerning the marking out of tenements. In that case, the judgment was that failure of the applicant for title to comply with a minor technicality of the Western Australian Mining Act rendered his application invalid. It was never the government's intention that the Territory act should be interpreted in this way. An amendment is proposed to ensure that substantial compliance with the act and regulations is sufficient to ensure legality of title.

The eighth of these more serious matters that the bill addresses concerns the fact that no form of authorisation currently exists over Crown land required for use as a service corridor between 2 non-adjacent mining tenements. The act will be amended to remedy this situation.

Amendments proposed for these areas of concern will save considerable time and cost, both for industry and government, and lead to a significant reduction in the time required to grant secure exploration and mining title

while, at the same time, protecting the interests of other common land users. It remains for me now to comment on several policy changes represented in amendments proposed in the area of mineral claims and appointment of mining wardens.

The bill contains provision for mineral claims to be an alternative to mineral leases as a form of tenure flowing from the exploration retention licences, to be used to secure tenure covering exploration for extractive minerals and to have their priority dated from the time of marking off rather than the time of lodgement of the application with the department. It is also proposed to allow the pegging and grant of mineral claims on private land subject to prior authorisation by a warden. In relation to this last provision, there are cases where private landholders would like to mine their own land, by virtue of a mineral claim, but presently are unable to do so. Amendments will allow this.

I believe the proposal requiring authorisation by a warden prior to marking out of tenements will protect private landholders' interests. As a consequence, the existing compensation provisions have been expanded to include mineral claims. Another proposal contained in the bill may not appeal, at first glance, to the owners of private land. I refer to the proposal to reduce the existing limited powers of veto by private landowners. The existing powers of veto extend to an application for a mineral lease over private land if that application is within 50 m of a residence, yard, garden, orchard or cultivated field. It covers land used as or within a distance of 200 m of a cemetery or burial ground or that is within 200 m of certain specified natural and artificial water storage facilities. It is proposed to amend this provision to provide the private landowner with the power of veto over all classes of tenements, not only mineral leases, that are within 50 m of a residence. In addition, the private landowner will retain the power of veto over any application for the mining of extractive minerals such as sand, gravel, rock etc on his land.

I can assure private landowners that miners will not be charging on to their land with bulldozers. Miners will go only where economic deposits of minerals occur and then only after detailed liaison with the landowners. The act contains provisions which ensure that adequate compensation is assessed prior to the grant of a tenement on private land. It follows that any deposit discovered on private land would need to be of an economic significance sufficient to bear the cost of the compensation payout. The principle of Crown ownership of minerals has been reinforced while the rights of the private owner to fair and just compensation have not been diminished.

Last November, I raised with the Northern Territory Chamber of Mines my views concerning the operation of the Warden's Court provisions of the Mining Act and my interest in seeing changes to the regime. The reaction to that initiative has ranged from enthusiastic approval to strident opposition. An amendment in the bill provides that persons appointed as wardens may be selected from inside and outside the public service and the magistrature. This amendment, which has some support, along with other administrative changes mentioned, should resolve the problems in the courts.

There has been full consultation with the mining and primary industry bodies throughout the process of developing these proposals. As a result, my department has already instituted administrative procedures to keep other land users, such as pastoralists and graingrowers fully informed about mining tenure granted on their land. Whilst this government may be unashamedly pro-development, it recognises the legitimate rights of others to use

Territory land. The Territory is at the forefront of Australian states in putting the concept of multiple land use into practice. It is my fervent hope that the Commonwealth will follow our lead.

I believe we have the best regime of mining administration in Australia, and this is appropriate in view of mining being by far our major industry. I want to see that we continue in the forefront in this field so as to encourage the continued development of mining to underpin economic growth throughout the Territory.

The amendments proposed in this bill will greatly streamline the department's procedures in administering the act and so reduce delays. In addition, I foresee less conflict and litigation in the handling of applications for mining tenure. The jurisdictional amendments should open the way to successful prosecutions in the case of illegal mining and contribute to the successful operation of the Gold Squad. The overall effect of the amendments should be to stimulate the mining industry even more by bringing about greater security, variety and flexibility of tenure and greater speed and fairness in creating that tenure. I commend the bill to all honourable members.

Debate adjourned.

TRUSTEE AMENDMENT BILL
(Serial 123)

Continued from 24 August 1988.

Mr LEO (Nhulunbuy): Mr Speaker, in a few short words, I indicate the opposition's wholehearted support for this legislation.

Motion agreed to.

In committee:

Clauses 1 to 3 agreed to.

Clause 4:

Mr MANZIE: Mr Chairman, I move amendments 51.1 to 51.5.

Amendment 51.1 is to expand the section. It removes the words 'loan to' and substitutes 'deposit with'. Amendment 51.2 removes the words 'or a subsidiary of a company' and 51.3 removes 'operating in the Territory' and substitutes 'registered under the Building Societies Act'. In other words, it expands it. Amendment 51.4 is quite substantial. It relates to the size of the investment, the holders of prescribed interests in the scheme undertaking an enterprise to which the approved deed relates having received a return in the nature of income in the 5 years preceding. The prescribed interests in the scheme undertaking enterprises to which the approved deed relates are listed for quotation on stock exchanges in the Commonwealth. It is an expansion and it allows the details to be provided in terms of the stock exchanges etc.

Amendments agreed to.

Clause 4, as amended, agreed to.

Clause 5 agreed to.

Clause 6:

Mr MANZIE: Mr Chairman, I move amendment 51.6.

This amendment relates to flooding and flood insurance. It extends the obligation to insure. Presently only storm surge is supposed to be insured and it must now include flood insurance where reasonably available. That relates to property that the trustees have under their control.

Amendment agreed to.

Mr MANZIE: Mr Chairman, I move amendment 51.7.

This relates to the value. It extends it from \$10 000 to \$10 000 or a prescribed amount, and that is the norm in Western Australian legislation which this follows.

Amendment agreed to.

Clause 6, as amended, agreed to.

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

Bill passed remaining stages without debate.

OMBUDSMAN (NORTHERN TERRITORY) AMENDMENT BILL
(Serial 147)

Continued from 12 October 1988.

Mr SMITH (Opposition Leader): Mr Speaker, this bill tackles a number of problems that have been seen to occur with the act as it is at present. The opposition supports the proposed amendments. The bill puts in place a definition of the circumstances in which officers of the government are acting as officers of the government as distinct from being themselves, if that makes any sense to you, Mr Speaker. In fact, there is quite a wide and a generous definition. I do not think anyone can have any problem with that.

The second definition puts into the legislation what is a current practice - the ability of the Ombudsman to receive oral complaints. At present, complaints are supposed to be in writing but that has not been the practice as it has evolved. There have been problems with many of the complainants having insufficient literary skills to be able to write and, for that and other reasons, oral complaints have been taken and then reduced to writing by the staff of the Ombudsman. That process is being confirmed in this legislation.

The third change is to provide for confidential communications between the Ombudsman and prisoners, and I think that is obvious and just. The fourth provides that, where complaints against the police are made to the Ombudsman, he will immediately advise the Police Commissioner and vice versa. That is part of the system that has been developed to tackle this vexed question of the powers of the Ombudsman over the operations of the police force. Of course, that has been an issue in this parliament before. Certainly, I do not intend to go into it again tonight. The change that has been proposed is again eminently sensible.

In his second-reading speech, the Chief Minister said: 'Complainants shall have first endeavoured to resolve their problems with the department, authority or municipality before the Ombudsman will undertake an investigation of the matter'. That is in fact incorrect. What the relevant part of the legislation says is that the Ombudsman may ask that a complainant attempt to resolve the matter with the department etc first. He may ask that that happen, but it certainly is not a requirement of the complainant that he attempt to resolve the matter with the department or whatever before he goes to the Ombudsman. I would suggest that the Chief Minister shoot his speech writer. I have tackled the Ombudsman on this particular matter and he denies that he wrote that. What he said was that he provided 2 drafts and somebody fiddled with the 2 drafts to get one that he thought the minister would be happy with. It is not a serious matter, but I point out that the second-reading speech overstates the requirement in the legislation. Obviously, it is a sensible requirement as it is contained in the bill. If, in the opinion of the Ombudsman, there is a chance that the matter can be resolved at departmental level, he should refer the matter back to the department and ask the department to talk to the complainant. Obviously, it is in everybody's interest if that can occur.

The sixth and last provision is that the secrecy provisions that surround the operations of the Ombudsman are waived, to an extent, to allow joint investigations of police matters by the Ombudsman and the Commissioner of Police. Since that system has been established, obviously it is a sensible provision. Under the secrecy provisions, it is strictly illegal to do it and that is the reason for the amendment.

We support the bill, but I want to make 2 general observations which arise from my meeting with the Ombudsman. They are not new because the Ombudsman has mentioned them previously, as have various members in this House. The first is that the Ombudsman feels some difficulty in reporting to the Chief Minister. That is not the result of personality differences. Indeed, the Ombudsman has had a very good working relationship with all Chief Ministers and I feel that that is reciprocated. However, it is his view - and it is one that I share - that it would be more appropriate for the Ombudsman to report directly to the parliament. In a sense, he should be regarded as an officer of the parliament and the supervision of his activities should be by the parliament rather than through the Chief Minister.

The suggestion has been made that it might be an appropriate idea to consider - and that is all I do at this stage - the establishment of a parliamentary committee on the Ombudsman. That parliamentary committee, which obviously would be a standing committee, would have the task of keeping an eye on the operations of the Ombudsman, not in a negative sense but providing a contact point between the Ombudsman and the parliament so that there could be a regular exchange of views on the role of the Ombudsman and his or her relationship with the parliament.

On the face of it, that suggestion has certain attractions. I think it would guarantee the independence of the Ombudsman and it would be seen to guarantee the independence of the Ombudsman. I am certainly not suggesting that he has anything less than complete independence at present - I am sure that he has - but it is a matter that he has raised with me and it is certainly a matter that he has raised previously. I believe that it is a matter that members should reflect on individually, talk to the Ombudsman, talk among ourselves and, at a later date next year, I may well bring the matter back before the House in a more formal way.

The other thing that gives concern to the Ombudsman is another matter that he has raised previously. I refer to the lack of a requirement on public servants to give reasons for their decisions. I can see that that poses a particular difficulty for the Ombudsman when he is involved in an investigation. He talks to the relevant department people and examines the relevant departmental files. He sees the decisions that have been taken but, at present, there is no legal requirement for the reasons for the decisions to be listed with the decisions themselves. There is no legal requirement for the reasons to be written down at all.

That involves perhaps the broader area of freedom of information and I do not want to pursue that topic today. The Ombudsman indicated that he thought it would be desirable for this parliament to examine the matter in terms of accountability of public servants and in terms of public servants being seen to be accountable for their decisions. An obvious example would be in respect of tenders. Many arguments in respect of tenders would be removed completely if an unsuccessful tenderer were able to approach the Tender Board and be told the reason why a particular tenderer had been awarded the contract. It does not have to be a long and complicated argument. I think it is an essential and basic element of natural justice that, if you had a dealing with a particular government department and you were not happy with that dealing, you should be able to find out the reason why the decision was taken. Obviously, there will be logical reasons. Public servants are logical people who work within a set of guidelines. They do a competent and a thorough job 99.99% of the time. What is wrong with reinforcing the impression that we have competent public servants who are able to make rational decisions by asking them to provide the reasons for their decisions?

Again, that is a broad and general statement. Obviously, if we were to pursue it, we would need to define some guidelines for it because there would be minor decisions for which you do not need reasons. I raise it at this stage for consideration. I give notice that, at some time in the future, I may well want to proceed with this matter. To conclude, I reiterate the opposition's support for this bill.

Mr SETTER (Jingili): Mr Speaker, the Ombudsman's office in the Northern Territory was established shortly after self-government. The Ombudsman has played a vital role in arbitrating with respect to situations where the public or individuals are dissatisfied with decisions of government departments. The current Ombudsman and his predecessor have carried out their role in a very understanding and competent manner.

I was very interested to hear the comments by the Leader of the Opposition resulting from his discussions with the Ombudsman. I must say that it surprises me that those suggestions have not been put forward previously through normal channels. Perhaps they have, but I certainly would like that point clarified. I would take some convincing that the role of the Ombudsman has been impaired in any way by the fact that currently he reports to the Chief Minister. I would like to know what would be gained should he report directly to the parliament. What is the advantage in that? According to the Leader of the Opposition, he reports to the Chief Minister. He provides an annual report to the parliament which is available for debate in this parliament.

The other point that was raised by the Leader of the Opposition is that he believes that the Ombudsman should have the power to require public servants to give reasons for the various decisions that they have made. I question that. Obviously, it is not the situation currently. I understand that the

Ombudsman's role is to assess whether or not those public servants have carried out their role in a proper manner. Surely the decisions that are made are matters for them as responsible public servants. The Ombudsman's role is to assess whether or not they have carried out the process according to the regulations, requirements or whatever the guidelines might be and not necessarily whether their decisions as such were correct. I think that is a different matter.

This bill relates mainly to matters where complaints are lodged against the police. That is a very contentious area indeed because the police are out there at the chalk face of society. They have an interaction with the public at large, on a day-to-day basis, and generally in a fairly delicate and sometimes controversial role. That is particularly true in respect of domestic violence. That is a matter which will be discussed by this House at another time. Nevertheless, that is the sort of delicate situation that police are involved with and, from time to time, complaints are lodged against them.

This bill will eliminate an existing problem. In the past, complaints have been lodged either with the commissioner or with the Ombudsman and apparently there has been some communication difficulty. One could assume that there has been some indecision as to who is the responsible person in relation to such matters. I understand that some confusion has occurred in the past. This should eliminate that. It also eliminates the existing problems relating to the secrecy provisions of the act.

Other major changes in the bill provide for a clarification of when government officers are acting on behalf of the government and when they are acting in a personal role. It provides for the acceptance of oral complaints against police. Apparently, in the past, these have not been acceptable. Such oral complaints, when received by the Ombudsman, will be referred to the commissioner for investigation. Doubtless, once the commissioner assesses the situation, he will liaise with the Ombudsman.

The bill provides for confidential communication between the Ombudsman and prisoners. That is very important because, if a prisoner feels that he is being badly done by in a particular situation, he will now have the right to go directly to the Ombudsman who can interview him on a confidential basis.

Complainants are required to attempt to resolve their problems with the responsible authorities before going to the Ombudsman. The Leader of the Opposition touched on this matter earlier. If a person has a difficulty with a government department, it is only fair and reasonable that he should attempt to resolve the matter with the department. That sort of thing happens on a day-to-day basis. Everybody has difficulties with government departments at times and, in most cases, these can be sorted out, often by approaching a senior officer. It is only when the matter cannot be resolved satisfactorily that an approach to the Ombudsman is necessary. That is appropriate, Mr Speaker. Otherwise people would be continually running to the Ombudsman and wasting his time and that of his officers with complaints that could easily be solved by others. With those few words, I support the bill.

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH (Koolpinyah): Mr Speaker, I rise to support this legislation. We are very lucky to have had the 2 Ombudsmen we have had in the Northern Territory. Each of them has been very learned and has had great breadth of vision, as well as a genuine interest in the cases and the people with whom they deal. I have found it necessary on a number of occasions to call on the good offices of the Ombudsman to help my constituents in the rural

area. I am sure that the member for Jingili will agree with me when I say that, if all MLAs did their jobs thoroughly, the Ombudsman would not have nearly so much work to do. I believe that much of the work of an MLA involves sorting out problems which constituents have with government authorities. As a result of our positions, and perhaps of our long residence in the Territory, most of us know many more people than do our constituents and therefore have a greater range of communication which enables us to solve many problems. Nevertheless, there are some problems that we cannot solve.

In 3 well-known cases in the rural area, I was unable to do any more and referred people to the Ombudsman, more or less in desperation. In one instance, a department was insisting that people in the rural area sign contracts for taking a supply of water. These contracts contained certain stringent conditions in relation to the continued taking of the water. My constituents considered that that was unfair, as I did, and 12 or 13 people refused to sign contracts under any circumstances. The department then threatened them with dire consequences. The Ombudsman was able to sort the matter out. The result was that the people did not have to sign the contracts. They had been taking water in good faith and paying their bills, and they had done so for the previous 12 months. Justice was done in that case. In another case, which related to a certain road reserve, the Ombudsman was unable to help and, in a third case, he was able to obtain a stay of proceedings or period of grace for some people who had been adversely affected by a planning decision.

My involvement in these cases has given me some personal knowledge of the work of the Ombudsman. I can only speak most highly of his work on behalf of my constituents. On a number of occasions, I have sought his advice on whether he has the jurisdiction to deal with particular complaints made by my constituents. His advice proved correct in all instances. I have no hesitation at all in supporting this legislation because, no doubt, it has been presented with the full acquiescence of the Ombudsman. I do not know whether he actually instigated it but, if it will enable his office to function more effectively, that is in the interests of the people in the Northern Territory.

Mr HATTON (Nightcliff): Mr Speaker, I rise to speak briefly in support of the bill. I believe it is important to clarify something that has arisen in the course of this debate about the relationship between the Ombudsman and the Chief Minister, who has administrative responsibility for the Ombudsman, and his relationship with parliament. I want to clarify this in case there is any misapprehension about that relationship, particularly following the comments of the Leader of the Opposition.

I understand the point that the Leader of the Opposition is making, but it is important to place on record that the Ombudsman is appointed by the Administrator on the advice of the Legislative Assembly, following a resolution of the Legislative Assembly. I am sure that all honourable members will remember the bipartisan interviewing committee which recommended the appointment of the current Ombudsman.

Mrs Padgham-Purich: That happened with the first one too.

Mr HATTON: I was not here when the first appointment was made. I can refer only to the second one. I accept the word of the member for Koolpinyah. I am sure that a bipartisan procedure applied then and will do so in the future.

What I am saying is that the appointment is made on the recommendation of the parliament and that any reference to the Chief Minister in the legislation is really only for care and victualling, in the sense of making budgetary provision for office space and the necessary staff support. The Ombudsman has no reporting responsibilities to the Chief Minister, except in relation to budgetary matters. In respect of his work as an Ombudsman, he reports to this parliament. The parliament can determine the procedures in that respect but it can in no way remove the necessity, in terms of practical budgetary purposes, for the Ombudsman to be associated with or responsible to a particular minister. Similarly, this Legislative Assembly is responsible to a particular minister for budgetary purposes and that will continue to be the case.

The Ombudsman acts as an agent for the Commonwealth Ombudsman in the Northern Territory and that requires the Chief Minister to be involved in negotiations with the Commonwealth in respect of the cost-sharing arrangements. That role is not one which could be performed by a parliamentary committee which is more appropriately concerned with the procedures adopted by the Ombudsman in dealing with complaints. The Chief Minister has no role now in that area because the Ombudsman reports to this parliament. The legislation has specific provisions in relation to suspension and removal of an Ombudsman. It requires such matters to be referred to the parliament which would make any decisions in that sphere. It is not within the power of either the Administrator or the minister to take any such disciplinary action against the Ombudsman, nor should it be. Whilst there is a budgetary link between the Ombudsman and the Chief Minister, that should not in any way be taken to mean that the Ombudsman has to report to that minister in respect of his role and his relationship with the parliament.

Having said that, I commend the bill to honourable members. I am aware that it deals with practical difficulties that have arisen in the work of the Ombudsman and will assist that work to be carried out more expeditiously in future. If I may make a final brief comment, I am sure that members of the police force will appreciate a procedure that will clearly streamline the procedure in relation to complaints against it. That has been a source of some consternation within the force for some time and I am sure that the development of clear procedures and their reinforcement in this bill will assist considerably in removing some of the bureaucratic complications which have often surrounded past complaints against police.

Mr PERRON (Chief Minister): Mr Speaker, I would like to support the comments of the member for Nightcliff. As Chief Minister, I am happy to continue the convention in relation to the bipartisan selection of Ombudsmen in the future, whenever it may be required. I cannot see any reason why the Ombudsman would feel that there are any constraints on himself under the existing arrangements in terms of reporting to parliament through the Chief Minister. In a sense, the Auditor-General is also an appointment by parliament. He reports to parliament through the Chief Minister so that there is someone on the floor of the House responsible for sponsoring legislation and answering questions in that regard. However, if the Leader of the Opposition wishes us to consider other proposals, we would entertain such consideration based on argument.

The Leader of the Opposition also suggested that it would be helpful for public servants to record the reasons for their decisions. On simple reflection, I think it could be quite difficult administratively to try to institute that across the board and it is probably not entirely necessary. However, I suppose there are so many circumstances in respect of public

servants dealing with individuals that there may be situations where it is appropriate and others where it is not. My limited experience in this matter has been that, by and large, public servants are happy to volunteer to the Ombudsman the reasons for their decisions in order to try to clarify matters that the Ombudsman is investigating, bearing in mind that the Ombudsman does have very strong powers in regard to an investigation in the public service. If the relevant public servants have moved on, that may make it a little more difficult for the Ombudsman to determine the reasons for decisions that had been taken.

The Leader of the Opposition commented that it would be useful to have a system whereby unsuccessful tenderers would be able to find out the circumstances surrounding the successful tenderer. In many cases, that is so and I believe that, in many cases, the unsuccessful tenderers can easily find out who the successful tenderer was and the conditions on which that tender was awarded. It is usually the price but, in some cases, that may not be the sole reason for determination. It may be types of services offered, types of equipment being offered or types of backup offered.

The Tender Board or the departmental person responsible for allocating a tender may have a number of matters on which he can take a decision other than simply price. In some circumstances, it will be found that no explanation to an unsuccessful tenderer will satisfy him that he was overlooked reasonably. The nature of tendering is such that such cases will always come to light from time to time and the Ombudsman is an ideal avenue for people who are genuinely aggrieved and can make some reasonable case that they may have been wrongly done by. The Ombudsman has examined a number of matters relating to the letting of tenders, and rightly so. Certainly, as a politician, I do not want to be dragged into the tender letting process on behalf of unsuccessful tenderers and I am happy to leave the job to him.

Lastly, the Attorney-General has asked me to inform the House that he has referred a matter to the Law Reform Committee for its opinion: whether there should be some form of judicial review of administrative decisions in the Northern Territory. Obviously, that matter bears on the type of work that the Ombudsman undertakes currently. In due course, no doubt, the Law Reform Committee will report to the Attorney-General and he may let us know its opinion. I thank honourable members for their support for the bill.

Motion agreed to; bill read a second time.

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

Motion agreed to; bill read a third time.

ADJOURNMENT

Mr HARRIS (Education): Mr Speaker, I move that the Assembly do now adjourn.

Mr EDE (Stuart): Mr Speaker, there are a couple of points that I would like to raise in the adjournment tonight. The first is in relation to libraries. Mr Speaker, I do not think I have to convince you of what a disastrous decision the slashing of funds to individual libraries has been. It has meant that magazine subscriptions have now been cancelled and it is one of those disgusting examples of this government abrogating a basic commitment that we expect government to have to Territorians.

It is a fact that hardly any new books are being purchased and the range of items on offer to borrowers is rapidly declining. A basic analysis of the requirements of Territorians suggests that, rather than cutting the amount of funds available to libraries, it should be increased. For example, for Darwin, the statistics are very interesting. Some 50% of the population of Darwin is registered with the public library service. That is not some overblown figure that has carried over from years gone by. That applies notwithstanding the fact that there is an automatic removal of membership in all cases where no items have been borrowed in the previous 18 months. Despite that stringent cleaning of the lists, 50% of people in Darwin are active borrowers at our libraries. Down south, the average is for some 25% of the community to be registered as borrowers.

Given that support for libraries from Territorians, particularly people in Darwin, one would have thought that the government would have realised that that support existed and that it would have provided libraries with adequate funds to provide at least as adequate a library service as is offered in the south and that, instead of walking away from the libraries, the government would have been backing them up.

Mr Speaker, from your time as a member for a rural electorate, you know how people in those areas find it a great convenience to be able to establish their membership of libraries in Alice Springs, Darwin or wherever, and what a great source of reading matter those libraries are for people. People receive regular book lists. They are able to establish the type of book that they are after and request individual books. The library service was developed some years ago in conjunction with school libraries to be able to develop that service out bush.

The commitment is there from the community and it has been demonstrated. In the past, there have been government programs to extend the service out bush which I have applauded. But, Mr Speaker, when you have a look at the actual number of books that are available to people in Darwin, you will find that there is nowhere near the number of items per registered borrower that are available in southern cities. One example that we took was Happy Valley in Adelaide. It has a typical library serving some 28 000 people and it has 66 000 items on offer. That allows 2.35 items per unit of population or 10 per borrower. The Darwin library service serves some 70 000 people and has some 35 000 borrowers. It has only 118 000 items on offer and that represents only 1.68 items per unit of population or 3.4 per borrower. In Happy Valley, 2.35 items are available per unit of population and Darwin has 1.68 items per unit of population. Happy Valley has 10 items per borrower and Darwin 3.4. The support provided by the Northern Territory government through its library service in Darwin to its borrowers is only one third of the support that is provided by the library service at Happy Valley, which is typical of the library services provided in South Australia.

The issue has been raised with the government time and time again and it has been mentioned in the press. Certainly, representations have been made by the School Library Association of the Northern Territory in Darwin to the government. Like other honourable members, no doubt, I have received a letter from Susan Ross, the President of that organisation, enclosing a copy of a letter that the School Library Association forwarded to the Minister for Education in which it indicated quite convincingly the valuable community services that public libraries provide and how those are being downgraded by the honourable minister. I ask the honourable minister to reconsider this item. It may have been one of those that happened to slip through at the time and unfortunately escaped his eye. However, now that it has been brought to his attention, I hope that he will take it up.

The next matter that I would like to raise relates to the Dorothea Mackellar Memorial Trust. Mr Speaker, no doubt you are aware of the famous Australian poet, Dorothea Mackellar, who is best known for her poem 'My Country'. The memorial trust provides Australia-wide annual prizes for poetry written by primary school children. It is a source of some pride to us in the Northern Territory that not only did Parap Primary School win the schools' section in competition with schools throughout Australia, but young Patrick Porter from Parap gained second place overall throughout Australia. I cannot recall her name at the moment, but I believe that an Alice Springs girl also received a Dorothea Mackellar Memorial Trust prize some years ago. It is a significant achievement for Parap Primary School and for Patrick Porter.

I take this opportunity to congratulate Patrick on his achievement. Unfortunately, I do not have a copy of his poem to table for the benefit of honourable members but I may be able to procure a copy for us next week. He deserves strong praise for his achievement. I know that he is very keen on poetry and is constantly developing pieces. Obviously, Parap Primary School has done considerable work in relation to poetry and was able to win that prize against Australia-wide competition.

In conclusion, I want to pass on my congratulations to Grainger's Glass Service, specifically to Kay and Dick Grainger, for winning the Northern Territory manufacturing section of the Small Business Awards which were awarded last Monday at the Atrium Hotel. The competition in that field of business is very fierce in Alice Springs with 5 companies competing against one another whereas there are only 2 in Darwin. In fact, the 5 firms have to compete also against quotations from Perth and Adelaide. Grainger's Glass Service, which has been established in Alice Springs for many years, has developed a reputation for excellent service. As a result of the service it has provided through its excellent staff, it took out the major prize in the Small Business Awards on Monday.

Naturally, I am proud of the fact that finally a firm from Alice Springs has taken out one of these prizes. The prizes always seem to go to people this side of the Berrimah Line. This firm has demonstrated that business management in Alice Springs is as good as it is anywhere else in the Northern Territory, and I know that it will be going to Adelaide in February to compete against winners from around Australia. I am sure all members will join with me in wishing the firm the very best of luck. Whilst I know that it has not relied on luck for the very substantial success it had in winning this award, it will be happy to take our best wishes with it to Adelaide in February when, hopefully, it will be able to show not only the Northern Territory but all of Australia what Alice Springs business is all about.

Mr REED (Katherine): Mr Speaker, I rise tonight to pay tribute to Sister Olive O'Keefe who died in Katherine on 10 November at the age of 82 years.

Sister O'Keefe, or Keeffie as she was affectionately known, was born near Nambour in Queensland. Later, she trained as a nurse and became a double certificated nurse at the Brisbane General Hospital. Later still, she moved to the Territory and spent some 50 years of her life here. She arrived in the Territory aboard the Marilla on 19 November 1936. Following a brief period of service at the Darwin Hospital, Sister O'Keefe transferred to the Pine Creek Hospital to relieve a nurse who was sick at that time. It was in Pine Creek that Keeffie met Johnny O'Keefe whom she married in 1938. Following their marriage, Keeffie and Johnno went to live in Birdum where they managed the pub. Johnno predeceased Keeffie by a few years.

Sister O'Keefe nursed in Darwin, Pine Creek, Katherine and Alice Springs and, in the 1930s, she flew with the legendary Dr Clyde Fenton. She had a consistently pleasant and caring attitude. When flying with the good doctor, she had to have a sense of humour and be able to accept risk and a touch of adventure from time to time. Clearly, she had a pioneering nature and, in providing the services and establishing with Dr Fenton the Northern Territory Aerial Medical Service, she committed herself to a life of nursing in the Territory and to serving the sick, particularly in the outback. In those days, there were great dangers, particularly in regard to night flying which was essential at times. It was the practice of Dr Fenton to proceed to provide assistance as soon as he received a call from a person requiring help in the remote parts of the Northern Territory. In her time, Keeffie flew to some very remote areas around Borroloola, the Gulf district and other parts of the Top End. In those years, when there were few roads and limited facilities for obtaining fuel and other services for aircraft, it was indeed a courageous activity.

There was a touch of humour involved. I understand from Keeffie that Dr Clyde Fenton did not mind his drop of whiskey from time to time. One of the stories that she frequently told was that, when they were flying, he had a habit of having a nip of whiskey and sharing it with the sister or whoever was accompanying him. There was a dividing wall between the 2 sections of the aircraft where the pilot and passenger sat. There was a horizontal oval hole in the wall and, in order to pass the glass of whiskey from one compartment to the other, it was necessary for the aircraft to fly with the wing at 90° to the ground. Keeffie used to get a bit of a kick out of that and, I guess, a kick out of the glass of whiskey when she finally received it. It was one of the very sad facts that Keeffie died before the return of Dr Fenton's first aircraft which is to be returned to Katherine. Unfortunately, that has been delayed. She was very much looking forward to seeing one of his aircraft that was similar to the type that she used to fly in. Unfortunately, she died before she had the opportunity to see it.

Keeffie was a selfless and tireless worker in providing health care to generations of Territorians. She derived personal satisfaction from helping the sick and the underprivileged. Although Keeffie and Johnno never had a family of their own, over the years they had taken into their home countless children who had no home and no one to care for them. Sometimes they were cared for in the O'Keefe's home for weeks and, in some circumstances, for a number of years. They provided a very comfortable home and a family atmosphere for some of the underprivileged children with whom they came in contact.

Sister O'Keefe retired from nursing in the 1960s. At that time, she was nursing in the Outpatients Unit of the Katherine Hospital. In 1965, she was awarded an MBE for her services to nursing and to the community. To give an example of the sincerity and unselfish attitude of Olive O'Keefe, when she moved into a flat after her husband died a few years ago, she had the opportunity to establish that very comfortably but she chose, in fact, to take with her the furniture from the old house that she lived in for 20 years - an old World War II officers' mess on Riverbank Drive in Katherine. She took her furniture and personal possessions from there. She decided to forgo the purchase of new furniture and what we might regard as the trappings of life. Instead, she made a substantial financial donation to the St Joseph's Catholic Primary School in Katherine which contributed significantly to the establishment of that school. That is the type of action that Keeffie undertook during her life that best indicates her unselfishness and her caring attitude towards other human beings.

Keeffie was one of those rare people one meets on the pathway through life, who always put others first and give little thought to the trappings of life and material things. I take this opportunity to record my appreciation of Keeffie, the services that she provided to the Northern Territory and the health care that she provided. I offer my condolences to Olive O'Keeffe's sister, Mrs Ena Ryan, who still lives in Katherine, and the many friends she has in town.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Ladies before gentlemen, Neil.

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH (Koolpinyah): Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker. If the member for MacDonnell cannot see the difference between men and women, he has something wrong with him.

Mr Bell: That has never been the problem, Noel.

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH: It appears to be the problem.

Mr Deputy Speaker, some time ago, during the time of office of the previous Chief Minister, the Minister for Education spoke out in a forthright fashion about certain matters connected with Indonesia. What happened? He was promptly given the chop despite events a short time later proving him to have been substantially correct. I am not a minister and therefore the Chief Minister cannot demote me. I no longer belong to his party and therefore I cannot be disciplined by the party.

I wish to contribute my six-penn'orth in respect of all the illegal Indonesian fishermen who have fished in Australian waters and who will no doubt continue to fish in Australian waters. Believe me, Mr Deputy Speaker, we have seen only the tip of the iceberg. I believe there are many hundreds more Indonesian fishermen who fish in our territorial waters that we have not seen and who will not be apprehended. I would like to know whether, during his recent trip to East Timor, the Chief Minister spoke to Indonesian officials about this matter. I do not think he would have done so. Those Indonesian fishermen who participate in this activity are figuratively raping our territorial waters and, one could say, are thumbing their noses at the Australian authorities as boat after boat comes over. I understand that more than 300 have been accounted for already.

When this matter was raised with the local Indonesian Consul, or some other Indonesian official - I am not sure whom - some months ago, he tried to sweet talk his way out of it and play down its importance as though it were a slight aberration on the part of 1 or 2 fishermen. The Indonesians know that we are too soft in Australia, both on the Northern Territory scene and the federal scene, to stand up for our rights in this matter. What we do is feed, clothe and repatriate these Indonesian fishermen at great cost to the Australian taxpayer.

When a single yacht with 2 Australians aboard strayed into Indonesian waters - and whether they were connected with drugs or not is not the point in question - they were not treated as Australia treats Indonesians who enter our waters. The Australian man was shot outright by an Indonesian policeman who also obviously shot to kill the pregnant woman on the yacht. What a low and callous act: to shoot a pregnant woman who was offering no resistance to the police, who was not fishing in Indonesian territorial waters for profit and who, together with her male companion, came into Indonesian waters because of some navigation problem. Compare the 2 situations, Mr Deputy Speaker. The Indonesians shot this Australian in cold blood. That is remarkably like the

actions of certain prison officers in charge of World War II concentration camps in Europe. He also shot, though failed to kill, the pregnant woman. Mr Deputy Speaker, his actions were disgusting and reprehensible.

In contrast, we have accommodated over 300 Indonesian fisherman for an holiday in Australia of about 5 weeks on average at a cost of about \$15 per person per day. Over 300 trochus shell fishermen, as well as being fed and clothed, have been repatriated to Indonesia by charter at a cost of about \$600 each. Work that out, Mr Deputy Speaker. Merpati, the Indonesian airline, has flown home about 200 Indonesian gill net shark fishermen at a cost of \$132 a head. What a sweet cop that is for the Indonesian government! These fishermen also cost about \$15 each per day to maintain. To my knowledge, the Australian government pays all these fees and fares and perhaps the Northern Territory foots some of the bill too. I do not see our near northern neighbours paying to get their nationals back. They are not silly. We even pay the Indonesian government to fly the fishermen back on Merpati Airlines.

What a comparison, Mr Deputy Speaker. Australians feed and clothe Indonesians and treat them royally when they are found in our territorial waters. Not only do they fish in our territorial waters, it is on record that they have pillaged our national park, the Ashmore Reef National Nature Reserve. They are vandals who have no concern for our wildlife, our environment, the future of our bird species or conservation values generally. Recently, I saw part of a program on ABC television. I could not bear to watch all the lurid details because I like animals too much. However, I saw enough to see instances of the butchering of endangered fauna species by our near northern neighbours and to realise that they have no concern at all for conserving the few remaining numbers of endangered species.

Instead of doing something constructive to maintain numbers, the Indonesians have been actively contributing to the expected sad demise of these species. It appears that the killing was done in a very inhumane way too. The continuation of this practice in the present day indicates that not only the individuals involved but also their governments have no concern at all for the preservation of these endangered species. Indonesians killed 120 sooty terns and noddy terns on the Ashmore Reef National Nature Reserve. In addition, they were involved in the live capture of 40 birds and the taking of about 3000 eggs. This attracts the greatest shame to the Indonesian government which did nothing to publicly rebut the actions of its nationals and has not attempted to repay Australia for this act of robbery. I will be charitable and suggest that something may have been done although I certainly have not heard about it.

Mr Deputy Speaker, what would happen if an Australian national performed such acts. He or she would face considerable fines and possibly a jail term, and rightly so.

By the way, Mr Deputy Speaker, I did not hear too many environmental groups making public statements on this matter. We did not hear a peep from the Australian Conservation Foundation, the Northern Territory Environment Centre or the group which is concerned with endangered bird species. Some people only talk about conservation. Talk is cheap. Some of us do more and live it. My reason for raising this matter has been to point out that the Indonesians who come into our territorial waters to rob us of our natural resources are treated royally in return and repatriated at our expense, whilst 2 Australians who entered Indonesian waters were shot and 1 of them was killed. What a comparison!

Mr PERRON (Chief Minister): Mr Deputy Speaker, I rise to respond to the remarks which the member for Koolpinyah has just made. I believe that the member demonstrated considerable ignorance when she alleged that Australians were shot simply because they had sailed into Indonesian waters.

Mrs Padgham-Purich: Even if they were crooks, they should not have been shot.

Mr PERRON: She argued that that is how Indonesians treat Australians who go into Indonesian waters and contrasted that with the treatment of Indonesian fishermen who enter Australian waters illegally. I think that she is doing a great disservice by drawing comparisons between those situations. I would suggest to her that an enormous number of foreign yachtsmen, tourists and business people travel in Indonesia and in Indonesian waters quite safely, and have been doing so for many years. In the incident described by the member, an Australian appears to have been killed by an Indonesian. I understand that, following diplomatic representations by Australian officials, the Indonesian government has agreed to investigate the matter thoroughly and to bring the persons involved to trial.

Mrs Padgham-Purich: That was months ago.

Mr PERRON: The honourable member interjects that that was months ago. I suggest to her that she might occasionally look at the Australian court lists and investigate the time which often elapses between the laying of charges and the hearing of matters in court. In many cases, that can take a considerable period of time. In the Northern Territory, a gentleman is being held currently on several murder charges. One would imagine that such matters could be brought to court quite quickly but that is not the case. Matters must wait until the authorities are ready and particular cases are scheduled. There are often many reasons for delays and they may include the need for sufficient time to prepare a defence for the accused or for the prosecution to prepare its case. Without knowing all the details, it is very difficult to sit here and make judgments.

I believe that the Indonesian government is very concerned about both types of incident: the injury of foreigners in Indonesian territory and the illegal incursion of Indonesians into Australian waters. I believe that the Indonesian government is very seriously and genuinely concerned about those matters. It is very easy for the member for Koolpinyah to sit back here and comment on a government that has problems which we could not even imagine, in terms of being responsible for a population of 150 to 170 million.

Mrs Padgham-Purich: It has many people to do the work, though.

Mr PERRON: Indonesia has about 13 000 islands and an enormous number of tribal cultures, religions and languages. Comprehending the problems of governing a country like that is well beyond most of us who have experience only of the Northern Territory. However, I believe that the Indonesian government is working very hard to do the right thing in relation to the types of matters referred to by the member for Koolpinyah.

Mrs Padgham-Purich: It does not pay to bring its nationals back.

Mr PERRON: The honourable member complains because Australian dollars are used to pay for the repatriation of Indonesian people. I understand that such matters are dealt with under an international agreement. It is normal practice, when any nation apprehends people from another country who have

broken its law and require repatriation, with or without charges being laid, for that country to foot the bill. I understand that Australia is doing no more than its duty under that convention. Whether or not it will seek some recompense if the problem continues or worsens is a matter for the federal government. I believe that it is completely inappropriate for us to curl our top lips and snarl about the need to sort out the Indonesians. The honourable member should appreciate that fishermen have been moving through these areas for hundreds or even thousands of years.

Mrs Padgham-Purich: I thought they used to come in the Wet.

Mr PERRON: I think she will discover that the people being apprehended are living a subsistence lifestyle, a lifestyle which encourages people to do whatever they have to do to feed themselves and their families.

Mrs Padgham-Purich: Why doesn't their own government look after them?

Mr PERRON: That interjection from the honourable member really does show ignorance. A government in a country like that simply cannot look after its own citizens in the same way as the government in a country like this. We do not realise how lucky we are in being able to afford to look after the poor in this country, to offer unemployment benefits, unmarried mothers' benefits, pensioner benefits and so on. Those countries are so far from being in that financial situation, that it is not funny. Indonesia is a very real example of a third-world, underdeveloped country and, no doubt, it will be for a long time.

Those thoughts spring to mind on hearing the comments of the member for Koolpinyah. I hope that she will think a little more about what she has said and come to a better appreciation of the situation of the Indonesian government. It is not appropriate that she should sit here adopting the attitude that any Australian who enters Indonesian waters is liable to be shot without cause, without subsequent inquiry and without the due process of law occurring. I do not believe that is the case. There have been occasions where foreigners have been savagely and horribly murdered in Australia, and that includes some quite recent cases in the Northern Territory. I hope that the countries from which those people came would understand that it is not the will of the Australian government or the will of the Australian people that that occurred and that they show a bit more appreciation of our our sincerity than she has shown to the people in the government in Indonesia.

Mr BELL (MacDonnell): Mr Deputy Speaker, the Sunday before last, I attended a public meeting at 11 am in Tennant Creek about the subject of strip shows in the local hotel. Strong opinions were expressed on both sides of that argument. I listened very carefully to what various people had to say and it was obvious to me that the drawing up of guidelines for the conduct of these strip shows had not been drawn to the attention of the management of the hotel or of the people attending the public meeting. I felt I had fulfilled some useful purpose by drawing to the attention of the meeting those particular guidelines. There are 10 of them and honourable members may be aware of them. I know the Minister for Tourism, who is responsible for the Racing, Gaming and Liquor Commission, is aware of them because he was instrumental in drawing up the guidelines for the conduct of these shows in Darwin. Subsequently, it became clear to me, firstly, that those guidelines had been breached and, secondly, that the management of the premises concerned was prepared to make some concessions and to operate within the context of those guidelines.

Unfortunately, in my view, the local member cast aspersions on some of the people who had indicated at that public meeting that those guidelines had not been met. It is my intention to table 3 statutory declarations indicating that those guidelines had not been met. Mr Speaker, I seek the leave of the Assembly to table these 3 statutory declarations which I will explain.

Leave granted.

Mr BELL: Of these statutory declarations, 2 are identical in the sense that both of them have been completed by 2 former employees of the hotel, Mr Dennis Graham and Mr Brendan Wyman.

I will go through those guidelines where they indicate the breaches that occurred. The first guideline is that a sign be erected warning the public of the show. They say that, at no time, was there a sign at the front entrance of the public bar stating that the show was taking place. Secondly, curtains and screens should be drawn where passing public may be able to view the show or where it may be viewed by other patrons of the hotel. The declarations state:

The public bar has 4 main access doors which were never cleared. Of these, one was the connecting door to the hotel foyer from the public bar, therefore allowing other patrons to view the show. This made my job as security officer very frustrating because, once you removed under-aged and intoxicated persons, male and female, from the premises, they would enter the bar from another entrance. The fact that the front door facing the main road was always open meant that a substantial amount of our time was spent clearing the front of the hotel of children who were viewing the show through gaps in the curtains and through the open door. My efforts proved most futile due to my responsibility for the other 3 entrances. The ages of these children averaged between 4 and 17 years.

Please note that, Mr Deputy Speaker: 'between 4 and 17 years old'.

The third guideline is that no children are allowed in the area. This is to be stated on the signs warning the public of the show already referred to. The fourth guideline is that the audience is to be kept at a reasonable distance from the show. This is the comment:

Considering the size of the stage and the area in which it is situated, a reasonable distance is definitely not attainable in this situation, taking into account the overcrowded atmosphere created by this situation, the large audiences attending the shows and the need for me to traverse the stage to perform my duties as security officer.

The fifth guideline is that no member of the audience is to touch the entertainers. The comment is:

This code was definitely totally unenforceable due to the severe overcrowding, as previously described, and the fact that the entertainers encouraged audience participation by involving the audience to such an extent whereby they: (a) rubbed oil all over the bodies of the entertainers; (b) assisted in removing clothing from the entertainer; (c) fondled the entertainer as she moved through the audience.

The sixth guideline is that no entertainer is to touch members of the audience. The comment is:

It must be mentioned that, on numerous occasions, the entertainers rubbed parts of their naked bodies on audience members and sat on the laps of audience members.

Seventh guideline is that shows are to be of a type where there is no obscene act or sexual suggestion. Emphasis is to be on the dance routine. The comment is:

It is fair to state that a minority of the entertainers seen during the course of my employment did place more emphasis on the dance routine and a minimum amount of time on being totally naked but, as stated, these entertainers were a minority and a majority were constantly breaching this code, i.e. putting more emphasis on being totally naked than the dance routine.

The eighth guideline is that a responsible member of the hotel team is to be present at each performance to closely monitor the shows and ensure these rules are observed. The comment is:

Due to the overcrowding, as previously described, and the heavy workload experienced by the staff in catering for the large audience in attendance, it was not humanly possible for any one person to effectively monitor the shows.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I will qualify the comments in that declaration by saying that my subsequent discussions with the manager indicated that, in future, the hotel would be sticking to those guidelines. I was shown by the operations manager of Australian Frontier Holidays that those shows would be moved into a different area. I believe that is an amelioration. Personally, I am not particularly happy about strip shows on licensed premises. The views I expressed at that meeting were these. Interestingly, although the meeting had been quite a heated one with differences on each side, I looked around the audience and I said: 'Are there any people here who would be happy to see their daughters or sons or nephews or nieces involved in that sort of activity?' Obviously, there was not a demur from anybody. That is not to say that these things will not occur, that young women will not be prepared to be involved in that sort of performance and that people will not be prepared to pay to watch them. I know that it will happen but, in my view, it should not be happening on licensed premises.

If the sort of incidents that are detailed in those 2 statutory declarations are not sufficiently convincing for honourable members, let me read the third statutory declaration and briefly outline another incident that I do not have in the form of a statutory declaration but which is now the subject of a complaint to the police and a police investigation that stems directly from the occurrence of these shows on licensed premises. I will read this verbatim. It is a statutory declaration from Chris George, who is involved with the Anyinginyi Congress and who stood unsuccessfully for the council. It is not a popular issue. I think, in terms of strict numbers, the member for Barkly is probably keeping well clear of this issue and has regarded as moralists some of the people who have raised these issues. When I read this, it made my hair stand on end. I quote:

I, Christina Hope George, being of sound mind and body make the following statement that, on Thursday 25 February 1988, I accompanied

a number of people to a Tennant Creek Hotel. As I am in the habit, as part of my work, to record incidents in my diary, the incident, which is fairly clear, is one of violence as a direct result of the strip show of the Tennant Creek Hotel.

The strip show had been in progress for some time when a female person came into the lounge and demanded that her husband leave the show immediately. He started to abuse her and was telling her that he was not leaving. She, however, was persistent and a nasty scene broke out. The male person grabbed the female and proceeded to drag her by the hair out of the hotel. She was screaming for help. I felt that it was my community responsibility to try and help the lady. The man proceeded to drag her to the side of the hotel and was continually punching and abusing her. I tried to stop him. However, I was told it was none of my business in no uncertain terms. I raced back into the hotel and immediately phoned the police. When the police came the man had already taken the woman and, at that time, I had no idea who the woman and man was.

It would break your heart, wouldn't it? Mr Deputy Speaker, the other case relates to an incident at the Tennant Creek Hotel the day before this public meeting. I spoke to the woman involved. She went to the hotel about noon. Because she had had a disagreement with her fiance about the strip shows at the pub, she was accused of spying because the stripper was about to come on. She had had 4 drinks of cider but she was by no means intoxicated. However, because an argument broke out, she was refused service and she left. She had no more to drink. She returned to the hotel at 4.30 pm when this incident occurred. She was approached by 3 large men who were all unknown to her. One of these men tipped a drink all over her. The second one said: 'If you go to to the meeting tomorrow, I will knock your block off'. The third one said: 'Yeah, and so will I'.

Honourable members will know enough about the law to know that that constitutes assault. That young woman has laid a complaint with the police on that basis, and so she should. She did not know and still does not know the names of the 3 people. As far as I am concerned, this Assembly has some responsibility to take into consideration those sorts of incidents and not simply walk by on the other side. That young woman subsequently went home and had a further disagreement with her father. Because her fiance and her father ended up in a fight, the father called the police. The police grabbed the fiance and were in the process of taking him to the police station. The father said: 'You might as well take her too'. She was furious. She was sober but, nevertheless, spent 3 hours in the police lock-up on the Saturday night. She had never been in jail in her life. That sort of indignity, that sort of indication of the powerlessness of this woman and the powerlessness of women in both those incidents is something that cannot be ignored by this Assembly. It is for that reason that I am becoming rapidly convinced that we should be taking a stronger position than simply promoting a code of ethics, guidelines - call it what you will - for these shows in licensed premises. Strip shows in licensed premises in that way are less than appropriate.

Mr TUXWORTH (Barkly): Mr Deputy Speaker, I had this item on my agenda to discuss during the adjournment debate. Since the member for MacDonnell has taken my name in vain in relation to this issue, I feel I should respond forthwith. The meeting in Tennant Creek to which the honourable member referred was a very important meeting for several reasons. Regrettably, the meeting was called by a doctor who was pretty emotionally involved with the scene that he lives with in Tennant Creek in terms of looking after people who

are in a drunken state or people who are the innocent victims of assaults by drunken persons.

In that sense, the meeting got off to a pretty shaky start. Nevertheless, the presence of members of the Aboriginal community at the meeting and the forthright manner in which they expressed their concern about the level of alcoholism in the community and the damage that it was doing to them as a community was very good to hear. By its nature, alcoholism is one of those diseases that you cannot do anything about until the people who are suffering from it reach out and ask for help. Any help you try to offer until that point is a waste of time and rarely ever bears fruit. The plea of the Aboriginals was a very important message to the white community. At the same time, the Aboriginals realise too that they must also take action themselves to combat alcoholism because there is only so much that we as a European community and we as a legislature can do. In the end, the Aboriginals have to stop drinking if they want to solve their problem.

The issue of alcoholism was really what the chairman of the meeting, Dr Boffa, was about. In my view, he raised the issue of the strippers to attract attention to the other issue of concern to him. It is one of those things that I must express my great concern about because, as the member for MacDonnell said, there is certainly some irregularity in the way the strip shows are being organised in hotels. Given that the code of ethics was drawn up by the owner or manager of the hotel in question, and that that hotel is where the breach of ethics has occurred, one has to ask how much the code of ethics is worth. The member for MacDonnell has repeated some stories which he heard in Tennant Creek in relation to strip shows, and I have no doubt that they were true. Some pretty horrifying stories were told at the meeting by people who had been to strip shows over a period of weeks. They were not attractive stories or the sort of stories which would do the town much good if they were spread far and wide. They certainly would not do its tourist industry much good.

For the benefit of honourable members, I will repeat a story that I heard in the hope that the minister will take it on board. I was at the baseball grand final, leaning over the fence with a local character who drinks regularly at the Tennant Creek Hotel. We were watching the game and a young fellow of 8 or 9 walked past. My companion turned to me and said: 'You see that young tacker there? Well, he sat in front of me at the strip show last night'. I have no reason to doubt that the person who told me that was telling the truth. He was not being malicious. In fact, he did not care; it was none of his business. He was just making the point.

That story, together with the others, certainly raises questions about the conduct of strip shows and it certainly raises a question in my mind as to whether such strip show activities should occur on licensed premises at all. There are many other places where such activities can occur. In the states, they seem to occur in picture theatres and various other places. If it is necessary for us to have such activities, with or without a code of ethics, I do not think it unreasonable to hold them in places where beer or alcohol is not sold. To the credit of the management, it has come right out and said that it runs the strip shows in the pub to promote the sale of alcohol. It made that straightforward admission to the meeting that was held to discuss the matter. As legislators, we need to decide whether or not we regard strip shows as an appropriate way of promoting the sale of alcohol. What will come next? Will we allow cock fights and dog fights in licensed premises in order to attract people to have a beer on a Sunday?

Mrs Padgham-Purich: Wrestling in baked beans.

Mr TUXWORTH: Yes, wrestling in baked beans or naked wrestling in mud. Are all of these things to become the norm so that people can sell copious amounts of alcohol?

Mr Deputy Speaker, I wish to raise this matter with the minister in more detail at a later date. He ought to be aware that, while it came to a head in Tennant Creek, it is a pretty hot issue almost everywhere in the Territory. People are openly asking: 'What are we coming to? Have we degenerated to such an extent that this has become the norm in our community, in our hotels and in our public premises?' Good, hard-working, law-abiding citizens regard this as an affront to the Territory way of life.

I want to return to the issue of alcohol consumption which is very important in the Territory. Since about 1974, it has been recognised that there is a need to have special legislation to cater for our unique needs in view of the diversity of our population and social patterns. Our Liquor Act contains a wide range of provisions which do not occur in any other liquor legislation in Australia. It takes into account the special social problems which Aborigines have by allowing for the declaration of dry areas and by providing heavy penalties, such as the forfeiture of vehicles, for people convicted of taking alcohol into dry areas. We have made provision for people to be on licensed premises because, in many places, the licensed premise is the only place in the community where a social function can be held. The act provides for roadhouses to be denied the right to sell fortified wines or spirits and, in some cases, we have adjusted the trading hours of roadhouses located near particular Aboriginal communities so that the impact of alcohol on those communities will be minimal. These provisions are fair and reasonable. On the whole, the white community has accepted the intrusion into its normal rights which has to occur if Aborigines are to have the benefit of these provisions.

Despite all this, the level of alcoholism in the Aboriginal community is of great concern, not only to ourselves but to Aborigines themselves. In many ways, they have not come to grips with it and do not know how to cope with it. With licences coming up for renewal, particularly in the southern part of the Territory, there is pressure for further restrictions. These include: a ban on the sale of cartons, with 6-packs to be the upper limit for takeaway purposes; a requirement for beer to be opened before it is sold; restrictions on the availability of fortified wines; and, in some towns, a reduction in alcohol trading hours. Those pressures are continuing to mount. They are causing a great deal of aggravation in the European community because people are saying that they feel that they have made the effort and have done enough, and it is time for the Aborigines to do their part, which is to stop drinking alcohol at their current rate.

I do not subscribe to the view that further restrictions or bans on the sale of alcohol will solve the alcoholism problem among Aborigines. I am one of those people who was here many years ago when Aborigines were not allowed to drink. As honourable members know, in those days, Aborigines obtained alcohol but, worse still, they drank some of the most vile concoctions that one could possibly conceive of. There is no doubt in my mind that, if we continue to restrict the availability of alcohol, it will be only a matter of time before Aborigines start to turn to some of those concoctions again as a substitute for commercial alcohol products.

We are approaching the moment of truth. In due course, I will be putting to the minister my view that sufficient restrictions have been placed on the availability of alcohol through licensed premises in the Territory. Now we need to sit down with Aborigines and say: 'If you continue to drink at the rate you are drinking now, your future is not at all bright'. In my opinion, further restrictions on alcohol sales do not appear likely to solve the problem. Fortunately, some Aborigines are well aware of this and are trying to come to grips with the problem and take a stand. They are not sure how to handle it and I think the meeting in Tennant Creek the other day was a sign of the frustration, exasperation and desperation which the Aboriginal community feels in its efforts to deal with this problem. I think that they will still have to face some traumatic years but that it behoves us to sit down with Aboriginal people and try and work it through.

I must say that, since the meeting the other day, I have had discussions with several Aboriginal women whom I regard in many ways as the backbone of the Aboriginal community in Tennant Creek. They are very sound citizens and they do a very good job keeping the body and soul of the community together. They know, in their heart of hearts, that it is not the availability of liquor, it is not strip shows in liquor joints, it is not fortified wine and it is not rum. It is not all of these other things that is causing the damage. It is the fact that people will not stop drinking. The damage that has been caused by that, with the family cheque each week being spent on alcohol instead of food for their children and all the rest of it, is a problem that still has to be addressed.

I would say to the minister that there is a need for him to come to Tennant Creek in particular and both address the stripper activities that are occurring there and listen to the Aboriginal community and the white community about their feelings on alcohol. Maybe there are things we can do in Tennant Creek as a pilot study to try to obtain a new direction in respect of the problem of Aboriginal drinking and the damage that it is doing to their community. I am not sure that we have all the answers but, certainly, as a community, we have some suggestions that we would like to make. It may need the cooperation of the minister and his Racing, Gaming and Liquor Commission to put those plans into effect.

For the benefit of the member for MacDonnell, I would like to say that I have not dismissed the people organising this movement as rathbags and radicals at all. I am not taking the high moral ground. It is a time for reason, balance and common sense to prevail if the Aboriginal people are to get any relief at all from what is an overwhelming problem.

Mr SETTER (Jingili): Mr Speaker, I rise this evening to respond to the member for Koolpinyah with regard to her ...

Mrs Padgham-Purich: Surprise, surprise!

Mr SETTER: You should not be surprised.

Mrs Padgham-Purich: I am not.

Mr SETTER: And I know you are not. I am responding to the comments the honourable member made concerning Indonesian fishermen and what is commonly known as the David Blenkinsop affair, the yachtsman who allegedly was shot by an Indonesian. I would like to support the comments by the Chief Minister when he responded to her earlier.

I must say that the honourable member's comments earlier displayed an appalling lack of understanding of the situation. Obviously, she has no concept whatsoever of what the true situation is and yet she takes the opportunity to stand up here and go for a cheap grab in the media in an effort to get her name across the front page at the expense of these poor fishermen, and that is a pretty lousy trick in my opinion.

The honourable member spoke about Indonesian fishermen coming down and raping our reefs and whatever.

Mrs Padgham-Purich interjecting.

Mr SETTER: Let me explain it. I think, Mr Speaker, that she should take note because she needs to inform herself a little better than she is informed at the moment. Obviously, she knows nothing about the situation.

There are fishermen coming down and fishing the Ashmore and Cartier Reefs. She spoke earlier about how they are taking terns and tern eggs, and that may well be true.

Mrs Padgham-Purich: It is true.

Mr SETTER: But that is a different group of fishermen from those who are coming down to the Broome area and taking trochus and indeed a different group of fishermen again from those who are coming down to undertake long-line fishing north of the Wessel Islands. You cannot broad brush this situation because many different groups of fishermen and sets of circumstances are involved. One needs to ask why this has suddenly occurred. And I put it to you, Mr Speaker, that it has not occurred suddenly at all, and that these people have been traditionally fishing these areas although perhaps not so close to the coast near Broome, for centuries and centuries. The fact that the Australian surveillance authorities have lifted their game and are now paying far more attention to this issue and, in consequence, are apprehending more of these fisherman has brought the matter into the public arena.

Many of the people are not poor fishermen. In fact, the majority of the people arrested on vessels off the Wessel Islands recently were farmers. That came about because the second rice crop had failed and a couple of smart Chinese businessmen who had vessels told these farmers that they knew they were down on their luck and that they would give them the chance to make a quick dollar. They supplied a vessel, with a skipper and first mate, and the farmers worked as crew. They bought their own supplies and were fishing for shark fin. It was an entirely different situation to what was happening over in the west.

Mrs Padgham-Purich: That was what I said. One was trochus and one was shark fin!

Mr SETTER: You agree with me. Good. But you must understand that, in the main, these people are uneducated. They are simple fishermen or farmers who are coming down to try to make a living for their families and, whilst you say ...

Mrs Padgham-Purich: In our territorial waters.

Mr SETTER: Okay, in our territorial waters. However, you must appreciate that these vessels have very limited navigational equipment. They might have a compass and a rough map and that is about all. Somebody has drawn a line

across the sea out there which is 250 miles off the shore here, and these poor fellows sail down trying to catch fish and suddenly they drift across that line.

Mr Collins: 100 miles?

Mr SETTER: They may well be in Australian waters but, from what I understand, generally they are not very far within our waters and it is very understandable that, with the poor navigational equipment that they have, they could easily make that error.

I am not trying to excuse them for fishing in Australian waters. There seems to be little doubt that they have done that and they have to pay the penalty, but the honourable member said that we are giving them a holiday for 5 weeks or more and, at Australian government expense, we send them back to Indonesia and it is a great big jaunt. She implied that they were virtually lining up to come down and enjoy our hospitality. What absolute rubbish.

Mrs Padgham-Purich: Those are your words, not mine.

Mr SETTER: The greatest penalty that they can incur is to lose their vessels. They are incurring that penalty. So far, 60 or 70 vessels have been impounded.

Mrs Padgham-Purich: 84!

Mr SETTER: Okay, 84 have been impounded.

These people return to their villages but without their traditional source of income which, for most of them, are these fishing boats. That group of people have depended on those boats to provide food and income for their villages for a long time. Now we have taken that means of support from them. Where do they go? What do they do? Are they to starve? I am saying that, by impounding these vessels, we have imposed on those people a greater penalty than fining them thousands of dollars because those fishing boats are extremely difficult to replace. In fact, I doubt if they could afford to replace them. An enormous penalty is being imposed on those people.

As the Chief Minister indicated before, one of the great difficulties that the Indonesian government has in this whole scenario is being able to communicate with these people who live in these very far-flung and remote islands. There are 13 000 islands there and even the provincial authorities have great difficulty in getting the message across to these people. By the time it eventually filters through, in many cases the damage has already been done. As the message does get through and they realise the consequences of fishing in Australian waters, this problem will taper off very quickly.

One of the difficulties that is causing is that, because of the enormous population of some 170 million people there, their waters are being fished out. One of their greatest sources of food, particularly for the island people, is fish. Can you imagine the number of people fishing those waters day in and day out. It soon depletes the fishing grounds. Because that has been occurring, the people are now travelling further afield looking for fish. All these matters are compounding the problem. I think the problem will solve itself. As the Indonesian government is able to get the message across, the people will realise that it is not worth the risk.

The other matter that the honourable member raised concerns David Blenkinsop whom she alleges was shot by an Indonesian policeman in Irian Jayan waters. Again, obviously, she has no understanding of what that situation was. From what I have read in the media - and I am no authority on it - and obviously her sources are the same as mine, he was in that area without a sailing permit. When you enter waters of a foreign country, you require a permit to enter those waters. If you do not have a permit, you are there illegally in the same way that these fishermen are.

Mrs Padgham-Purich: They were not shot, though, were they?

Mr SETTER: The authorities had every right to apprehend that vessel.

Mrs Padgham-Purich: Yes, but they were shot.

Mr SETTER: Mr Speaker, according to reports that I have read in the media, that vessel was travelling from the island where it was apprehended to Biak, which is a further island in Irian Jayan waters. They were travelling at night through reefs. Blenkinsop was very concerned about the safety of his vessel and he protested to the police officers who were on board. I understand that some altercation occurred and it is alleged that, as a result, Mr Blenkinsop was shot and, subsequently, apparently has died.

That occurred in August. It was not reported in Australia until mid- to late October. In the interim, Blenkinsop's father and brother had been to that area searching for him for some time and had returned to Australia. The British Embassy in Jakarta and the Australian Embassy were both aware of it and had been undertaking investigations into the matter long before it became public knowledge in Australia. Indeed, when the matter was first raised and came to the notice of those authorities, they understood that Blenkinsop and his lady friend were British. I understand that Mr Blenkinsop held dual nationality. They all thought he was British and that the British were the prime instigators of the investigation.

Mrs Padgham-Purich: That doesn't excuse his being shot.

Mr SETTER: Mr Speaker, perhaps it does not exonerate anybody. However, I understand that that policeman has been charged and will be brought to trial. It will be very interesting to see what the outcome of that trial is because, from the reputation that Mr Blenkinsop had in Darwin, one must have some suspicion about some of the things that have been said and alleged.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I think it is very important that one does not take a firm position in this whole matter. As I said, the Blenkinsop affair will be before the courts in Indonesia at some future date. I understand that the Australian Embassy will be monitoring the situation very closely, and that the Australian media will be present and we will receive reports when that case comes to court. In closing, I would like to recommend to the honourable member that, before she goes running off at the mouth again and making all sorts of allegations and accusations, she get her facts straight because, in this particular instance, she is way off the track.

Mr COLLINS (Sadadeen): Mr Speaker, I was rather disappointed this morning when I asked a question of the Chief Minister in relation to 'The Territory on the Move'. He commented that he had never heard the suggestion from me that the whole booklet would have been greatly improved in its marketability and its assistance to people whose appetite for the Territory had been whetted if contact phone numbers and addresses had been supplied. Obviously, the best

place for that information to be included would have been at the appropriate place in each of the sections of the booklet.

I recall very clearly interjecting when it was debated at the last sittings. When the Chief Minister was summing up, I called out a couple of times across the floor, 'What about the contact addresses and phone numbers?' But he chose to ignore that. The point is that the booklet contains much good information to whet the appetite of people but then it leaves them high and dry. The Chief Minister may be correct in saying that a person who is very keen will ring around and obtain more information, but what about the person who reads this through and sees something that catches his interest? He may wish to know more about it but, because the information is not readily available, he may well be distracted by something else and simply forget about it.

The booklet was a good idea but it has not been followed through. When one is trying to sell something, it is best to make things as easy as possible for customers and clients. One of the things that I have learnt about the art of selling is that you should make it as easy as you possibly can for people to obtain further information because that little spark of interest which is aroused can be fanned into a flame. We must make it easy to obtain further information. We need people on the other end of the telephone line in government departments and the private sector who can provide information and help people develop their ideas. From that point of view, this really is a failure because of that simple shortcoming. No doubt it would have taken some time to gather that information, but it should have been done.

However, for the Chief Minister to suggest that he has not heard of my suggestion before amazes me. I discussed it with 1 government member who said he thought it was an idea worthy of very strong consideration. I would be most surprised if he had not raised it with the Chief Minister, but I cannot guarantee that one way or the other. It is something that the Chief Minister should take on board if he is really serious about wanting to get real value out of an expensive booklet. It should be followed up with contact numbers. That will certainly not be as good as it would have been to have had those contact numbers printed at the appropriate places in the original document, but at least it would give a better chance for interested people to obtain further information. If people have that additional information and encouragement, they may take the more tedious and expensive step of coming to the Territory and taking up some of the opportunities which no doubt abound for people with the get up and go, and those are the people that this booklet is designed to attract.

I saw a reminder on television this evening that, on Friday and Saturday night during this coming weekend, there is to be a nation-wide television appeal for Life Education. Channel 9 has taken up this cause in support of Life Education across Australia. Imparja in Alice Springs is joining in and people from all over Australia will be encouraging others to make their donations towards Life Education which, in my book, is the most positive thing which people of this country can do if they are concerned about their kids and their grandchildren and the drug scene. For our kids, the drug scene is not a very happy one. I am certainly glad that, in my teenage years, one never heard of any drugs apart from alcohol, although I do remember an episode in a Biggles yarn in which some chewing gum was drugged. I think it was in 'Biggles Goes to the Orient'. There may have been some drug use in our society but it was very limited and well hidden.

I would urge all honourable members to take an interest and learn about what the Life Education program is about. It is certainly gripping the imagination of people and gaining their support. A number of functions presented by the Life Education group in Alice Springs have been absolutely fantastic. It is heartening to see that group endeavouring to raise \$200 000 in an area which extends from Katherine in the north to Coober Pedy in South Australia in the south.

I urge all members to become involved. Politics does not come into this. The drug problem is far too important and any donation, no matter how small, contributes to spreading understanding of the drug scene among our society's children and giving them the capacity to say no to people promoting drug use. This program offers a wonderful opportunity to tackle the problem of stopping the demand for drugs, given that legal measures, such as the application of harsh penalties, do not seem to be stopping the supply. I urge honourable members to become involved. I know that their support will be very welcome because this project belongs to all Territorians. It has the capacity to unite people and that is something which we certainly need.

The Aboriginal community is very concerned about drug abuse, petrol sniffing and so forth. Aboriginal people care for the welfare of their kids just as we do and, with that sort of common ground, it is easy to create a feeling of empathy that crosses cultural barriers. I recommend members to find out about the program, to become involved and to give it their support. I believe that it is a project which belongs to the total community and I hope that we never have to ask for government money to employ the teacher or for other purposes. If that happens, I believe the program will lose its impetus in the community.

Motion agreed to; the Assembly adjourned.

Mr Speaker Vale took the Chair at 10 am.

SUSPENSION OF STANDING ORDERS

Mr MANZIE (Lands and Housing): Mr Speaker, I move that so much of standing orders be suspended as would prevent me from moving a motion relating to the government's new housing assistance package and the actions of the opposition in relation to it.

Motion agreed to.

MOTION

Condemnation of the Opposition

Mr MANZIE: Mr Speaker, I move that this Assembly condemn the members of the opposition for:

- (1) their gratuitous and irresponsible attempt to undermine the new Northern Territory Interest Subsidy Scheme;
- (2) their reckless attempt to mislead the Northern Territory public by falsely claiming that the new scheme may be in jeopardy;
- (3) their attempt to have the federal government intervene in Northern Territory affairs; and
- (4) the Leader of the Opposition's abject failure to meet his responsibilities to represent his constituents at the sittings of this Assembly without any justification for his absence.

Mr Speaker, Territorians awoke this morning to the voice of the Leader of the Opposition, the member for Millner, speaking through the media. For the benefit of honourable members who were lucky enough to miss the broadcast this morning, I will read out some of the comments that he made. On the 7 o'clock 8DN news, he said:

Well, last night, it became clear the Northern Territory government was in breach of 2 sections of the Commonwealth State Housing Agreement with its new housing policy. This has placed in jeopardy the housing package arrangements announced yesterday because the Northern Territory government has not gone about it the right way, because it has not made the basic consultations with the federal minister and sought his approval as is necessary. There is some real concern now about the future of the package. It is to resolve those concerns that I am taking off on this trip this morning.

Mr Speaker, on the ABC 7.25 am news, a reporter stated:

Mr Smith has told the ABC that the new Interest Subsidy Scheme tabled in the House is without federal government approval and it appears the Territory government is in breach of the Commonwealth State Housing Agreement. Mr Smith claimed any new arrangements concerning interest rates must be subject to federal as well as local government negotiations. According to Mr Smith: 'It has the potential to place in jeopardy the whole arrangement announced yesterday by Daryl Manzie. No one in the Northern Territory wants that to happen. We should not be in this position'.

The member for Stuart gave us a rundown as well on the radio this morning. Mr Speaker, what does all this mean? It is very easy to see what it means. It is a very cheap political stunt by the Leader of the Opposition to try to gain some newspaper coverage, some radio coverage and some headlines at the expense of Territorians. It means that, in an effort to gain some kudos for his mumblings and bumbblings over the last few years, the Leader of the Opposition will attempt to place in jeopardy a housing assistance scheme that is available for Territorians. He will do that by travelling to Canberra, cap in hand, to grovel to his political masters in the hope that that will lead to some interference in our affairs which will affect all Territorians. It is an unprecedented action which deserves loud condemnation, not only from members of this House but from members of the entire Territory community.

In this context, it is important firstly to look at what the government proposes to do and, secondly, at the Commonwealth State Housing Agreement.

Mr TUXWORTH: A point of order, Mr Speaker! I am sorry to interrupt the minister's speech, but I would like some clarification from either yourself or the Leader of Government Business about the housekeeping arrangements. Is question time to be set aside while this motion is dealt with, and will all members be entitled to speak in this debate or will there be a specific number of speakers from each side of the House?

Mr SPEAKER: My understanding is that, in essence, this is a censure motion and that question time will occur after the motion is dealt with.

Mr COULTER: Mr Speaker, I can advise the member for Barkly that question time has simply been postponed until later in the day. The matter before the House is a motion rather than a censure motion. I also advise all honourable members that the debate is being broadcast on 8 TOP FM. In terms of the opportunity for members on the crossbenches to participate in this debate, perhaps the member for Barkly would like to talk to the Deputy Leader of the Opposition, the member for Stuart.

Mr TUXWORTH: Mr Speaker, I would appreciate it if the Leader of Government Business could answer the question directly and say whether all members in the House will have an opportunity to participate or not.

Mr COULTER: Mr Speaker, when a motion is being debated, the usual practice is to allow any member to speak.

Mr TUXWORTH: I thank the Leader of Government Business for his answer. I am sorry, Mr Speaker, to have had to interrupt the minister's speech.

Mr MANZIE: Mr Speaker, if the member for Barkly were conversant with standing orders, he would probably understand how this debate will proceed. I believe that this matter is far more important than a lecture on the protocol of the House.

Mr Speaker, as I was saying, let us have a look at what the government has done. It has put together a package to provide relief to people who are presently covered by the Northern Territory Home Purchase Assistance Scheme. That package conforms with the requirements of the Commonwealth State Housing Agreement, and I will explain why that is so shortly. In addition, we have introduced a new scheme which will assist low- and middle-income earners to purchase houses in the Northern Territory and to meet their monthly repayments in spite of continued efforts by the federal government to raise interest rates and to prevent ordinary Australians from having the opportunity to buy a

house. It is an innovative scheme which aims to assist Territory families and we stand behind it unashamedly. I believe that the majority of Territorians support us.

What has occurred in response to that initiative? The Leader of the Opposition packed his bags in the middle of the night and raced off, cap in hand, to his masters in Canberra to ask them: 'What can we do about this? How can we stop it? How can we gain some kudos from it? How can we make out that we are the ones who are helping Territorians?' What an absolutely appalling attempt to grab a headline! The Leader of the Opposition is jeopardising the rights of Territorians in relation to other Australians. This sort of action was foreshadowed yesterday when the member for MacDonnell stated that he might try to interfere with our funding arrangements because of the steps we have taken to assist Territorians purchasing homes. Perhaps that was the first stage in the opposition's strategy.

Mr BELL: A point of order, Mr Speaker! The minister for Lands and Housing is most welcome to introduce a motion of this sort into the House. He is not welcome to misrepresent completely my comments in this regard and I ask him to withdraw any suggestion that I intend to interfere personally with the financial arrangements that he and his government are making for the housing of Territorians.

Mr SPEAKER: There is no point of order. The member for MacDonnell can respond at a later stage.

Mr MANZIE: Mr Speaker, it is obvious that the member for MacDonnell now regrets his comments. They are on the record and the implications behind them are very clear. Territorians will be entitled to make the sort of inferences that all members of this House made yesterday: because the member for MacDonnell was miffed and because the Labor Party had not come forward with an innovative scheme to assist Territorians, in some way he would cause penalties to be imposed. A previous federal member, Mr John Reeves, did the same thing when he went about trying to ensure that cuts would be made to funding to the Territory by making statements in the federal House that we were overfunded.

Mr Speaker, they have 'priors' for this sort of behaviour and, believe you me ...

Mr Bell laughing.

Mr MANZIE: He is laughing, Mr Speaker. He thinks it is funny. I am glad that he does because I do not. I believe that funding to Territorians should be based on exactly the same grounds as that given to other Australians. For members opposite, for political gain, to try to interfere with our funding relationships is absolutely abominable. Clearly, the electorate realises that and that is why there are only 6 members opposite.

To get back to what is happening, we have a situation whereby, for political gain, the Leader of the Opposition is attempting to interfere with the sovereignty of the Territory government. Mr Speaker, let us have a look at the Commonwealth State Housing Agreement. I would like to start with schedule 1 Recital (D) which says that the 'primary principle of this agreement is to ensure that every person in Australia has access to adequate and appropriate housing at a price within his or her capacity to pay ...'. Recital (D)(a) says: '... the primary consideration in delivering housing assistance under this agreement will be the needs of people, rather than to attach assistance to particular dwellings or categories of dwellings ...'.

Recital (D)(d) is quite explicit: '... ownership assistance under this agreement shall seek to provide home ownership opportunities for those unable to obtain or maintain affordable finance from the private sector or from other sources outside the agreement;'. (e) states: '... the state will be able to exercise maximum autonomy and flexibility in developing the administrative arrangements necessary to achieve these principles'.

Mr Speaker, please note that last phrase: 'the state will be able to exercise maximum autonomy and flexibility'. I certainly do not believe that the Leader of the Opposition's running down to Canberra cap in hand will help the Territory to exercise maximum autonomy. But I will move on.

Under clause 21(1)(h), if I can find the appropriate amendment ...

Mr Tuxworth: Daryl, can we have a copy of that?

Mr MANZIE: Yes, I can provide one later.

It says that we 'shall assist home purchase by other means, including participation in joint ventures'. It is very clear that the agreement gives flexibility and scope to a state government. The state may use moneys - in accordance with Recital (D), which gives maximum autonomy and flexibility - 'to provide home ownership opportunities for those unable to obtain or maintain affordable finance and ... assisting home purchase by other means including participation in joint ventures'.

Mr Speaker, we move on to section 27(3)(a) of the Home Purchase Assistance Scheme which says, as amended:

the state may waive recovery pursuant to paragraph (d) of subclause (1) in any year of any amount recoverable in respect of the preceding year, having regard to the level of repayments as adjusted in accordance with paragraph 27(1)(c) and, where necessary, the income of the home purchaser.

Section 27(3)(b) states:

in the event that the loan is discharged in circumstances in which the borrower would suffer hardship if he or she were required to repay an amount recoverable, and having regard also to movement in housing prices and in the income of the home purchaser ...

In other words, the government has the ability, under the agreement, to waive amounts recoverable in respect of the loan. It even has the ability to discharge the loan in circumstances where the borrower may suffer some sort of hardship. That is implicit in the agreement. I believe that steps taken under the Northern Territory Home Purchase Assistance Scheme fit within the guidelines of that agreement without any problems whatsoever. The agreement is there for people to look at and I am sure that, when the fuss and bother that has been created by the Leader of the Opposition dies down, that is exactly what will happen.

Section 28(3) of the agreement, as amended, lays out that the state has the ability to reschedule repayments of loans in relation to agreements under the agreement. Those sections give scope to the state governments that have made an agreement with the Commonwealth to move within the confines of that agreement in those areas. This government has been quite careful to ensure that the changes proposed meet the requirements of the agreement. When you

Look at what occurs in the states - and we had considerable consultation with state governments - you will find that similar schemes are in operation in the states. Clause 28(3) of the agreement is quite explicit in saying that the state may reschedule repayments and the conditions of eligibility shall be that assistance is provided to those persons who are not able to obtain mortgage finance assistance on the open market or from other sources. The agreement expands on the ability of assistance to be provided to those people in need.

In Queensland, there is a system of home finance assistance which is based on income and on an interest subsidy scheme. It is not dissimilar in concept to the scheme that is being proposed for introduction on 1 December. I will bet that the leader of the Labor Party in Queensland did not run off when that particular scheme was proposed in Queensland. The other states have similar systems of assistance in terms of loans for low-income earners in the form of interest subsidised starter loans, low repayment loans etc.

There are myriad schemes throughout Australia which all operate within the confines of the agreement and I will guarantee that not 1 member of the opposition in any of the states ran off to Canberra when those schemes were proposed to try to have the scheme changed, stopped or altered, or to jeopardise it. Instead of asking a question during question time this morning with regard to any misgivings he may have in relation to the scheme as proposed, instead of addressing a question to the appropriate minister, what did the Leader of the Opposition do? He packed his bags in the middle of the night and off he ran. I have since found out that he will not be able to see the federal minister until 7 o'clock tonight anyway.

But, Mr Speaker, fancy him not asking his questions of the appropriate minister in this House! This is the Northern Territory. We govern ourselves. In case these people over the road do not remember, we have responsibility for these matters. We have ministers in this government who are responsible for particular items and areas of government expenditure and the role of the opposition is to ask questions in this parliament of those responsible ministers, not to hop on an aeroplane and go running off to Canberra. Perhaps he is getting instructions, asking what he should do next. We know they are all members of the Australian Labor Party and that they are not a Northern Territory party. They do not care about the interests of Territorians and they do not worry about what Territorians think. They worry about what their bosses in Canberra think - and I hear a moan from the member for MacDonnell.

Can anyone in this House understand why the Leader of the Opposition would run off to Canberra in the middle of the night instead of asking some simple questions in this House? I can tell you why he did it, Mr Speaker. He did it because, if he had asked those simple questions in this House, he would have obtained the answers but he would have missed out on a headline. We need to be aware of what is happening. The members opposite are trying deliberately to get the federal government to interfere, in a way which would be unprecedented in this country in relation to the Commonwealth State Housing Agreement, to prevent Territorians achieving home ownership. We have to be very clear about that. If there were any doubts whatsoever in the minds of members opposite, they should make the point in here, not run off to Canberra and say: 'Oops! Can you tell us how we can trick these guys, how we can muck up the scheme and how we can hurt Territorians? We might get a few votes out of it'. Not only will they get no votes out of it, but I believe that we are seeing the last days of the member for Millner as the leader of the Northern Territory Labor Party.

If the honourable member really did not want to ask questions in here, I am sure he could have picked up a telephone and contacted the federal member or their federal Senator. I am sure that Senator Bob Collins would have made inquiries for him. The federal House is sitting at present and that would certainly have saved the cost of an aeroplane trip and travelling allowance. Perhaps it was organised to get him out of the House and take the heat off him for a while because he is under considerable pressure.

Mr Speaker, we need to get down to the facts on this and understand what we are talking about. We are talking about a situation where we have an agreement with the Commonwealth regarding state finance and housing assistance money. We provide money from the Territory Treasury - our money. In addition, we receive money from the federal government under the Commonwealth State Housing Agreement, and that money is to be used for the provision of accommodation for people who have problems in purchasing their home, and to provide assistance in the purchase of accommodation and the purchase of housing for people in the low- and middle-income groups who have difficulty in obtaining finance from normal finance sources. It is pretty clear. The agreement gives autonomy to local state ministers within a set of general guidelines. We believe that the scheme that is proposed to start on 1 December fits in with those guidelines. We have had advice from Treasury officials and from housing people. They have had discussions with their interstate colleagues and their Commonwealth counterparts. The measures were not put before this House at the drop of a hat. They were 10 months in the making.

What has been the opposition's response? Instead of putting questions to me in this House about any doubts he may have in relation to certain provisions of the legislation, the Leader of the Opposition has boarded a plane in the middle of the night. Why? Because he is looking for a cheap headline. What does he hope to achieve? He cannot change the agreement. He cannot change the advice that the government has been given. The only thing he can do, if he causes enough problems in relation to the Commonwealth's role in the financing arrangements, is to cause Territory homebuyers to suffer by restricting their access to cheap housing. I cannot see why he would go to Canberra, except to cause problems for Territorians which he thinks may result in increased votes for him at the ballot box.

I have pointed out quite clearly that the provisions of the Commonwealth State Housing Agreement allow for what has been proposed. It is an innovative scheme, but it is not unique. Already, similar schemes are operating elsewhere in the country. It is a Territory scheme which is within the powers of the Territory government under the agreement. If the Leader of the Opposition has questions to ask, he should put them to the Territory government rather than run off to get his mates in Canberra to torpedo the hopes and aspirations of Territorians.

This House must condemn the Leader of the Opposition and members opposite for the attitude they have displayed in relation to the attempts by this government to provide assistance to Territorians at a time when this country is moving away from some things that we all hold dear such as home ownership, the integrity of the family and the ability of people to provide a roof over their heads. This House must pass the motion condemning the opposition. I certainly hope that members opposite will have a look at what they have been doing in the last couple of days. I hope that they will have a hard look at the actions of the Leader of the Opposition because I am sure the Territory community will be doing so. People will be endeavouring to work out what he is trying to achieve and will watch very carefully to see if he does achieve

it. I am sure that some members opposite, as well as federal members of the Territory Labor party, will abhor the action of the member for Millner and I am sure that he will be censured by them at a later stage. Indeed, these may be his last days as Leader of the Opposition.

We must understand what is happening. The opposition is making a deliberate attempt to undermine the aspirations of ordinary Territorians to own their own homes. Mr Speaker, I commend the motion and ask all members to be loud and clear in their condemnation of what the opposition has attempted to do during the last couple of days.

Mr EDE (Stuart): Mr Speaker, I am very sorry to hear the line which the minister has taken in relation to this very important proposal. As we have said, it is 2 or 3 years too late. However, it does attempt to address some of the problems that people are experiencing with their loan repayments, given the downturn in the Territory economy and the real problems that the housing industry is suffering. It really is a shame that the minister has decided to play politics and to make a political speech. Yesterday, he knocked Canberra and attempted to argue that it is somehow the fault of the federal government that the Northern Territory is going backwards when the rest of Australia is booming. Today he has continued to knock Canberra.

Mr Manzie: I am not knocking Canberra.

Mr EDE: I find that most unfortunate. He says that the Leader of the Opposition is going to Canberra, cap in hand. To some extent, that is true. He is going cap in hand. He is doing so in an effort to save the government's package. That would not have been necessary if the government had done its job correctly. In a moment, I will cite the relevant section of the act, which the minister skirted around entirely. That section makes it absolutely clear, beyond all doubt, why there is a problem with the government's package.

Mr Speaker, last night we made a routine phone call to the federal minister, Mr Staples. We were quite surprised to hear that the Northern Territory government had made no contact with his office in relation to its proposals. His office had not received copies of them and were quite unaware of them. In fact, the federal minister said that he had never met Mr Manzie, nor had he ever had a phone call from him. We faxed down a copy of the proposals and were surprised when word came back some time later that they appeared to contain at least 2 clear breaches of the Commonwealth State Housing Agreement.

We decided immediately that we had to do our best to find some way to fix the problem. We rang Senator Bob Collins and Mr Warren Snowdon, the Territory member in the House of Representatives. We asked them to assist in setting up a meeting between the Leader of the Opposition and Mr Staples at a time which would enable the Leader of the Opposition to be in Canberra. That time is tonight. He left Darwin by air at 6 am this morning. That was the quickest way that he could get to Canberra. He will be meeting with the minister tonight. All we can do is wait and hope that he has some success and is able to pull the irons out of the fire.

The honourable minister quoted selectively from various parts of the agreement which do give the states certain powers to act in their own right under the Commonwealth State Housing Agreement. However, there are a couple of fundamental areas. Clause 27(1)(a) of schedule 1 to the Housing Assistance Act is quite clear:

The rate of interest that is charged in respect of so much as is for the time being outstanding on a loan or under a terms contract of sale, as the case may be, to a home purchaser shall be the rate that is from time to time agreed between the minister and the state minister having regard to the then ruling minimum Commonwealth Savings Bank market rate for housing loans and other factors as are for this purpose from time to time agreed.

It is talking about the rate of interest that is charged in respect of the amount outstanding. It is to be the rate that is from time to time agreed between the federal minister and the state minister which, in this agreement, includes a Territory minister, having regard to then ruling minimum Commonwealth Savings Bank market rate for housing loans and other factors. It cannot be clearer than that. It states specifically that, where amendments relate to interest rates, it is necessary for the minister to obtain the agreement of the Commonwealth minister.

Whether that would have been an easy task or a difficult task is not the question. The minister has been working on this proposal for some 10 months. He said that he has had discussions with his interstate colleagues and that he had talked to people somewhere in the Commonwealth bureaucracy. Certainly, he has not talked to the minister, which he is required to do under the agreement. Equally certainly, he has not talked to anybody on the minister's staff. Possibly, he may have had somebody at a junior level in his department ring up somebody at a junior level in the federal department and talk about a proposal that the Territory government was developing. At a federal level, it is the ministers who control the policy of the government. It may be that junior public servants control the policy formulation of this government, but that is not the situation in Canberra. As it states in the agreement, it is minister to minister. Changes of this kind require a bilateral agreement between those 2 ministers.

Mr Speaker, I have a copy of the relevant clause of the schedule and I am surprised that the members opposite do not have it. The fact that, after 10 months consideration, the minister opposite or his department did not have the nous to read the act and the schedule to see that it quite clearly required him to obtain the agreement of the federal minister is what has blown this package out of the water. We could have said nothing and possibly run a couple of questions in this House and tried to make a thing about it. If we had done that, we would have been criticised, and correctly so, for playing politics with this because the time frame is critical. This is the important factor. The bill was to be introduced today. This is not a package ...

Members interjecting.

Mr LEO: A point of order, Mr Speaker! Perhaps you might remind the members opposite that this debate is going to air. Whilst they may be prepared to discredit themselves, I do not think it is right that they should discredit this House.

Mr SPEAKER: There is no point of order but, in fact, the member for Nhulunbuy is correct. I remind all honourable members that this is going to air and interjections will interfere with the ability of the listeners to hear properly.

Mr EDE: Mr Speaker, the fact was that there was very little time. This was not a proposal that the minister was tabling for public discussion and which would become the subject of a bill at some later stage which would then

go through the normal process of being introduced, together with a second-reading speech, in 1 sittings and then be finalised at another sittings. The minister told us yesterday, when he introduced this package, that this bill would be passed this week under urgency because he wished to have it operational by 1 December. That put a critical time frame on this proposal. The bill was to be introduced today. I understand that he was to seek a suspension of standing orders to attempt to push it through all stages tomorrow.

If we had sat back and waited, we would have been in the situation in the Northern Territory where the Commonwealth State Housing Agreement would have been breached. The government could have pig-headedly passed legislation which it would have been unable to implement because it would be in breach of the Commonwealth State Housing Agreement. The sufferers would have been Territorian home owners, the very people whom we are all committed to try to assist. Those people would have suffered because it would have ended with an argument between the 2 levels of government. The federal government would have said: 'You did not come to us as is required in the legislation. Come to us and we will discuss it'. The whole bureaucratic process would have gone on over the Christmas period.

The very reasonable and correct decision that we made last night was that the Leader of the Opposition had to travel to Canberra and, together with the member for the Northern Territory and Senator Bob Collins, speak to Mr Staples. They will say to minister: 'Regardless of the fact that there has been a breach, regardless of the fact that the act requires the minister in the Northern Territory to discuss this matter with you and to seek your agreement, please set that aside for the moment and let us see if we can provide assistance to Territory home owners'.

Mr Coulter: What did Mr Staples say to you when you said that to him?

Mr EDE: Mr Speaker, Mr Staples has agreed to meet. I think that honourable members should realise that there are ramifications to this. Yesterday, we believed that the government had cleared these matters with the federal government. It was a perfectly normal assumption. After all, the act is there and we presumed that the minister knows the act because it is fundamental to his portfolio of housing. After all, some 90% of his housing funding is dominated by that act because the money comes from the federal government. But that was not the case, and therefore the decision had to be made for the Leader of the Opposition to travel to Canberra.

One of the points that came up in those discussions was that, because of the time that it takes to reach Canberra by plane, he would not arrive in time to see the minister before 7 o'clock tonight. Hopefully, in the meantime, the federal government, through its bureaucracy, will be able to work out whether there are any wider ramifications to this proposal which will result in more problems or whether it is possible for us to set aside the fact that there has been a breach of the Commonwealth State Housing Agreement and proceed. It is possible that there could be problems in that, while we may be talking about \$1.75m to \$2m, the same scheme applied in New South Wales might run into hundreds of millions of dollars of federal money. Obviously, that is an issue which the federal minister has to look at. He has to see what would happen if he were to create a precedent by agreeing to this scheme operating in the Northern Territory and, once created, what effect that precedent would have around Australia.

We remain hopeful. All we can really do at this stage is hope that, between them, Senator Bob Collins, the federal member, Mr Warren Snowdon, and the Leader of the Opposition will succeed in pulling the minister's irons out of the fire.

Mr Dale: He is sneaking around like Jack the Ripper trying to cut our gizzard out. That is what he is doing.

Mr EDE: Oh, Mr Speaker! That is really an absolutely ridiculous statement from the honourable minister. I would hope that, when he speaks in this debate, he will withdraw it and apologise. We are doing our level best to try to pull this government's mistakes out of the fire but the series of absolutely grotesque errors that this government has made in this regard is really breathtaking.

I hope that government members will realise that the fumbling performance that we witnessed from the minister opposite indicated that he was trying to pull the wool over their eyes in order to cover his tail after he had made an abysmal failure of discussing this and obtaining the approval of the federal minister. After all, he did have the opportunity to do that. I am informed that, as recently as last week, the Minister for Lands and Housing was in Canberra. He was traipsing around from embassy to embassy in Canberra trying to beat up support for one of his colleagues to take a trip to Rio. That was his priority. Whilst he was there, he could have had a talk with the responsible federal minister, Mr Staples. He could have had that discussion. He could have talked with him in general terms whilst he was in Canberra and then he would have found out that there was a possibility that this scheme would breach the agreement if it were not discussed, and that would have been sorted out.

Mr Dale: Oh, it is too late now, is it?

Mr EDE: It was potential last week; it is actual now.

Mr Speaker, the honourable minister failed last week. However, he showed all Territorians where his priorities lie. In Canberra, his priorities were not with the housing aspect of his portfolio. His priority was to set up cheap political tricks to score cheap political points in connection with his colleague's trip to Rio.

If that bill is introduced today, it will be the first time that members on this side of the House have even had a chance to look at it. That is another indication of the minister's frame of mind in relation to this package. Not only did he not talk to his federal colleague about the package, he also has a bill in his pocket which he intends to introduce under urgency, between today and tomorrow, without showing it to the opposition. I dare say that he has displayed the same lack of courtesy to members on the crossbenches. That approach is unfortunate.

I will now quote from a press release which I have just received from Hon Peter Staples, the federal minister responsible for housing. It says:

Federal Housing Minister, Mr Peter Staples, said today he was disturbed by media reports that the Northern Territory government had unilaterally altered home purchase schemes which involved substantial Commonwealth funds. 'Under the Commonwealth State Housing Agreement, which provides housing funds to the Territory, any state minister is obliged to consult and reach agreement with the Commonwealth if he or

she wants to change the interest charged on home loans', Mr Staples said. In particular, clause 27(1)(a) of the agreement specifically requires mutual agreement before these sorts of changes can be introduced. The Northern Territory is a signatory to that agreement, but in this case its government seems to have completely ignored the fact that it is Commonwealth funds they are playing with.

'I have a duty to protect taxpayers' money under the Commonwealth State Housing Agreement and any proposals which involve discounting, subsidies or cuts in interest rates should be discussed and reviewed before they are implemented. It has been obvious for a long time that the existing home purchase arrangements in the Territory were inadequate and in need of a serious overhaul. I would have been more than happy to talk to the Territory government about their proposals at any time, but no contact has been made whatsoever. It is unfortunate that the Territory housing manager has gone off half-cocked with his new purchase scheme and has failed to fulfil his obligations under the Commonwealth State Housing Agreement', Mr Staples said.

'At this stage, based on the limited information that has been made available to me, I am unable to give any agreement or endorsement of the new system. I am obliged, under the Commonwealth State Housing Agreement, to ensure that Australia's taxpayers are protected and that any new scheme is fair and equitable. I will have to examine the proposals in some detail before I can give any indication of whether or not these conditions have been met', Mr Staples said. 'It does the Territory's continuing cause for increased funds no good at all to have such amateurish administration of their existing funds'.

Mr Speaker, that says it all. The federal minister would have been more than happy to have discussed this matter with his Northern Territory colleague opposite. He is unable, on the basis of the information given to him to date, to give carte blanche approval to the Territory government's proposals. He has to examine them. He has a duty and an obligation to do so and he will do so. However, he really says it all when he points out that the amateurish administration of the existing funds does the Northern Territory no good at all. That is the sorriest part of the whole exercise.

Mr Speaker, I seek leave to table the press statement from the federal minister and ask that copies be given to all honourable members.

Leave granted.

Mr EDE: Mr Speaker, this episode is not only woeful, it is unnecessary. That is the shame of it. In an attempt to score political points, the Minister for Lands and Housing tried to blame the federal government for the problems in our housing industry. Yesterday, he produced a package which he says has been worked on for 10 months. That shows the most incredible incompetence. It was unnecessary. The federal minister has said that he would have been happy to meet with him to discuss the issues. The Minister for Lands and Housing was in Canberra last week and all he would have had to do was hold discussions with the federal minister.

As I said, perhaps some discussion occurred at a very low level in the bureaucracy but we have no ...

Mr Manzie: It fits the guidelines to the agreement, and that is all there is to it.

Mr EDE: He says it is implied by the agreement.

Mr Manzie: I said it fits the guidelines.

Mr EDE: Implied by! He may be able to draw inferences on the basis of the agreement, but the matter is explicit in the act. Every agreement is drawn subject to the parent act. The parent act takes precedence over anything that is in the agreement. The minister still will not read the act which clearly states, as the federal minister has said, that consultation and bilateral agreement are required.

I really am distressed that the minister decided that he would go ahead and bring on a ridiculous motion like this in a pathetic attempt to save his own bacon. He would have been better off if he had simply admitted that he had made the mistake, thanked the Leader of the Opposition for his intervention and stated that, at the earliest possible time, he would join him in Canberra in an effort to help Territorians and save this package. That was what he should have done. If he were not so concerned with playing politics, that is what he would have done. But no, instead he brings forward a completely ridiculous motion which means absolutely nothing. He failed to establish any one of the points that he raised and I believe that he stands condemned for what he has done in this House and for the time he has wasted. I believe also that he stands condemned by all Territorians for his absolute and abysmal incompetence in not knowing the basic sections of the act which governs some 90% of the funds that he has to deal with. Mr Speaker, a minister cannot get much more incompetent than that.

We will do our best, as I am sure other members here will do, to ensure that his irons are pulled out of the fire but, if we do not win on this one, it will not be us who will be judged: it will be on his head. We will do our best but on his head be it if it is not possible to get this scheme in operation on 1 December. If there is a delay, Territorians will know that every delay is on his head because he breached the Commonwealth State Housing Agreement.

Mr Speaker, I move that the Assembly omit all words after 'condemns' and insert in their stead: 'the Minister for Lands and Housing for his failure to ensure that the proposed housing finance initiatives conform with the Housing Assistance Agreement between the Commonwealth and the states and the Northern Territory'. The effect of that amendment is to place condemnation where it belongs: on the head of the minister.

This House must condemn the Minister for Lands and Housing now for his failure to ensure that the proposed housing finance initiatives conform with the Housing Assistance Agreement between the Commonwealth and the states and the Northern Territory. It is a fact that he has failed to ensure that the proposed housing finance initiatives conform. He did not go to the federal minister which he is required to do under the act. He did not go to the federal government to discuss it, and he did not obtain the agreement which he is required to do. For that very reason, he stands condemned before this House and I ask any honourable member who has the interest of his or her electorate at heart and the interests of all those people in the community who are suffering as a result of the current situation under the housing loan scheme to join with members on this side of the House in condemning the honourable minister for his failure.

Mr COULTER (Leader of Government Business): Mr Speaker, I move that the amendment be now put.

The Assembly divided:

Ayes 14

Noes 9

Mr Coulter
Mr Dale
Mr Dondas
Mr Finch
Mr Firmin
Mr Harris
Mr Hatton
Mr McCarthy
Mr Manzie
Mr Palmer
Mr Perron
Mr Poole
Mr Reed
Mr Setter

Mr Bell
Mr Collins
Mr Ede
Mr Floreani
Mr Lanhupuy
Mr Leo
Mrs Padgham-Purich
Mr Tipiloura
Mr Tuxworth

Motion agreed to.

Mr SPEAKER: The question is that the amendment be agreed to.

The Assembly divided:

Ayes 9

Noes 14

Mr Bell
Mr Collins
Mr Ede
Mr Floreani
Mr Lanhupuy
Mr Leo
Mrs Padgham-Purich
Mr Tipiloura
Mr Tuxworth

Mr Coulter
Mr Dale
Mr Dondas
Mr Finch
Mr Firmin
Mr Harris
Mr Hatton
Mr McCarthy
Mr Manzie
Mr Palmer
Mr Perron
Mr Poole
Mr Reed
Mr Setter

Amendment negatived.

Mr PERRON (Chief Minister): Mr Speaker, what we have here is opposition in the extreme. This opposition seeks not only to criticise constructively, or even destructively, activities of the government, it goes out of its way to make life difficult for the government to implement its schemes. Indeed, it does that even to the point of obstruction. By his action in leaving the Assembly while it is sitting, in order to go to Canberra on some pretext, the Leader of the Opposition has reached new heights in what he is prepared to do to obtain coverage in the media. Having regard to what we hear of his tenuous grip on the leadership of the small band of opposition members we have in this House, I guess he has to do whatever he can to obtain some lines in the paper and to appear to have been taking some action on his own initiative. This is a good example of the lengths that he is prepared to go to do that.

It was totally unwarranted of him to leave the House during the sittings. If members of the opposition were really concerned about the possibility of the loans scheme which was outlined by the Minister for Lands and Housing not being able to be implemented in the Northern Territory because some approval was lacking, then they had several options before them as to what they could do about that. Certainly, they did not have to go this extreme length, with the Leader of the Opposition disappearing in the dead of night on the first flight available to fly 2500 miles to make representations to a federal minister.

If they want representation in Canberra, they have representation in Canberra. There are 3 Territory federal parliamentarians, of course, as all members are aware, and 2 of them happen to belong to the same party as the Leader of the Opposition. Both men claim that they go to enormous lengths to represent the Territory and achieve results for us in Canberra. They claim to have excellent contacts with federal ministers and that they have the 'in' on where it really happens and where the decisions are made. Why could not one or both of those gentlemen have been asked to make representations on our behalf? Why did the Leader of the Opposition have to go down? Was it to brief them perhaps? Are our federal ALP representatives so thick that they would not be able to pick up the matters that the opposition want presented to the minister by way of briefings on the phone or by way of facsimiles? Are they so thick that they could not get the whole story to give to the federal minister? No, of course they are not. They could have been given complete briefings.

Apart from that, there are facilities such as phones and fax machines that could have been used to establish direct contact with the minister's office to express concern, to urge him to approve the scheme or to urge him not to act precipitately if that was their concern. Why didn't they do that? The Leader of the Opposition did not have to leave this House when it was sitting for that sort of purpose.

Of course, he had other options. He could have sent 1 of his colleagues from this House. Why did the leader himself have to go? There are another 5 members here, including the opposition spokesman for housing in the Northern Territory. Why did the leader have to go? I thought that he was supposed to be here leading the charge. He claims that there are all sorts of issues that concern Territorians that he should be raising in this Assembly. But no, he went personally and, of course, he went personally for political reasons. If he really wanted someone down south, he could have sent a member of his staff. We all know that he makes great play, from time to time, that he has an economic adviser on his personal staff who, I am sure, would be very capable of briefing the federal people on this matter and, indeed, of briefing the federal minister. He could have been on the plane, in the very seat in which the Leader of the Opposition is now sitting, and the opposition members in this House could have continued doing their job in this House.

All of these options were open if members opposite were genuinely concerned. Indeed, if they were genuinely concerned, they could have advised the minister of their concerns during debate in this House and offered to support him in any approach to the federal minister, if he decided to take that course of action, to obtain an endorsement for these schemes. That would have been a perfectly reasonable approach. They could even have claimed some kudos if they demonstrated - but they will not be able to - that their assistance somehow got the scheme through the system.

We all know that the action of the Leader of the Opposition in leaving this Assembly whilst it is sitting has nothing to do with genuine feelings about the Northern Territory Housing Loans Scheme introduced by the minister in this House yesterday. The Leader of the Opposition knew he was in trouble yesterday during debate when the shadow spokesman for lands and the shadow spokesman for housing spoke on these schemes. Indeed, they were very critical of these schemes. The Leader of the Opposition knew full well that the schemes would be very well received in the Northern Territory. The last thing he wanted in the community was any perception that the ALP was not in full support of the schemes. He knows that they will be very popular.

The member for MacDonnell said yesterday that, when the Territory minister next goes to a Housing Ministers Conference he will be told that the Territory government will not get away with this. He was implying, of course, that the schemes we were introducing were generous schemes to the point that we were wasting money and that the minister's state colleagues would take this matter up with him. He went further and said that when I go to a Premiers Conference or other conferences in Canberra, the Commonwealth will say: 'If you can afford to throw dollars away like that, boyo, you do not need as much as you had last time'. He went on to say that he was not satisfied that the Territory government had acted responsibly in bringing these schemes before the House in order to implement them in the Northern Territory.

In listening to those words from the member for MacDonnell, I thought: 'Here we go again'. I think the member for MacDonnell may be trying to take the place of a former member representing the Northern Territory in the federal House, Mr Reeves, who ran a most terrible campaign against the Northern Territory and a campaign that was fairly successful. We all remember the reports in the Territory of his speeches to federal parliament wherein he claimed that the Northern Territory was grossly overfunded and wasted money terribly. He went on and on in the federal parliament in that vein, supposedly working in the interests of Territorians. Of course, over subsequent years, the Northern Territory received a fairly hard time, financially, from the federal government.

Included in the schemes available in those days was an enormously successful housing scheme that we had introduced. I am not exactly sure of the title of the scheme now, but it was so successful in encouraging Territorians to buy their own homes at an affordable rate that, at one stage, the scheme involved funding of \$35m a year. That was in addition to the enormous funding that the Northern Territory government was putting into the construction of public housing at that time. I recall saying that the Northern Territory put more money into housing as a proportion of its budget than any other government in Australia. Indeed, we were and it was a very successful scheme.

Mr Reeves was fairly successful in running a campaign in Canberra that gave the impression that what we were doing in the Territory was simply wasting money, and that we had too much of it. The federal government even went so far as to invent a new category of funding for the Northern Territory. It was called a 'negative special grant' which was included as a title in our allocations. What it really meant was 'less than nothing'. It meant we had money taken from us. That is exactly what happened to us. The federal government took the money away. It probably had to rewrite the dictionaries used by economics students to include the new term 'negative special grant'. I would doubt that it has been used against any government other than the Northern Territory government.

Is the member for MacDonnell trying to take over the part that Mr Reeves played in pooh-poohing the Northern Territory's actions, in trying to announce to Canberra that we are acting irresponsibly and that we should have our wrists slapped and our money taken from us because we have too much? That is virtually what he said yesterday: 'When you go down there, the feds will have you fellows on toast for introducing schemes like this'. I believe such words were a worry to the Leader of the Opposition yesterday. He was very concerned because he knew that the schemes will be very successful and the government will be applauded for taking these initiatives.

If the opposition is so genuine about its concern that it considers that the Leader of the Opposition should rush off to Canberra to make representations on this matter, why didn't it do that on other occasions when we really needed its help? Why didn't it do it when the railway was cancelled? 'Only the Labor Party can be trusted to build the railway' was the election campaign slogan. After the election was over and Labor was elected, the railway project was cancelled. It was said that it was not justified. Where were members of the opposition when it came to asking for promises to be fulfilled? Did they all go to Canberra? No. Not one of them went to Canberra, not even a member of the Leader of the Opposition's staff went to Canberra to make representations on behalf of Territorians.

Where were they when construction of the airport terminal in Darwin was cancelled? The Prime Minister himself, in an election campaign, was seen on television turning the first sod. If one ever thought that a government project would be sacrosanct from the chop in times of tight funding, one would think that it would be projects for which the Prime Minister himself had turned the first sod. What happened? \$12m or \$15m was spent and the project was cancelled in mid-contract. Cranes were still lifting pieces of steel when the contractors were told to stop and get off the site. Godness knows what it cost the Commonwealth to terminate those contracts mid-term. I hope the PAC in Canberra examines that at some time. Where was the opposition then? Did the Leader of the Opposition climb on a plane and rush to Canberra and say: 'You cannot do this to the Territory. We do not deserve that sort of treatment'? He did not go. This House was not sitting then so he could have gone without even interrupting the business of this House.

Where was the Leader of the Opposition when the Northern Territory was dragged screaming and kicking into the state relativities review? We protested most strongly because it was obviously part of Commonwealth government strategy to fund the Territory as a state, even though it is not a state and does not have the revenue-raising capacity of the states. We protested most strongly about being put into that relativities review. Where was the opposition? We did not hear a single word from it, let alone see its leader making unscheduled, early-morning flights to Canberra.

Where was the opposition when we were included in the states tax-sharing pool during this financial year? We are now funded as a state. We do not have the powers of a state. Certainly we do not have their revenue-raising capacity. However, from this financial year onwards, we will be funded as a state. There has not been a peep from the opposition about that, let alone a trip to Canberra.

Where were members of the opposition when the Northern Territory took 10% of the federal budget cuts? Those cuts were imposed on 1% of Australia's population - Territorians. All members opposite should have flown to Canberra then, not just the Leader of the Opposition. They should have said to Territorians: 'We are going in to fight for you. We may not come out with

the result we want but we will show you that we are concerned'. That is what the Leader of the Opposition is trying to do today. He is trying to get himself a few lines in the paper saying: 'I am shattered. I am so concerned that I am interrupting my whole program and going to Canberra to speak on your behalf'. He is simply grandstanding; he is not genuine at all.

It is important for honourable members to bear in mind that, in this debate, we are not talking only about Commonwealth State Housing Agreement funds in this matter. Every year, the Northern Territory contributes substantial funds from its own budget to housing. No doubt, we will continue to do that because we do not believe that the funding under the CSHA is sufficient for housing expenditure in the Northern Territory.

We have introduced some very good housing schemes over the years in the Northern Territory. The scheme that is in difficulty is the NTHPAS. Yesterday, the minister announced a package to assist those people who are in difficulty as a result of the lack of movement in house and land prices in the Northern Territory since they took up their loans. It is unfortunate that one of our loan schemes was not as successful as the others, but it is now being replaced by another scheme which will be very successful - so successful that the opposition is scared of it. We need the Leader of the Opposition's help like a hole in the head. If he really wants to help us, he can do us an enormous favour by staying out of the matter altogether and remaining in the Northern Territory to work on behalf of his constituents. We cannot afford his kind of help, nor can the Territory.

Mr BELL (MacDonnell): Mr Deputy Speaker, what an extraordinary performance from the Chief Minister. I am absolutely staggered that the Chief Minister can get up in this House and attempt to defend the sort of administrative bungle that has thrown the housing of Territorians into jeopardy. Instead of attempting to condemn the opposition, the Chief Minister and the Minister for Lands and Housing ought to be giving thanks that the opposition is prepared to put some effort into what is quite obviously and demonstrably a key area of community need.

The Chief Minister has attempted to make some criticism of me. The point which I made in response to the minister's statement yesterday is absolutely correct. When he fronts up to the next Housing Ministers Conference, eyebrows will be raised. He will be seriously embarrassed. That observation is made quite apart from my concern for the need to provide relief for Territorians who are having difficulty in maintaining a roof over their heads. Those are 2 quite separate issues and it is dishonest of both the Chief Minister and the Minister for Lands and Housing to attempt to say that they are the same. The fact is that the misgivings which I expressed yesterday have already been justified.

Mr Deputy Speaker, both the Chief Minister and the Minister for Lands and Housing have run an absurdly chauvinistic Territory line which does them no credit and does nothing to enhance the reputation of the Northern Territory as a self-governing entity. It is exactly this sort of cock-up which ...

Mr DALE: A point of order, Mr Deputy Speaker! If the honourable member could raise the standard of his language in this House above his normal standard, we would all appreciate it.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: I ask the member to withdraw the offending remark.

Mr BELL: Mr Deputy Speaker, I withdraw unreservedly.

It is exactly this sort of botch up, this sort of mess, this sort of administrative error on the part of the minister ...

Mr Perron: You have not demonstrated one yet. You have just waffled about it.

Mr BELL: I would have thought, Mr Deputy Speaker, that the Deputy Leader of the Opposition's reference to the Housing Assistance Act showed that government members are obviously not aware of ...

Mr Perron: You have not even got the right document.

Mr BELL: Mr Deputy Speaker, I will take up that interjection from the Chief Minister. In his 20-minute speech to this Assembly, he made no reference to the relevant Commonwealth legislation. The performance of the Minister for Lands and Housing was lamentable. He was throwing bits of paper around like confetti at a wedding. He did not know where he was!

The fact is that the opposition has done some homework on the statement the minister made yesterday. I will say in passing that the first time we knew of the package was when we saw news of it emblazoned across the front page of the Sunday Territorian. Of course, the opposition was not party to the details of the proposals at that stage. The press is always told about these things before the opposition is. Yesterday - and Territorians will be thankful for this - the opposition sought advice on the substance of the minister's statement.

As somebody who has put more than a little time into housing policy and has had the opportunity to discuss various aspects of housing policy with people in various states, I will be making some further inquiries and doing some further research into this subject. I believe that, as other members of the opposition have said, it is important to have a decent housing policy in the Northern Territory. I demonstrated yesterday that the government is running from pillar to post. Its shared equity scheme is in chaos, and I remind it of that fact. The document tabled yesterday was absolute nonsense. It reneges on an election promise. It has been castigated, privately by housing industry representatives. The Minister for Lands and Housing and the Chief Minister now have the gall to suggest that the mission of the Leader of the Opposition to rescue some semblance of respect for the Northern Territory and to rescue the so-called package, in the interests of providing at least some relief for Territorians, is somehow inappropriate or an overreaction. Goodness me, Mr Deputy Speaker!

In moving his motion this morning, the Minister for Lands and Housing did not mention any problems with his negotiations with the federal Minister for Housing in relation to the alteration of interest rates on housing loans. Honourable members will probably recall the huge kafuffle right around this country when there was debate about raising the ceiling on housing loan interest rates above 13.5%. Tremendous heat was generated by that debate. Can you imagine, Mr Speaker, that the people who spend a bit of time studying the housing market will not be extraordinarily surprised, to say the least, that the Minister for Lands and Housing, who has gone through this big build up about his package, has not even done his homework?

Mr Tipiloura: 10 months.

Mr BELL: As my colleague says, he has had all of 10 months to ensure that it stacks up. It does not stack up. Believing in the importance of housing

to Territorians, the Leader of the Opposition has travelled to Canberra in a most important attempt to ensure that these proposals are able to be put in place to provide the relief that Territorians need. I mentioned yesterday and I reiterate that the opposition is well aware of the desperate need that is indicated by the number of mortgagee auctions and the number of housing loans through NTHPAS that people have had to walk away from. We had an indication of that from the minister yesterday. We had heard that from housing industry representatives and we are pleased that, finally, the government has been prepared to do something about it. However, it is very unfortunate that the opposition has had to come to its rescue in this way.

The Minister for Lands and Housing made a comment about other state housing schemes. I think I know as much as the minister does about the housing schemes elsewhere in Australia. For example, I have put a considerable amount of time into informing myself about the innovative mortgage arrangements that apply in some of the Labor states. It is good to note that the honourable minister is not so blinkered in his thinking that he is not prepared to take up some of the arrangements that are in place in Labor states. If the minister had taken the trouble to study Labor's housing policy before the last election, he would have noted the reference to innovative mortgage arrangements that were part of our policy and which were hastily copied by the government. He would know that the Labor Party around this country has been a leader in this policy area and that this government has been following on the coat-tails of Labor initiatives elsewhere. It did it completely ineffectively with its promise of a shared equity scheme that was put together hastily before the last election and is still not in place.

I will be studying the details of these schemes. On the basis of what I know at the moment, I have confidence in them. However, my confidence has been somewhat shaken by the realisation that the minister has not done his homework and that he has put in jeopardy what looked like being schemes that would be of help to Territory home owners and prospective home owners.

The Chief Minister gave us a bit of a history lesson. I always find it interesting that, when the Chief Minister is on the ropes, he dives back into history and talks about this capital works project and that capital works project. I am not going to respond at length to that. I will simply mention a couple of key words. We could just about have these debates in shorthand. I will just talk about the terms 'Federal Hotels', 'Myilly Point development', the 'Sheraton Hotels' and the ...

Mr COULTER: A point of order, Mr Speaker! The motion is quite specific and the member for MacDonnell is failing to address it.

Mr BELL: In speaking to the point of order, Mr Speaker, the Leader of Government Business was not in here when the Chief Minister was speaking. Whether he heard the comments on the loudspeaker system or not, I do not know. From his point of order, I suggest that he did not. To fill him in, the Chief Minister was attempting to say ...

Mr SPEAKER: There is no point of order, but the member must relate his remarks to the motion before the House.

Mr BELL: I will indeed, Mr Speaker.

I inform the Leader of Government Business, who is only half listening to this debate, that the Chief Minister tried to say that all the Territory government's financial woes are the direct fault of the opposition or the

Canberra government. I was endeavouring to point out some of the catastrophic decisions that Country Liberal Party governments - some of which he has been a member of and some of which he has not - have been what has damaged the Territory's reputation in government financial circles. I suggest that the exploit with Federal Hotels and the casino, the Sheratons and the Anderson project are further chapters in that litany. I certainly hope and pray that this particular housing loan proposal does not join that sad and sorry list.

Mr Speaker, a point that the opposition has made continually is that the Northern Territory and the Commonwealth must cooperate. There is no clearer example of the necessity for cooperation than in terms of housing policy and housing funds. I do not imagine that any government member, let alone the minister, would deny that the Commonwealth has a responsibility to ensure that the funds it disburses for housing are equitably employed across this country. If a scheme introduced in the Northern Territory does not take that into consideration, the minister who introduces it is derelict in his duty. There is abundant evidence that the Minister for Lands and Housing has been derelict in his duty. The Minister for Lands and Housing has been derelict in his legal responsibilities under Commonwealth legislation and it is certainly to be hoped that the Leader of the Opposition is able to rescue him. Instead of the Leader of the Opposition being the subject of this absurd condemnation motion, it is in my view that the minister himself should be its subject. It is about time that the minister told us the truth about these particular aspects of the Housing Assistance Act. He has an army of advisers to provide him with this sort of information. It is a great credit to this parliament as well as to the opposition that, in less than 24 hours and with the scant resources available to us, we are able to come to the government's rescue. Instead of being the target of this sort of absurd motion, we should be the recipients of a motion of thanks from the government.

Mr COULTER (Leader of Government Business): Mr Speaker, it is quite clear that things have gone wrong for the opposition and wrong, in particular, for the Leader of the Opposition. Whoever wrote the press release for Hon Peter Staples has got it wrong too. The interesting paragraphs in the press release are the third and the sixth. I will read the sixth paragraph first because I think it is important: 'It has been obvious for a long time that the existing home purchase arrangements in the Territory were inadequate and in need of serious overhaul'. This is a federal minister saying that the arrangements are inadequate and in need of an overhaul. Some of the most innovative home ownership packages in this country have been offered to the people of the Northern Territory, as the Chief Minister pointed out.

In the third paragraph, he says that this is all wrong because, in particular, clause 27(1)(a) of the agreement specifically requires mutual agreement before these sorts of changes can be introduced. Wrong, wrong, wrong! Clause 27(1) has been read out by the Deputy Leader of the Opposition, the heir apparent who has his big chance today to take over. However, he has played it pretty cool because he knows, for example, that clause 27(3) states that the state may waive recovery pursuant to paragraph (d) of subclause (1). It says: 'In any year of an amount recoverable in respect of the preceding year having regard to the level of repayments as adjusted in accordance with paragraph 21(c), and where necessary the income of the home purchaser'. It can be done. It can be waived.

In paragraph (b): 'in the event that the loan is discharged in circumstances in which the borrower would suffer hardship if he or she were required to repay an amount recoverable or having regard also to movements in housing prices and the income of home purchasers'. It can be done; the states

can do it. It is more specific than that. Clause 28(3) says: 'The state may reschedule repayments by borrowers or rental purchasers in the event of hardship'. It can be done.

In the House yesterday and today, members of the opposition agreed that there is no doubt about hardship existing, and they are on the public record as saying that. In writing this press release for the federal minister responsible for housing, where they went wrong was that they did not take into consideration the new and the old schemes. They are saying they are all one and that, under clause 27(1)(a), it cannot be changed. That is where they got it wrong, because it can. It is quite clear that clause 27(3) and clause 28(3) quite obviously allow for reductions in interest by a state or the Territory without the need for any reference to the Commonwealth. It is as simple as that. You do not have to go any further. You do not have to get on a plane and go to Canberra to understand it; that is how easy it is.

In relation to the old scheme, the Territory, as is proposed, can reduce interest without reference to the authority. It is as simple as that. What have we got today? The Leader of the Opposition has jumped on a plane and is heading off to Canberra. What an insult to Bob Collins that he needs Terry Smith to come down to help him. I can imagine the 2 of them getting on very well together. They have been fighting against one another, and let us all remember the knives that the then Deputy Leader of the Opposition, the member for Millner, put into the previous Leader of the Opposition, now Senator Bob Collins. We are now to believe that the Leader of the Opposition packed his bags overnight and got on the first plane because Senator Bob Collins was not able to carry out negotiations on behalf of the Territory. What an insult!

Mr Speaker, as I said, it is quite clear that whoever wrote this press release for Hon Peter Staples got it wrong. This does not need to be referred to the Commonwealth and that is stated in the legislation.

In relation to the new scheme, it is true that there has been no reduction in the interest. The government is subsidising the interest payments made by the borrowers to the banks. The interest payable to the banks remains the same. However, the borrower's payments are reduced by the interest subsidy provided by the Territory. Given that there is no reduction in interest, the requirements of clause 27, which are designed really to prevent increases in interest not reductions, are not applicable.

That is the end of this debate. It is all pretty simple stuff. He could have sorted it out over a beer last night if he had wanted to. It did not need any of those meetings that were held at 2 o'clock in the morning or any of the other bits and pieces and Machiavellian activity that occurred throughout the night. It is very simple, and I remind the honourable members on the crossbenches that that is what they voted against when we divided on the amendment this morning. That is what they have done. The conditions are laid out very clearly under those 3 parts, under 27(1) and under 28(3). Clauses 27(3) and 28(3) explain it all very simply: the old and the new act, the interest subsidies, end of story.

Mr Speaker, we have heard a great many things today and they fit in with my theory about any major development or major activity. Members of the opposition will can it and then, next day, they will claim that they have never knocked it. We must admit that they are consistent, but they are wishy-washy and soggy. What is more, they are wrong, and that is what people in the Northern Territory will no longer tolerate. Let us wait and see what

the press make of this exercise today. The shame of it all is that it brings great discredit on this parliament. Let us wait and see how members of the press interpret this little trick, this little con. They will not be fooled by this little act. Let us wait and see what is presented in this afternoon's paper or tonight's television report. We have only a few hours to wait for that.

We heard the member for MacDonnell say that he had not said that he would create any mischief and that he would not seek support to have this bill knocked. What a load of nonsense! The Chief Minister gave one quote and it had the word 'boyo' in it but I do not think it was the one that I intend to use. In his opening remarks, the member said: 'I will be very interested to see what reaction there is to this sort of proposal elsewhere around the country'. What does it matter what reaction there is around the country? We are Territorians and we are here. He was prepared to make another pilgrimage right around the country. What does it matter? Where is his faith in the Territory and in Territorians? Why does he have to run around the country?

It is quite obvious that this little scheme had been well thought out by the opposition and even the member for MacDonnell was prepared to run around the country, as was the Leader of the Opposition. Yesterday afternoon, very early in the debate, it became quite clear what the opposition intended to do, and it did it. The member for MacDonnell said: 'I will certainly be doing my research into that'. 'Research' is a very nice word, Mr Speaker. What he meant was that he would do everything in his power to discredit and knock this proposal by doing exactly what the Leader of the Opposition is doing now - running around the country canning it and bad-mouthing it. That is what he intended to do.

I turn now to the contribution made to this debate yesterday by the Leader of the Opposition. It did not even fill a page in the Daily Hansard, and that was because his strategy was already in place. The decision to go to Canberra was not made overnight. The member for MacDonnell said yesterday: 'I will be very interested to see what the reaction is to this sort of proposal elsewhere around the country'. That was the signal for a vindictive campaign to can the government's proposal throughout Australia.

There are several disturbing aspects of the Leader of the Opposition's behaviour. It is an illustration of how the ALP would run government in the Territory. It would be subservient to Canberra. It would take us back to the pre-1978 days before self-government. This is an indication that, as a Chief Minister, the Leader of the Opposition would lack the courage to take major policy decisions. Instead, he would run cap in hand to Canberra for permission. A Labor government in the Territory would be no more than a local branch of the ALP central power base in Canberra. That has been demonstrated today. It would be a return to the bad old days when John Reeves was widely known as Canberra's representative in the Territory, not the Territory's representative in Canberra. That is the model which we are witnessing today.

Of course, we can hardly blame the Leader of the Opposition. He was to ask a few questions about State Square. His departure shows how much importance he places on that. His real constituency is not among the Housing Commission tenants in Millner but among Labor's power brokers in Canberra. In a classical exercise, a Canberra conspiracy involving the Leader of the Opposition, Senator Collins and Mr Snowdon, the federal member of the House of Representatives, is trying to scuttle a Territory initiative to help Territorians. Territorians have always demonstrated that they want Territory government by Territorians and they are rightly suspicious of direction on Territory affairs from Canberra.

We can all remember the Prime Minister's promise to commence construction of the railway in 1984. 'Watch my lips', he said. He promised a start to construction of the new Darwin Airport terminal in 1985. Recently, Senator Bob Collins and Mr Warren Snowdon have said that the airport project is well under way. I think we will be hearing more about that. I wonder if the Leader of the Opposition will drop into the Prime Minister's office today, where he is holding a major meeting with Cabinet ministers in relation to Coronation Hill. I wonder if he would have jumped on the plane and gone to Canberra to talk about the railway, the airport, funding for the Northern Territory or the electricity subsidy. Of course not. However, when he has the chance to can something and to bad-mouth the Territory, he is off like a shot.

The member for Stuart said piously: 'We are not playing politics'. How naive does he think we are? This exercise is a clear example of politics for the sake of politics, with no consideration whatsoever for the Territory public. That is what will be said and that is a great shame.

Mr Speaker, I have said many times in this House: 'Thank goodness for the Leader of the Opposition. Whilst he remains there, we will be in government for a very long time in the Northern Territory'. But I wonder sometimes about the conspiracy and what is it that keeps him there. And I wonder if the CLP machine may not be even more powerful than I think it is and whether it has some way of propping him up and keeping him there. Or is it simply that he really is the best representative of the opposition? Mr Speaker, I will leave you to make your own judgment on that. This episode maintains Labor's perfect track record of opposing all Territory initiatives for growth and expansion ranging from the construction of the gas pipeline to the Trade Development Zone and now to a housing initiative that would help the very constituents for whom he professes to speak.

The motion really sums it up very well, and I will read it again for the benefit of honourable members so they really understand what we are saying. The Minister for Lands and Housing made it quite clear. He moved that 'the Assembly condemns the members of the opposition for: (1) their gratuitous and irresponsible attempt to undermine the Territory Interest Subsidy Scheme'. Mr Speaker, I will be interested to see where members on the crossbenches go on this one, but I do not think you will find anybody in this House who would disagree with that.

Mrs Padgham-Purich: We do!

Mr Tuxworth: Don't worry about us, Bazza.

Mr COULTER: '(2) their reckless attempt to mislead the Northern Territory public by falsely claiming that the new scheme may be in jeopardy'. I have pointed that out and I will sum up in relation to the parts of the act that make that abundantly clear. '(3) their attempt to have the federal government intervene in Northern Territory affairs'. It is quite clear under the old scheme that there is no need for the Commonwealth to be involved. The provisions within the legislation are quite clear, particularly clauses 27(3) and 28(3). I hope honourable members have copies of the act now and that they will stand to their feet and agree with me.

I see the member for Nhulunbuy is taking notes. Let us see if he can read the act and stand up and agree that I am correct in saying that. Let us see if he has the courage to do that. It is correct. In fact, I will make a briefing available to him from officers of the Housing Commission now if he would like to save any embarrassment to himself.

The fourth paragraph of the motion reads: 'the Leader of the Opposition's abject failure to meet his responsibilities to represent his constituents at the sittings of this Assembly without any justification for his absence'. There is no doubt in my mind that the support for that should be unanimous. I realise that it cannot be because members opposite will vote on party lines. However, over the lunch break, I ask them to read again the third paragraph of the press release written for Hon Peter Staples: 'Clause 27(1)(a) of the agreement specifically requires mutual agreement before these sorts of changes can be introduced'. They should then read clause 27(3) very carefully. It states quite clearly what the Territory can do without consultation with the federal government. We have done it. They should look at clause 28(3) where it is also clear: 'The state may reschedule repayments by borrowers or rental purchasers in the event of hardship'. There is no problem with that. Clause 27(1)(a) is not true because, under the old scheme, it can be done. In relation to the new scheme, there has been no reduction in the interest rate. Where is the problem?

Mr LEO (Nhulunbuy): Mr Speaker, if this debate has done nothing else, it has certainly reinforced those things that I believe the Chief Minister holds dear. Whatever his complaint is, it seems to be rather infectious because it seems to have spread to his Deputy Chief Minister.

This debate is about the competence or otherwise of the Minister for Lands and Housing, despite the motion that is in front of us and the accusation that is levelled at the Leader of the Opposition. It is about the minister's competence, yet the Chief Minister continues to defend incompetence. For years, I have been a noted admirer of this Chief Minister. In other portfolios, he has continued in exactly the same vein. I have admired his style. He continues to equate incompetence, lack of reason and mismanagement as somehow being something that all Territorians should aspire to. If in this House you dare to intrude reason, logic or even effort, that is tantamount to treason. The Chief Minister has held to that line faithfully for almost a decade whilst I have been in here. He will not shift. What is even more interesting is that his wonderful, philosophical attitude towards life has now spread to his deputy. It is contagious. They can stay over there; this is an extreme form of psychosis and I can live without it.

It is like having a blackboard with one word painted on it: facts. What does the Chief Minister do to get away from that one word? He hangs the Territory flag over it. 'We have the Territory', that is the bottom line of everything the Chief Minister says. If you dare to intrude or in some way inflict logic on this House, you are un-Territorian. His scenario is that, to be a Territorian, you really have to be illogical and, the more incompetent and illogical you are, the more Territorian you are. If you are an absolute dunce, that is when you become a minister and the Chief Minister. That is the Chief Minister's scenario. It has been in every speech that he has made in this House: 'Don't you dare threaten my stupidity, you bludger'. That is the Chief Minister's message.

Mr DALE: A point of order, Mr Speaker! The member should withdraw that word. It is unparliamentary.

Mr SPEAKER: For the first time, the Clerk and the Speaker differ. I will uphold the Clerk's point and ask the honourable member to withdraw ...

Mr LEO: I withdraw, Mr Speaker.

It happens every time the Chief minister gets to his feet and now the Deputy Chief Minister does exactly the same. He says: 'Don't you threaten my stupidity. I demand to be stupid. It is my right to be incompetent'. We hear it in every speech that he makes in this House. It has marked his entire political history as I have seen it.

The Deputy Chief Minister uses words such as 'major policy decisions'. What you really have to read into that, when you look at the track record of this government - and it does not matter whether it is in relation to this matter or any of a dozen other matters - is 'major policy blunders'. This is merely another policy blunder.

What is even more blinding is that the Deputy Chief Minister in particular rises in this House and accuses members on this side of the House of dishonesty. Mr Speaker, that is the minister who lied to this House about a so-called TDZ audit. That is a fact of life, and he has the gall to accuse this side of the House of being ...

Mr SPEAKER: Order! I must pull up the member for Nhulunbuy. He used words in reference to the honourable Deputy Chief Minister: 'who lied to this House'. I ask that that reference be withdrawn.

Mr LEO: I withdraw it, Mr Speaker.

The Deputy Chief Minister accuses members on this side of the House of dishonest behaviour. In this matter, nothing could be further from the truth. The facts of life are that, whether you like it or not, there is a Commonwealth Housing Assistance Act and clause 27 of the schedule to that act inscribes in law the requirements of the ministers responsible for housing throughout the states and the Commonwealth. There must be ministerial agreement for those schemes to proceed. That is abundantly clear, and the minister has not bothered to deny it. No speaker on that side of the House has bothered to deny that the minister has not communicated this proposed change in financing arrangements for the purchase of homes in the Northern Territory to the Commonwealth minister. That is abundantly clear because nobody has bothered to deny it.

That is nothing more nor less than a straight political and policy blunder. There are no other words that can be used to describe it. And what happens? The minister does not rise in this House and say: 'We will have to fix this up. I will need to call on the federal minister and see if we can square this out'. He does not do that. It is now the Leader of the Opposition's fault that this scheme's success will be put under question. It is not the minister's fault. It is not his political blunder that has caused this crisis.

Mr Hatton: It is not a crisis.

Mr LEO: If it is not a crisis, why bring on this motion?

Mr Speaker, all the minister had to do to solve the problem was to make a phone call and speak to the federal minister. But no, when faced with the opportunity to act logically, this government attacks those who so desperately try to keep the ship of the Northern Territory afloat.

The Deputy Chief Minister alluded to sections of the legislation which are not pertinent in terms of the key issue. He referred to some subclauses within clause 27 and clause 28 of the agreement. Those deal with changes to

existing arrangements rather than radical changes to produce an entirely new scheme. The act is quite specific about what must be done in that case.

Mr Hatton: Which section are you referring to when you say that?

Mr LEO: Clause 27(1)(a) is quite specific in its requirements.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The member for Nightcliff will have his turn later.

Mr LEO: It is quite specific in its requirement that new schemes are subject to agreement between the 2 ministers involved. If that simple logic means that I am not a Territorian, then so be it. I refuse to indulge in the fantasies of members opposite. That may very well contribute to my being in opposition. If stupidity is the hallmark of government, I refuse to indulge myself in it. However, unless the minister comes to some agreement with the federal minister, the people for whom the grand gesture has been made will be the ones to suffer. The early Christmas present for some 1600 souls in the Northern Territory will be jeopardised because of this minister's incompetence or absolute lack of ability to understand the constraints of his position. That is what will happen, and I hope that nobody in this Chamber would want to see those people, some of whom are in extreme circumstances, disappointed or in any way jeopardised even further because of this minister's lack of attention to detail. But that is precisely what will happen.

There is no point in other members of the House trotting out the good old NT flag to hang over the word 'facts', because that will not wash. There is no logic to it, Mr Speaker. In his reply, I hope the minister will be able at least to inform the House that he has now contacted the federal Minister for Housing, that he at least has telephoned him and said that we will proceed with a new scheme and that, at some time in the very near future, he would like to take the opportunity to discuss that new scheme with the federal minister and his officers. Hopefully, then he would be able realistically to assure those 1600 souls in the Northern Territory that indeed their Christmas present may very well come early this year. If he is not prepared to do that, if arrogance is to be the hallmark of his reply, then the entire point of this motion will be absolutely lost. It will have achieved absolutely nothing.

Of course, the government can move motions of this kind on whatever occasion it wishes to. But it makes no sense. It achieves nothing. It does nothing to reassure those 1600 people. It does absolutely nothing for the government of the Northern Territory to move such motions. It does not matter if the government moves them till the cows come home. The bottom line is that, unless the minister can deliver this package on 1 December as promised, then 1600 people in the Northern Territory, a substantial number of people, will be gravely disappointed and disillusioned about their continued future in the Northern Territory.

Mr HATTON (Nightcliff): Mr Speaker, I thank you for the invitation to take my opportunity to speak at some stage later following the member for Nhulunbuy's speech. In the course of interjections, I was seeking to be absolutely crystal clear about the point that was being made by the member for Nhulunbuy because it has been a thread throughout this entire debate. It comes down to this. In respect of the proposals put forward by the Minister for Lands and Housing yesterday and the proposed new housing schemes, all the allegations of the members of the opposition are that there is something in contravention of the Commonwealth legislation and the agreement between the Commonwealth and the Northern Territory under the Commonwealth State Housing Agreement. They say the proposed scheme is in jeopardy as a consequence only

of the wording of clause 27(1)(a) of schedule 1 of the Housing Assistance Act 1984, schedule 1 being the terms and conditions of the Commonwealth State Housing Agreement. If we are to say that that is the entirety of the opposition's allegations that this scheme will fail ...

Mr Ede: The minister responsible ...

Mr HATTON: Mr Speaker, if the honourable member for Stuart will shut his mouth for a minute, I will deal with the issue ...

Mr Ede: You keep avoiding the facts.

Mr HATTON: ... of that particular press release. I am still looking forward to receiving a copy of the copy of the press release that was tabled. It has not yet been circulated to my desk. My memory of the wording of the press release is that the federal minister was commenting on the basis of information available to him. That information, no doubt, was limited.

I presume that the opposition went to great pains last night to pore over the proposals and search for loopholes. Members opposite were in a state of panic. They knew that there was huge community acceptance for the proposals. They gave a hint of their plans when, after lunch, the Leader of the Opposition stood up and supported the proposals. Obviously, the opposition realised that the reaction would be positive and that the proposals addressed a real problem in the Northern Territory community. That is why it jumped on the bandwagon and said that the proposals were good.

That, however, is not good enough for the opposition. It wants to win government and it knows that, to do that, it has to be seen as the source of good ideas whilst demonstrating that the government's approach is wrong. What the opposition needed was a mechanism to allow it to steal the credit for the proposal. Members opposite came up with their interpretation of clause 27(1)(a) of the Commonwealth State Housing Agreement. They had a discussion with the federal minister and rushed out a press release in the middle of last night. A hasty call was made to a ministerial driver requesting that the Leader of the Opposition be picked up at 5 am and whisked off to the airport to jump on a 6 am flight to Canberra via Cairns, Townsville, Brisbane and Sydney for a meeting with the federal Minister for Housing tonight.

Of course, it would never have occurred to the opposition, having identified a potential difficulty with the scheme, to take the logical step of asking the Territory minister a question in this House. One of its members could have said: 'Minister, we have read clause 27(1)(a) of the Commonwealth State Housing Agreement and it appears to be inconsistent with what you are saying. We think you have a problem with the scheme. Is that true and, if so, how do you propose to deal with it?' I believe that the minister would then have explained that that particular clause does not apply in this situation. The opposition could then have said: 'Great. It is a good scheme. Here we go'. On the other hand, if the minister had been unable to answer the question satisfactorily, the Leader of the Opposition could have jumped on his silver jet and flown to Canberra by a shorter route. He could have arrived, armed not only with his presumption but with the responses of the relevant Northern Territory government minister. He could then have engaged in his exercise down there.

Better still, he could have said: 'This is a good scheme. We have to sell it to the federal minister'. If he were right about the problem with

clause 27(1)(a), he could have said: 'You screwed up, minister, but I am prepared to go to the federal minister together with you. I know that, as Leader of the Opposition, I cannot enter into any agreements with the federal minister under the legislation. Only the Northern Territory minister can do that'. He could have done that. He did not. Why? He did not want to find out whether there was a real problem. He wanted to grab a headline with a dramatic gesture and, therefore, off he went.

Mr Speaker, it needs to be understood very clearly that the entirety of the opposition's case depends on the wording of clause 27(1)(a) of the Commonwealth State Housing Agreement. Let us turn to the words of that agreement:

The rate of interest that is charged in respect of so much as is for the time being outstanding on a loan or under a terms contract of sale, as the case may be, to a home purchaser shall be the rate that is from time to time agreed between the minister and the state minister having regard to the then ruling minimum Commonwealth Savings Bank market rate for housing loans and other factors as are for this purpose from time to time agreed.

We heard in the ministerial statement yesterday that the interest rate that will be charged on loans will be the rate that is determined by the Commonwealth Savings Bank market rate for home loans. The contract is entered into at those rates. The principles underlying the agreement are important. It is important to understand the issues raised by the Leader of Government Business immediately before lunch. It is important to understand why there are clauses that provide opportunities, within the broad parameters of this agreement, for a state to make arrangements to deal with circumstances of hardship. I would ask anybody in this House, particularly following the comments in the debate yesterday, to say that the people who were identified by the minister yesterday have not been suffering hardship in the last 2 or 3 years as a consequence of reduced real wages, increased interest rates and a freeze on or drop in the value of their homes. I would ask anybody to challenge that contention in this House this afternoon if he dares. Yesterday, all members agreed with that proposition.

The clauses referred to by this side of the House all related to the potential that enables a state government, and that includes the Territory government, to make arrangements with respect to hardship. This scheme operates where a contract of loan is entered into at the normal interest rate by the banking organisation. There is a subsidy arrangement that operates through a separate arrangement to pay directly to the bank a part of that interest. The minister and the Deputy Chief Minister outlined that there is a potential under this agreement to make some payments to compensate for those costs in the event of hardship.

Mr Ede: For specific cases.

Mr HATTON: Alternatively, even if that were not true, this agreement only refers to moneys that are specifically appropriated by the Commonwealth for housing purposes and the delineated matching funding by the Northern Territory under the Commonwealth State Housing Agreement - \$1-for-\$1 matching funding. In fact, this agreement recognises the potential for any state or the Northern Territory government to make whatever arrangements it believes are appropriate, provided they are outside of the Commonwealth State Housing Agreement funding package. States and the Territory can enter whatever arrangements they wish to meet their housing objectives. There is nothing to

prevent a state or the Territory from doing that within its own discretionary funding. That is something that the opposition has never even considered.

I urge members opposite to ask everybody who is having trouble with housing whether he thinks that that would be a good use of discretionary funding if we were forced to that position. I will tell them that the answer they will receive right around the Territory is that it would be. Every Territorian would support us if we had to do that because of the intrusive involvement of the Leader of the Opposition who is trying to play politics with the scheme to undermine a great initiative of the government.

I would like to turn schedule 1 which outlines the agreement. I refer particularly to Recital D:

the primary principle of this agreement is to ensure that every person in Australia has access to adequate and appropriate housing at a price within his or her capacity to pay by seeking to:

alleviate housing-related poverty; and

ensure that housing assistance is, as far as possible, delivered equitably to persons resident in different forms of housing tenure;

in implementing this principle, assistance provided under the agreement will also reflect the following detailed principles:

(a) Assistance Generally:

the primary consideration in delivering housing assistance under this agreement will be the needs of people, rather than to attach assistance to particular dwellings or categories of dwellings;

housing assistance provided under this agreement will be available to all sections of the community irrespective of age, sex, marital status, race, religion, disability or life situation. However, priority in granting assistance shall be determined by the need for assistance;

in delivering housing assistance, as far as possible, people should be given an equal choice between types of housing assistance available;

housing assistance programs developed under this agreement should be designed so that maximum social benefit is derived from previous investment in housing; ...

I ask honourable members to note that particularly. The final paragraph says:

housing assistance provided under this agreement should be coordinated with housing assistance programs that are developed outside this agreement.

The agreement envisages the potential for assistance programs to be arranged outside the agreement. I will not read the subclauses (b) and (c) which relate to public rental housing and income-related assistance to tenants respectively. Subclause (d) refers to home ownership assistance:

assistance under this agreement shall seek to provide home ownership opportunities for those unable to obtain or maintain affordable finance from the private sector or from other sources outside the agreement;

Mr Speaker, what have we been debating during the last 24 hours if not that exact subject? Subclause (e), covering implementation, says:

the state will be able to exercise maximum autonomy and flexibility in developing the administrative arrangements necessary to achieve these principles.

Those are the fundamental principles underlying the agreement and every section of the agreement relates to them. Clause 26(1) says that:

A state may use moneys in accordance with Recital (D) standing to the credit of the account of the state for -

(a) making repayments of principal and payments of interest in respect of loan assistance under this agreement ...

Isn't that exactly what the minister has been talking about for the last 4 to 30 hours? He has been talking about exactly that, and I am only quoting from schedule 1 of the Housing Assistance Act.

Mr Ede: Try clause 27(1)(a) again.

Mr HATTON: For the benefit of the member for Stuart, who will not listen, I will refer again to clause 26(1)(a) which refers to a person who enters into a housing contract under an interest arrangement that is consistent with clause 27(1)(a) of schedule 1 of the Housing Assistance Act. Through another mechanism, this government is providing a direct payment to the financial institution to relieve the burden of the borrower's repayments under the housing loan agreement. The provisions of the clauses that I have referred to indicate that we can do that.

Mr Speaker, I congratulate the minister for taking 10 months to analyse carefully the Commonwealth State Housing Agreement and to consider the available options under that binding agreement. I know that the Leader of the Opposition would love to undermine the minister's work because he wants to embarrass the government by means of some mechanism. If he succeeds and brings this scheme undone by having the federal minister pull the rug out from under it, he will be playing politics with the lives and resources of Territorians.

If the Leader of the Opposition succeeds in his gambit tonight, that will simply mean that this government will have to find the necessary funds for the proposal elsewhere, other than from those available under the Commonwealth State Housing Agreement. His scheme will fail. Territorians will still get the advantage of this innovative package. I challenge the opposition to carry out the member for MacDonnell's threat to tell Australia that, if we can afford to do this, we are overfunded. It will be dead if it attempts to do that because people in the community are looking for help. We are offering help and we have a mechanism to achieve it under the Commonwealth State Housing Agreement. If the opposition wishes to undermine that for its own political advantage, it deserves to be condemned.

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

Mr COLLINS (Sadadeen): Mr Speaker, in many ways it is a pity that the House has spent so much time on this debate. I believe that the vast majority of honourable members hope that the schemes will get off the ground and that they will benefit many people in various parts of the Territory. The 1600-odd households which will be affected have been hurting. They have problems with bills and with keeping up their payments. As has been shown, many have been going backwards in financial terms. Some have made the decision to hand in their keys and, no doubt, many others are in the same boat.

We have heard a great deal about various clauses of the Commonwealth State Housing Agreement. The debate seems to hinge on matters of interpretation and, obviously, the protagonists are trying to push their particular cases. However, I do not think the ordinary people of the Territory will be too interested in all these fine points. They want the package and we would like to see it commence without a kaffuffle.

I have been told by a member of the government side that discussions were held at officer-to-officer level between our housing people and the Commonwealth housing people. Certainly, there would be no grounds for anybody to have gone anywhere on this if the further step had been taken by the minister. This does not seem to require a written agreement although I imagine an exchange of letters would be a very useful thing so that it is in writing. It would have been good if the minister had been advised to do that, just as a precaution, because there is always a possibility that a doubt could be raised here.

In hindsight, one would always be wise to have had a look at it and to have conferred with the federal minister. That would have removed all grounds for any opposition or any doubts being raised. It is easy to be wise in hindsight. I bet that, if he had the opportunity, the minister would have said that it was worth a phone call. It is true that we like to think that we rule our own affairs and we are averse to Canberra dominating us, but we are signatories to this Commonwealth State Housing Agreement. As such, I believe that, in signing it, we are bound by it. Even though, by taking different clauses, the provisions can be interpreted in 2 different ways, it would have been a wise step to take, particularly if it is true, as I have been told, that it was discussed at officer-to-officer level. The implications of the comment made were that agreement was reached at officer-to-officer level. If the minister had taken the final step, we would not be debating this today.

I would like to take up a point raised by the member for Nightcliff who said that the schemes would go ahead anyway, even if somehow the federal minister vetoed them. I am sure each of us will recall that, in 1986, we had to phase out our home loan scheme because the Commonwealth thought it was too generous, and no doubt that hurt Territorians. It is fine for the minister to say the federal minister cannot do it, but a bit of action on his part would have made it doubly sure. If he had had a letter he could produce, he would not have given his opposition grounds to attack him. That is what it all really boils down to. One thing that could come out of this would be an unequivocal statement from the minister, or from the Chief Minister as Treasurer, to reassure Territorians that, even if the worst scenario occurs and the federal minister is able to veto the schemes, then the government will fund them from other revenue sources than those supplied through the Commonwealth State Housing Agreement. At least then people would have an assurance that the schemes will be implemented no matter what.

It would have been nice if that one part which creates a doubt were clarified. Someone might want to drag it through the court system. If the

lawyers get hold of it, no 2 of them would ever agree. It would be dragged out, and what a stupid thing that would be. We are working for the benefit of the people of the Territory who are trying to buy their homes and who, with interest rates and the like, are finding that their equity is disappearing. These schemes have considerable merit, as I said yesterday when I indicated that I supported them give an assurance that they will be implemented no matter what. I am sure that would give a very welcome reassurance to the community. It is a pity that the attack that has been made was not circumvented by correspondence between the 2 ministers.

Mr TUXWORTH (Barkly): Mr Deputy Speaker, it could almost be said that there is much ado about nothing but I think events have gone a little too far today for us to say that. As positions are gradually hardening on either side, it is likely that we will have a bunfight over this for some days.

I was interested this morning in the comments of the Chief Minister who said that he thought that the whole exercise by the Leader of the Opposition was one in grandstanding, and the Minister for Lands and Housing said that he thought it was just an exercise in headline grabbing. That is probably very true. I think it would be a fair description of what the Leader of the Opposition is up to. But that is an option that is open to the Leader of the Opposition at any time that he feels it would afford a political advantage to him, just as the government sought to gain political advantage from the benefit of these schemes with premature press leaks, a press conference before the sittings and a ministerial statement. The government had good press on the new schemes yesterday. This morning, obviously in anticipation of a reaction by the Labor Party, the government brought on this motion. It was done whilst proceedings were being broadcast by radio so that the government could capitalise on it. All that is grandstanding on the part of the government, and good luck to it. And good luck to the Leader of the Opposition if he can grandstand. However, it will not do the schemes or the people in the community one skerrick of good.

I would like to refer to the fact that, in yesterday's debate, I was more than happy to support the schemes. As I said, whenever the government develops schemes of this kind, so many scenarios are possible that one that is totally satisfactory will never be obtained. However, on balance, it was certainly worth a try because of the circumstances in the marketplace and because the difficulties in which Territorians find themselves are so great. During the course of my remarks, I said:

Finally, I would like to ask the minister about consultation with the federal government. Given the generosity of the scheme, has the minister obtained any reaction from the federal government? It would seem to me that, in establishing such a generous scheme, the government might be setting a benchmark which the Commonwealth and other states would like to emulate.

I understand the argument about being autonomous and independent and having an agreement with the states that gives them latitude to take account of local situations, but I think it also fair to say that, in having an agreement of that sort with the Commonwealth and the states, there is also a responsibility to consult with those other parties when something is tried that is a little different and probably a little more daring than anything that has been done before. On the surface, it seems to be a good package. It might be argued that there is a similar scheme in another state, but it certainly is very much different from the norm. It is very generous by any standards. Any government scheme that offers a first home owner a cash

contribution to his home of \$22 000 over 10 years is very generous. You can camouflage it any way you like, but it is generosity personified. When our government does that sort of thing, it cannot accept automatically that the rest of Australia, the 6 states and the Commonwealth, will go along with it just because the Northern Territory needs it at this time. The Territory does need it at this time and it is worth a try. But, it is one of those things that requires good manners as much as anything else. The government should consult with the state governments and the Commonwealth and say: 'We have special circumstances and degrees of hardship that are of concern to us. This is what we propose. What is the attitude of the Housing Ministers to it?'

I did not expect that this issue would arise in 24 hours. I fully expected that, at the next Housing Ministers Conference, it would be a point of discussion around the table, but not in 24 hours. The only flaw that I see so far is that there has been no consultation. That matter has to be corrected. It is not good enough for the minister to say that we are autonomous, the lawyers have told us that it is okay and that clause 27 does not apply. Those things may all be true. However, if we read the press release issued this morning by the federal Minister for Housing, it is clear that he is not giving any automatic approval to it. While he might not have the legal capacity to stop it in the long run, he can certainly make things very difficult and tie the program up for 2 or 3 months in a legal fight. Would that help Territorians, Mr Speaker? Not one little bit.

I say to the honourable minister that what we think of the interpretation of these various sections of the act is totally irrelevant. What needs to happen now is for the minister to contact the federal minister and say that we have this scheme, that there appears to be a problem and that he does not know whether the federal minister has been given false information, but that he would like to put the Territory's case before him and seek his urgent approval so that we can legislate to have it in place by 1 December. If the minister does not want to do that, then we have to accept that the scheme is in doubt, maybe for a week, 6 months or whatever, or maybe it is off for all time. If the minister does not want to consult with the federal minister, we have to accept that Territorians will suffer for it.

We are now fighting over what the small print in clause 27(1) means and whether the Territory has the right to do this or needs to consult with the federal minister. I even heard the argument advanced earlier that this does not apply because of an amendment to the legislation which allows the Territory government to make special provisions in the case of hardship. We are arguing 1600 cases of hardship in a broad-brush approach. That is all great stuff for a political debate in here but, in the wide world and in the minister's office in Canberra, it is just so much hocus-pocus.

We have what appears to be a scheme that might work and which would be good for Territorians. By his own admission, the minister has not consulted. Whether he did not consult because of bad manners or ignorance or because he did not believe he had to or he did not have the time or his officers forgot, does not matter. It is now time to consult. It behoves the minister to say: 'Let us get it out of the political arena. I will undertake to go to Canberra tomorrow or at some time and meet with the minister. When I return, I hope to have an agreement with the federal minister so that we can introduce the legislation next week and pass it through all stages'. We cannot maintain this position that the federal minister can hop it because we will do what we like. Everybody knows that, at the end of the day, the federal minister, whether he has the legal power or not, can make it so hot for the Territory minister that the package may not get off the ground. As I said earlier,

there has been much ado about nothing. In many ways, this has been an exercise in political point-scoring. We all do it so let us not point the finger at others when they do it.

A member interjecting.

Mr TUXWORTH: I do it all the time, and that is the way of the game. I do not make any apology about that. That is what it is all about. If members opposite have not woken up to that, that is fine.

Mr Dale: We have woken up to it, don't worry about that.

Mr TUXWORTH: Mr Speaker, everybody does it. Anybody who wants to sit in here and tell me that he does not score political points when he can is a pathological liar. We all do it. It is a tool of the trade of politics. I say to honourable members that we have all had a great deal of fun today. Everybody has tipped buckets on everybody else but we still do not have a resolution. That is in the hands of the minister. He can fix that right now by walking out, ringing the federal minister and asking to speak to him. That has not happened yet. Let us not pretend that the situation is not one which might raise objections from the states or the Commonwealth. They may well object. If they do, that will cause more hardship. Let us not delay. I ask the minister to be big enough to ring the federal minister now and put matters on an even keel. If he can go to Canberra before we sit next week and obtain the approval of the federal minister, so much the better. If the Leader of the Opposition has won a point or 2 or lost a point or 2, that is a matter for him. However, the games that we have played today are not important. What matters is the need for assistance in the community. I concur with the member for Sadadeen when he says that we have an obligation to people who are hurting so badly that many of them may have no choice ultimately but to nick off.

Mr Dale: That is part of your politics as well.

Mr SPEAKER: Order!

Mr SETTER (Jingili): Mr Speaker, I do not often agree with the member for Barkly.

Mr Ede: Thank goodness for that!

Mr SETTER: You are absolutely right. I certainly have not agreed with much of what the member for Barkly has said in this place over the last 12 months or so. However, I agree with his observation that grandstanding on this matter will not do the public one skerrick of good.

In the early hours of this morning, the Leader of the Opposition slipped out of town, headed for Canberra in an attempt to undermine the package of schemes which this government introduced yesterday, for no better motive than political grandstanding. That is what his trip is all about. It has nothing to do with the poor people who want to buy homes, people who, despite the Labor Party policy articulated in Canberra last week, want a block of land and a house for their kids and their families. The Leader of the Opposition slipped off to Canberra early this morning to try to undermine this government's housing proposals. No wonder he is nicknamed 'Submarine Smith'. He tries to torpedo every proposal which this government puts forward. He does that over and over again. He has done it in relation to Yulara, the Sheratons, the casinos and the TDZ. The list goes on. It is boring.

Mr Speaker, look at the headlines in yesterday's paper where the independent members of the press gave their opinions on the government's policies. Those headlines read: 'Subsidy Key to Home Boost' and 'Scheme an Early Christmas Present'. To quote Frank Alcorta: 'The housing package released today by the Housing Minister, Mr Daryl Manzie, amounts to an early Christmas present'.

Mr Speaker, it is interesting to note that the Deputy Leader of the Opposition and his mate on the backbench, the Brutus with his dagger poised, have just bolted out of the House. When things get a bit hot, they take off. That is typical of the gaggle of 6 which sits on the opposition benches.

Mr Lanhupuy: What are you gagging on about?

Mr SETTER: I am waiting for you to get up and say something.

Mr Speaker, the member for Arnhem has just interjected. Let him get up and put his point of view in relation to the housing schemes. We have not heard anything from him or his colleague, the member for Arafura, not a thing. They are the only 2 members of the opposition who have not spoken. Let them rise and tell the House what they think about this issue. All they do is sit back there and smirk because they do not have an opinion. At least, they are not prepared to stand up and support their leader and their other colleagues.

As I said before, the government's package is an excellent one. I have had feedback in the last 24 hours from people in my electorate and in the community at large who are telephoning my office and asking how soon they can make applications under the new scheme. Other people, who are covered by the NTHPAS, have been experiencing difficulties during the last year or 2. A number of such people have spoken to me about their difficulties and have welcomed the opportunity to change their financial scenario. I am sure that they will be among those queuing up at the Housing Commission on 1 December when the new schemes take effect. How can members of the Labor Party, the so-called party of the working man and woman, sit back there and oppose this scheme, as they did yesterday? That is all on the public record in Hansard. Their leader has not raced off to Canberra in order to save the scheme, as members opposite have tried to argue. That is absolute nonsense.

The reality of the situation is that, when this package was announced yesterday, the gaggle of hopeless socialists opposite were traumatised. They sat there with their mouths open. They did not know which way to look. In fact, as the Leader of Government Business pointed out early today, the Leader of the Opposition spoke for some 5 or 6 minutes and his speech fills only 1 page in the Daily Hansard. He did not know which way to look. He did not know what to say. His colleagues have followed in the same vein. They know that the government has come up with an excellent package which has tremendous popular support. They know that they had intended to run in the next election with a housing scheme which was causing some difficulty in the community. They know that that rug has been pulled out from under them. That is why the Leader of the Opposition is down in Canberra. He is not trying to solve a problem. With the assistance of Senator Collins and the honourable Warren Snowdon, he is trying to torpedo this program. I will bet that they have their heads together right now, working out a proposal to put to the federal minister this evening in an attempt to gain his support to undermine our schemes. That is what it is all about: politics.

Mr Speaker, go out into the community and ask the average person what he thinks. Our program is widely acclaimed. Talk to the real estate industry.

Last night on television, Mr Frank Furness acclaimed the program because the real estate industry has been hurting for the last 18 months. There have been particular problems with properties valued at less than \$100 000. That sector of the market has been sluggish. I have already mentioned the media. Independent members of the press listened to the whole debate in this House yesterday. We debated the minister's statement for several hours and the press reports were totally positive. I am sure that members of the press will make an assessment of the trick which the opposition has tried to pull today on the people of the Northern Territory and the parliament. It will be seen for what it is: nothing more than a trick carried out in an effort to salvage the opposition's sagging popularity in this community.

Far too often, we have heard the Leader of the Opposition stand up in this place and promote his doomsday theories. It does not matter what initiatives the government brings before the House; he is all doom and gloom. We heard his contribution to the debate on the TDZ and it was full of doom and gloom. He forgot to mention the 250 jobs that will be created in the zone by early next year. I am quite sure that, within the next 2 to 4 years, several hundred if not more jobs will be created down there, yet the members of the opposition have sought to undermine and torpedo it all the way down the line.

The Leader of the Opposition and those faceless people who attempt to back him up have no credibility in this community. We have heard the Leader of the Opposition carry on over the last several months about job losses. He has spoken about small business bankruptcies and population drift interstate. We have heard it over and over again. Of course, he forgets to tell us that his federal colleagues, probably at his instigation, have cut our funding by hundreds of millions of dollars over the past 3 or 4 years. He does not mention that. That is a non-issue. But he fails to recognise that, because of that, we are tightening our belts year after year. He continues to try to justify the actions of his federal parliamentary colleagues and tries to turn the argument around and put the blame on this government, when the reality is that we have been doing our best to keep the Northern Territory on an even keel despite the efforts of his socialist colleagues, his Labor Party masters in Canberra.

The schemes put forward yesterday by the honourable minister were designed to assist people in the Northern Territory to purchase their homes more easily, and that is very important. We have seen a home ownership rate of about 20% prior to self-government rise in more recent times to close to 50%. I am quite sure that, when these schemes really get going, we will see that rate pushing towards 60% within the next several years. The whole idea of this is to provide relief for those people who, under the previous scheme, have had some difficulty. The schemes are designed to stabilise the population drift from the Northern Territory interstate because, as I indicated, the economic situation is a little difficult right now and that is the result entirely of the fact that the federal Labor government has cut our funding by hundreds of millions of dollars over the last 3 to 4 years.

We want to stop that population drift. We want to create economic development and we want to create jobs. At an earlier time, we heard about the State Square project and, in spite of all of the negative propaganda that these people have disseminated, that will give an enormous boost to the economy of the Northern Territory, particularly in Darwin which is the worst affected area of all. Something like \$100m injected into Darwin's economy over the next 3 to 4 years will have an enormous effect. However, all we see from these people over here is the undermining of every effort that this government makes. It is not because they believe that the programs are not

good for the Northern Territory. It is all about politics. All they are trying to do is boost their flagging popularity. That is what it is all about.

Mr Speaker, I would say to you that in all of this they have made a grave political error because ordinary Territorians, sitting in the northern suburbs of Darwin, in Katherine, in Tennant Creek and in Alice Springs, those people who are on a wage and have young families, are finding things increasingly difficult. I pointed out at another time that the value of the wage dollar has been decreasing over the last 3 or 4 years, indeed in the term of this federal Labor government. It is becoming more and more difficult for those people to save a deposit for a home, particularly when we see the present high interest rate of 14.5%. How can a person, who earns about \$350 a week and who has a wife and 2 or 3 kids, pay his rent, support the family and eventually save a deposit to be able to buy a home? It is absolutely impossible. We went into this at another time. Members of the opposition are making a grave political error because, when the community at large realises that it is the Labor Party which is opposing the excellent schemes proposed by the minister yesterday, let us see what happens to its flagging electoral stocks. They will go through the floor.

It is nonsense for the Leader of the Opposition to jump on a plane at dawn this morning and fly 2500 miles to Canberra to talk to the federal Minister for Housing. In his office, the Leader of the Opposition has a facsimile machine and he has a telephone. It would have been very simple for him to have communicated with the minister, to have raised his questions and queries, to have advised the minister of his concerns and to have obtained a response. It is not necessary to waste 2 days flying 2500 miles to Canberra, attending a 7.00 pm meeting in Parliament House this evening and flying all the way back tomorrow, doubtless with bad news, and of course that is what he will get. Of course, he is trying to gee up the federal minister to find a crack in the armour so that he can come back with a negative story which will undermine and torpedo the excellent schemes proposed by the Northern Territory government. That is what it is all about. His objective in going to Canberra is to undermine the Northern Territory government, nothing more and nothing less. I would like to see a member of the opposition stand up and deny that.

That is politics, and it has nothing to do with housing schemes, but the opposition has been caught out because I am quite convinced that not only the community at large but the media will see opposition members for what they are. This is just a cheap political trick. His mission is doomed, his party is doomed and his philosophy is doomed because those people in the community want houses, and they want houses under the best possible scheme. The people on the NTHPAS want some relief. This program will give it to them. These schemes will succeed because, from the feedback that I have had in the last 24 hours, I know that there is enormous community support for them. The efforts of members of the opposition, and of the Leader of the Opposition in flying off to Canberra, are doomed. I support the minister.

Mr LANHUPUY (Arnhem): Mr Speaker, I had no intention of participating in this debate. However, I could not sit and listen to the member for Jingili harp on for half an hour without responding. He tried to defend the minister whom, for so long, we have been asking at least to look at the agreement to which he is a signatory. We have asked him to have at least the courtesy to tell the federal minister what he intends to effect through legislation for the scheme that he is proposing.

Personally, I believe the scheme will work, and members of the opposition have given their support to it. What we are worried about is the fact that, after 10 months of hard work, this minister has failed to follow the requirements of the agreement to which he is a signatory. The minister has put in 10 months of hard work and consultation with real estate agents and the community. I commend the Department of Lands and Housing for the amount of work it has done with respect to this scheme because, as a Territorian, I believe it will benefit many people. I must admit that it will not be of any benefit to my constituents because of legislative arrangements. Like the member for Barkly, I urge the minister accept his responsibility to pick up the phone and say to the federal minister: 'We are in the process of introducing this legislation. We are asking the parliament of the Northern Territory to pass it through all stages urgently. Can we have your consent to it?'

Quite often, we have said that we support this scheme totally. For the member for Jingili and others opposite to rise in defence of the actions of the minister is really pathetic. I feel sorry for the member for Karama who for so long has championed the cause of people in the northern suburbs to be able to obtain some benefit through home loan schemes. He had achieved something with this government and within his party. He was so close to achieving his aim but his own minister omitted to attend to minor details for which he is responsible.

As a signatory to that agreement with the federal government, the minister above all should have been able to read and understand the legislation and the agreement which he had entered into. It is pathetic behaviour on the part of the minister, and does no credit to those ministers opposite who have risen to defend him. It is unbelievable. As the member for Barkly said, people living in the suburbs in the Northern Territory were hoping to benefit from this proposal. 1600 people involved in purchasing their homes under the existing scheme would benefit. They hoped to have some relief from their difficulties by Christmas and be able to keep their homes.

However, what we have now is an argument which I do not think the Labor opposition will withdraw from. It is our intention to demonstrate to this government where its inadequacies lie. We have that right. That is why we are here. We are not here because we clung to the coat-tails of other politicians. We were elected democratically to represent the views of our constituents, and that is why we will pounce on any minister who is not doing his job properly. This minister is incapable of looking after his own legislation. This is a classic example of incompetence. We are advising the Minister for Lands and Housing that he has an obligation under the Housing Assistance Act to consult with the federal minister. He should have spoken to him the last time he was in Canberra instead of organising a trip to Brazil for the former Chief Minister. That is what he should have been doing, Mr Speaker.

The scheme has its merits. Certainly, from the comments that I have heard, the Territory people have received it with open arms. But, once again, there has been a political muck-up. The member for Jingili claimed that we were doing this for political gain. Mr Speaker, what do you think he was doing himself? And he was doing it for his own political gain, for God's sake. If he is trying to hide that, I do not know what is true.

Mr Setter: That is rubbish!

Mr LANHUPUY: Mr Speaker, that is unbelievable. If I were supporting the people at Alyangula, I would be politically grandstanding, and that is exactly what he was doing for his mob at Jingili. Therefore, he does not have a case to argue.

Once again, I urge the Minister for Lands and Housing to pick up the phone and admit that his department did not advise him of the specific clause in the agreement. He should take the matter up with the federal minister and have it settled by next week so that the legislation can be passed at these sittings. I can assure him there will be many people in the Northern Territory who will appreciate the efforts of this government.

Mr MANZIE (Lands and Housing): Mr Speaker, the motion that I proposed this morning is all about the behaviour of the Leader of the Opposition in relation to claims by the opposition that somehow or other something improper and incorrect has occurred in relation to the Housing Loans Scheme proposed by the government. An example of just how wrong members of the opposition are is the inference by the member for Arnhem that, somehow or other, we must have the permission of the federal government to do what we are doing, that we have to obtain its endorsement. Nothing could be further from the truth. The Territory government has the ability and the responsibility to make decisions of this nature, and we have the power and the legislative sense to do it. We do not have to go to anyone to obtain permission.

The Commonwealth State Housing Agreement is an agreement which was worked out after detailed consultation with officers and ministers. It is an agreement which sets the parameters under which the states and the Commonwealth can operate in respect of housing. It sets out the whys and wherefores and the dos and the don'ts, the areas where governments can operate, the powers they have to do certain things in regard to housing assistance or building, the areas that they can move into which are not controlled by the agreement and areas where there has to be some consultation. The agreement is quite explicit. It is very large and it covers a great deal. However, it sets in place procedures in relation to the states and the Northern Territory in respect of housing. The member for Nightcliff pointed out very clearly the general thrust of that agreement. It is very plain that the agreement enables states to work in an autonomous manner within the constraints of that agreement.

We have heard claims from the opposition that what is proposed by the Northern Territory government is somehow outside the agreement, that it is not within the parameters of the agreement and that we should discuss with the federal minister what we are doing. We have heard some pretty strange and wild statements made by members opposite. However, that is the basis of what their problem is. They believe that there is some movement away from the agreement. If that is the case, obviously there is a proper procedure for the opposition to follow, and that is to take some action in this Northern Territory parliament. Opposition members can ask questions in this parliament as is their right and their role.

Mr Ede: You never answer them.

Mr MANZIE: They can propose an MPI in this parliament.

Mr Ede: You ignore them.

Mr MANZIE: They can propose or move a censure motion against me or the government.

Mr Ede: You gag them.

Mr MANZIE: They could debate the issue when legislation is introduced, as it will be.

Mr Ede: You don't listen.

Mr MANZIE: They do not want to do that. They do not want to work in the Territory parliament because, deep down, they do not care a fig about the Territory or Territorians or about the democratic process in the Territory. They do not care. Their idea of democracy is to run to their mates in Canberra: 'Please can you look after us, boys. Can we do this? Are we allowed to say this? Have we got permission to do this? Does this follow our policy?' What a load of rubbish! It just shows the contempt that the Leader of the Opposition and members of the opposition have for democracy in the Territory and for Territorians. They will not use our parliamentary system at all. They run like little girls to Canberra to find out if it is okay and to tittle-tattle because they do not have the intestinal fortitude to stand up in this House and make their point. What a disgrace!

Instead of trying to address concerns, if they do have legitimate concerns, we have the Leader of the Opposition running to Canberra trying to scuttle a scheme which is designed to provide housing loan assistance to average Territorians, to low- and middle-income earners. What a disgraceful thing! What do we have, Mr Speaker? We have the Leader of the Opposition issuing press releases. There are midnight phone calls, he packs his bags and shoots off first thing in the morning on a 20 000 km trip around Australia. His most esteemed deputy made absolutely absurd statements on the ABC along the lines that somehow or other the federal government can stop us from doing what we are doing. What a load of balderdash! It is impossible to do that, but that does not worry him. He talks about a law the federal government has that will stop us. The man's ignorance of these matters is appalling, but that does not stop him making radio statements that create concern amongst Territorians.

Members of the opposition conveyed to the federal minister some itchy-bitsy pieces of information and, as a result, the federal minister issued a press release which says that he has some concerns regarding what the Territory government is doing in relation to the CSHA. Unfortunately, I have been unable to speak to the federal minister regarding some of the crazy accusations that have been made by the opposition today. However, as a result of the scaremongering tactics that have been perpetrated by the opposition, I have faxed a letter to the federal Minister for Housing and I intend to read that letter, which I will table. It is addressed to Hon Peter Staples MP, Minister for Housing and Aged Care:

Dear Minister, Re Arrangements to Close the Northern Territory Home Purchase Assistance Scheme.

The Northern Territory Home Purchase Assistance Scheme was established in 1984 under clause 27(1) of the Commonwealth State Housing Agreement. It has become evident in recent times that this scheme, due to changes in the economic circumstances, is causing hardship to participants. The Northern Territory government has decided to change the circumstances of the original loans to ease these cases of hardship. All participants under the scheme will have the principal of the original Housing Commission loan reduced by 10% and initially reduced interest rate of the loan to 4% followed by subsequent increases in interest rates and repayments.

The understanding of the Northern Territory government was that this change in circumstances is covered by clauses 27(3) and 28(3) of the Commonwealth State Housing Agreement without further consultation with you as the federal Minister for Housing and Aged Care. The actions of the Territory government in this matter are responsible and, I believe, in accordance with the intent and wording of the CSHA and do not require your specific approval.

I am concerned that you have issued a statement on the basis of limited information derived from media reports. This statement indicates that you are disturbed by the Territory government home loan proposals. However, I would be pleased to discuss this matter with you if you feel that consultation is necessary.

In addition to the closure of the existing scheme, my government is proposing to introduce a new scheme known as the Interest Subsidy Scheme. The Interest Subsidy Scheme involves the payment of a subsidy to the lending institutions to enable them to provide loans at normal rates to people on low incomes, that is between \$300 and \$600 per week. It is considered that this scheme complies with the provisions of clause 26 of schedule 1 of the agreement, and does not require your specific approval. I feel sure that you will agree that the Interest Subsidy Scheme is an effective and exciting scheme aimed at providing genuine assistance to all low-income earners in the Northern Territory. Further, the proposed means of alleviating the present hardship for the Northern Territory Home Purchase Assistance Scheme borrowers complements the new scheme to provide a complete package of assistance to Territory home buyers.

You may not be aware that the Territory government is also introducing a \$1000 Home Establishment Grant to help to defray initial home purchase cost. This will not involve the use of CSHA funds. I look forward to receiving your support for this package.

That letter has been faxed to the federal minister and it points out areas where he can have his staff check and see that the relevant sections that I quoted do enable the scheme that has been proposed by the government to work within the parameters of the CSHA.

Now, Mr Speaker ...

Mr Ede: Are you going to table it?

Mr MANZIE: Mr Speaker, I seek leave to table the letter.

Leave granted.

Mr MANZIE: Thank you, Mr Speaker.

I will go over what I am talking about for the benefit of the honourable members opposite because it is a pretty long, slow process. We have seen in the past that they do eventually get the idea if it is repeated enough times, but it is rather a slow process. We have seen the member for MacDonnell and know that he is a bit slow to pick up many things, but eventually he gets there. I will run through it again.

Interest rates under the Northern Territory Home Purchase Assistance Scheme are to be reduced. The basis for this is clause 27(3) which reads:

the state may waive recovery pursuant to paragraph (d) of subclause (1):

- (a) in any year of an amount recoverable in respect to the preceding year having regard to the level of payments as adjusted in accordance with paragraph 27(1)(c) and, where necessary, the income of the home purchaser; and
- (b) in the event that the loan is discharged in circumstances in which the borrower would suffer hardship if he or she were required to repay an amount recoverable and having regard also to movements in housing prices and income of the home purchaser.

It can be clearly seen that, in the event of hardship, the agreement provides specifically that the level of repayments should be reduced. That is what is proposed in respect of the old scheme. Further, clause 28(3) provides that: 'the state may reschedule repayments by borrowers or rental purchasers in the event of hardship'. The change in the interest rates structure and repayments was the mechanism for rescheduling and is an integral part of the package.

Let us have a look at the new scheme. The primary purpose of the agreement is to assist low-income earners to achieve home ownership and Recital (D), paragraphs (d) and (e), reads as follows:

- (d) Home ownership assistance:

assistance under this agreement shall seek to provide home ownership opportunities for those unable to obtain or maintain affordable finance from the private sector or from other sources outside the agreement.

- (e) Implementation:

the state will be able to exercise maximum autonomy and flexibility in developing the administrative arrangements necessary to achieve these principles.

The clauses that I have referred to, clauses 27(3) and 28(3), in relation to hardship and reductions in interest rates give a further indication of the purpose of this agreement. I notice that the Deputy Leader of the Opposition is not interested in the facts ...

Mr Ede: I am busy.

Mr MANZIE: He is too busy talking to the member for MacDonnell.

Mr Bell: If you talked sense, it might be worth listening to.

Mr MANZIE: That is typical because every time the facts are put before them, they rabble round and take no notes.

Mr Bell interjecting.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The honourable member for MacDonnell will withdraw that remark.

Mr Bell: I withdraw unreservedly.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The member for MacDonnell will stand and withdraw that remark.

Mr Bell: I stand and withdraw it unreservedly.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! I think the honourable member shows disrespect for the Chair and for the parliament, standing with a newspaper in his hand. Note should be taken by all honourable members that casual withdrawals are not appropriate.

Mr BELL: Mr Speaker, I stand and withdraw unreservedly.

Mr SPEAKER: Thank you.

Mr MANZIE: Mr Speaker, it is unfortunate that, whenever facts are put before members opposite, they go out of their way to ensure that they remain ignorant of them because, in some way, they may inhibit their inane attempts to score political advantage at the cost of ordinary Territorians.

Mr Speaker, the purpose of clause 27(1)(a), which was referred to by the member for Stuart, is to prevent increases in interest by states. It is not its purpose to prevent reductions. That would be ridiculous given that there are specific provisions in the agreement relating to hardship. In any event, under the Interest Subsidy Scheme, there is no reduction in government loan interest rates. The government is introducing an arrangement with banks and borrowers who are suffering hardship whereby borrowers will be responsible for a certain percentage of the interest payment payable to a bank and the Territory government will pick up the balance of the interest by way of a direct subsidy paid to the bank. In short, there is no change in interest and, therefore, clearly there is no problem in respect of clause 27(1)(a).

The opposition has drawn a long bow in an effort to gain some political points after the introduction of a scheme which will have positive effects for ordinary Territorians. Failing to respect the parliament of the Northern Territory, the Leader of the Opposition hopped on an aeroplane and ran to his mates in Canberra. What an appalling thing to do! If members opposite had had a decent look at the agreement and at the contents of the government's schemes, they would have seen that they do not contravene the agreement.

Even if the schemes contravened the agreement, what would be the result? At the very worst, the federal government would have to take some court action against the Territory for failing to abide by an agreement. This would result only in a direction regarding the expenditure of specific Commonwealth funding. Honourable members should all be aware that we do not use only Commonwealth funds for housing in the Territory. We use Territory money as well. Under no circumstances, under the agreement, will the Commonwealth direct the Territory government on where it spends its own funds on housing. To suggest that the federal government can somehow veto the Territory government in these matters shows an appalling lack of understanding of what self-government is about and an appalling lack of understanding of the Commonwealth State Housing Agreement.

The member for Barkly performed his usual exercise of walking along the fence. He will slip one day and then he will be in big trouble. He wants to support the concept but also he wants to give us a bit of a smack in the mouth and get his own name up in lights. He was not sure how to go about that. He did not understand the situation. He thought that, somehow or other, the agreement of the federal government was necessary. He thought that our scheme

did not fit the parameters and that we should go cap in hand to the federal minister in an effort to fix things up. I agree that some repair work will need to be done. What else can we expect when the Leader of the Opposition has travelled to Canberra to create problems? In addition, we have heard threats from the member for MacDonnell that he would take action in one way or another to ensure that the federal government punished the Northern Territory financially. We are aware of the attitude of the ALP, and the member for Barkly agrees with it to some extent.

A number of members have referred to our scheme as new and innovative. Mr Speaker, it is not unique in this country. Interest subsidy has been a feature of a loan scheme in Queensland for a number of years. I can assure honourable members that the Queensland government works within the confines of the Commonwealth State Housing Agreement. I can also assure honourable members that, in respect of the Queensland loan situation, agreement was not negotiated with the federal minister, nor should it have been. The scheme was within the CSHA guidelines. If there were any suggestion that, as a signatory to the same agreement, the Northern Territory government should be treated differently from Queensland, that would appal me.

Members opposite have said repeatedly that we should be treated differently from other parties to this agreement, and I find that abhorrent. I am appalled by their lack of understanding of the Commonwealth State Housing Agreement, their misreading of its provisions, and their pathological attempts to win political gain. In that context, I believe that the motion should be strongly supported.

The Assembly divided:

Ayes 15

Noes 5

Mr Coulter
 Mr Dale
 Mr Dondas
 Mr Finch
 Mr Firmin
 Mr Harris
 Mr Hatton
 Mr McCarthy
 Mr Manzie
 Mr Palmer
 Mr Perron
 Mr Poole
 Mr Reed
 Mr Setter
 Mr Vale

Mr Bell
 Mr Ede
 Mr Lanhupuy
 Mr Leo
 Mr Tipiloura

Motion agreed to.

STATEMENT

Services for the Intellectually Disabled

Mr DALE (Health and Community Services): Mr Speaker, I rise in the House today to speak on a matter of the utmost significance for services for psychiatric patients and for the intellectually disabled. Considerable recent discussion and controversy in the local and interstate media shows that there is confusion about the needs of and services for psychiatric patients and the intellectually disabled in the Northern Territory. I feel it is necessary to

explain the differences between the 2 groups, and to outline those specific services which are available or planned.

It is not easy to find a simple definition for each category of person and, in fact, most legal texts try to omit such definitions. For instance, our recent Adult Guardianship Act defines intellectually disabled as:

A disability in an adult caused by the effects of an illness, injury, congenital disorder or organic deterioration of the person's mental condition, and by reason of which the person appears to be unable to make reasonable judgments or make informed decisions on matters relevant to the person's daily existence.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! I would advise that gentleman in the gallery that, if he wishes to engage the attention of a member of this House, he should do so by contacting an attendant, not by trying to wave or lean over the barrier between the gallery and the Chamber.

Mr DALE: South Australian law has a shorter definition which may be simpler. 'Mental illness' means 'any illness or disorder of the mind'. 'Mental handicap', for which we use the term 'intellectually disabled', means 'imperfect or retarded development, impairment or deterioration of mental faculties from whatever cause'.

I am not a medical person but, as I understand it in lay terms, mental illness is an illness, possibly temporary, from which one may recover totally or at least reach a balance where one can live a normal life with help or support. Mental illness requires treatment to try to effect a cure. Intellectual disablement, on the other hand, is a state in which one is not so well-developed intellectually as one's peers and for which some compensating care or support is necessary. It is a chronic disorder which requires management, not treatment. It cannot be treated. Generally, the 2 categories are dealt with separately now by law and by government agencies. There may be, and often are, times when the agencies may need to overlap, but today I propose to deal with the categories as if the difference is clear.

In the Northern Territory, we have 2 acts to deal with each category of person: first, the Mental Health Act which deals with mental illness and, secondly, the Adult Guardianship Act which deals with the adult intellectually disabled. On a number of occasions, I have described the services available and those being developed for the mentally ill. In fact, just over 12 months ago, I spoke of the mental health service in a discussion of a matter of public importance. Today, I will concentrate on the problems of the intellectually disabled. I will address the proposed further expansion of our mental health services at the next sittings.

The history of services for people with disabilities in Australia is largely a transition from minimal state, private or charitable services to the assumption of greater responsibilities by government, either by providing direct services or, more commonly, by funding organisations to provide those services. In the Northern Territory, until recent times, the population has been so small and dispersed that it has been impractical for either charitable organisations or governments to develop extensive services for people with severe disabilities. Better care could be provided at less cost elsewhere. The Northern Territory missed out on the development of those 19th century, large privately-funded charities which established institutions elsewhere in Australia. In a sense, we were lucky in that we are not faced now with some of the problems which these institutions have created. However, over the last

30 years, we have seen the growth of community and church-based organisations which have secured funds from the community and governments to provide services for physically and intellectually disabled people. Gradually, the range of services has increased.

Territory and Commonwealth funding for these organisations has increased sharply since the International Year of the Disabled in 1981. The Northern Territory government component has increased by approximately a factor of 9 over this period. The services that we were able to provide in the fields of special education, assessment, therapy and care permitted more and more people with disabled children to remain in the Northern Territory rather than move south or send children south for development programs or care. Since I took responsibility for this portfolio, I have said many times that the Northern Territory government supports the notion that the Territory must take care of its own.

Since the International Year of the Disabled, we have seen far more growth in disability services and, in the last 2 years, the approach taken by the Northern Territory government has developed further. We are moving from a situation of response to submissions from community organisations to adoption of a planning model in which we look at the range of services provided by assessing the needs within the community and ways in which the government can meet those needs by funding community groups.

Some 2 years ago, it became clear that there was a shortage of respite and residential care for both children and adults in the Darwin area. The government responded with an investigation of the needs, and made commitments to those needs before the last Northern Territory elections. The commitment to increase respite care was met by a provision of funds to the Spastics Association NT to enable it to provide additional care. Funding was made available to Somerville Homes to establish a residential care facility for children aged 5 to 16. A house in the Howard Springs area was purchased and funding given to Somerville for adults with a combination of physical and intellectual disabilities who could not be accommodated elsewhere.

Total expenditure on residential and respite care has risen from \$1.565m in 1987-88 to an anticipated \$1.824m in 1988-89. The government provides funds for a number of homes and centres in Darwin and Alice Springs. In Darwin, these are: 5 group homes run by Somerville, residential and respite care run by the Spastics Association NT, a residential facility run by the Handicapped Persons Association and, in Alice Springs, an activity centre and 2 residences run by the Bindi Centre, residential facilities run by the Alice Springs Spastics Council and, of course, St Mary's 'Blue Cottage'.

For the first time, I think we are able to say to Northern Territory families that we can provide developmental services in the Northern Territory and we can provide care. In conjunction with the Commonwealth, we can provide the range of services from assessment, to care and assistance at home, through developmental and employment programs, to respite care which gives care givers at home a break from responsibilities, to residential care for those who cannot be cared for at home. We have done this without recourse to large, impersonal institutions or services. The emphasis is on enabling people with whatever sort of disability to live as normal a life as is possible with assistance, to live at home, with programs that enable them to live as part of the wider community and with small, residential facilities that are, as far as is possible, similar to a normal, domestic household.

The government made an additional commitment to the disability services before the last election which has not yet been met. It was to continue its planned approach by the establishment of a disability services advisory committee to advise me on planning and priorities. I have excellent reasons for not yet having established this committee. It became apparent to me that the Commonwealth government was planning to establish a similar advisory structure in each state and territory. It seemed obvious to me that such a body advising both governments would lead to a far more coordinated and effective approach to planning of services. I am delighted to advise honourable members that, after much correspondence and negotiation, the Commonwealth has agreed that the Northern Territory will have the distinction of a coordinated approach. Officers of both governments are currently finalising terms of reference and a joint announcement will be made shortly.

The government has introduced and passed the Adult Guardianship Act which will provide for guardianship of persons unable to make day-to-day decisions for themselves for reasons of intellectual disability. This is a piece of legislation of which I am particularly proud. It sets out very clearly the principles and philosophy which form the basis of government's policy on disability services. They are that: people's lives should be as unrestricted as is possible by the care provided; that the goal should be as normal a life as possible; that participation in community life should be encouraged; and that those who cannot speak for themselves should benefit from advocacy on their behalf.

I have said that, for the first time, I feel that we can provide a full range of care, including residential care for those in the Territory who need it. That does not mean that there is no room for improvement or for further development of additional services in some areas. It does mean that we have the framework and, having achieved this, it is now time for us to look at those people for whom, in the past, we have not been able to provide adequate care in the Northern Territory and to make plans for them.

I want to be quite clear about my priorities, Mr Speaker. While we were not able to provide residential care in the Northern Territory for those people with intellectual disabilities who needed care, we could not put a high priority on bringing back people who were receiving care elsewhere. Now, with the election commitment to residential care achieved, we can look at meeting the needs of Territorians currently being cared for in South Australian institutions. I would like to give honourable members a brief history of these arrangements with South Australia as a background to the current situation.

Over several years, a number of intellectually disabled people for whom care could not be provided in the Northern Territory were transferred to South Australia. The basis on which this was done appears, in some cases, to have been fairly informal. There is some discrepancy between our records and those held in South Australia because people moved from 1 institution to another. However, some people were transferred formally under the provisions of the Mental Health Act which provides for the government to arrange for care for persons in another state by obtaining orders from a magistrate.

With the benefit of hindsight, we can say that a much less clear distinction between mental illness and intellectual disability was made then than we would find acceptable now. A number of intellectually disabled people spent some time in mental institutions. A few, a very few, whom we now could care for at home with appropriate support, also went to institutions in South Australia. But, it is not my intention to criticise actions which were taken

20 years ago when far fewer community-based services were available here, especially in remote communities.

Currently, 24 intellectually disabled persons are in the Strathmont Centre and in Rua Rua in Adelaide, transferred by the Northern Territory authorities and for whom the Northern Territory government pays between \$55 and \$85 a day for care. There are 5 others who were sent privately to South Australia and are not the financial responsibility of the Northern Territory government.

In 1984, an agreement was signed between the Northern Territory and South Australia which attempted to regularise these arrangements. The agreement required that persons be transferred to South Australia only under the provisions of the Northern Territory Mental Health Act and be received and cared for within the ambit of the South Australian legislation. Northern Territory financial support for these persons was also a term of the agreement.

In 1987, my department became aware of plans by South Australia to de-institutionalise both Strathmont and Rua Rua. Officers from South Australia visited my staff and contacted several families and disability organisations to encourage relatives to lobby for the return of these people to the Northern Territory. In November 1987, information received during a departmental annual review of Territory clients in South Australia indicated the intended closure of Strathmont and Rua Rua. I wrote to the South Australian minister in January 1988, but it was not until 22 April that he replied advising me formally of the closure of Rua Rua by July 1989.

South Australian officers had come up with a plan for 4 residential facilities housing 6 persons each, geographically spread throughout the Northern Territory. I replied to the South Australian minister that I found this approach far too constrictive and that it smacked of moving people from large institutions to small ones. I approved a planned approach to repatriation of these people looking at individual needs and a variety of options for care. These included independent living, training and foster-type care as well as group living situations. I agreed that repatriation be staged over a period of time to allow for the development of appropriate services.

Subsequently, officers of my department visited South Australia to determine priorities for return and to assess the needs of those people whose return was top priority. Clearly, those people in Rua Rua who have remaining connections with the Northern Territory have priority. Also regarded as having priority are 2 people in Strathmont who have been able to express their desire to return to the Northern Territory. I have no intention of discussing the condition or circumstances of individuals. That would be an invasion of privacy and there has been rather too much of that already. I shall say more about that later. However, of the 24 people, there are some who might not be better off here. For example, there is 1 man who was institutionalised 24 years ago. There has been no family contact and the last known address of his family was confirmed 22 years ago as being in South Australia. I believe that we must seriously consider the best interests of such individuals and not automatically assume that for him to come to the Northern Territory is to come 'home'.

The appropriate authorities in South Australia are well aware of the planning in the Northern Territory and know that, as a first stage, 6 Territorians will be repatriated by mid-1989, 2 of them well before that. So what is the reason for some of the ridiculous allegations and intrusive publicity that we have seen recently? The South Australian government and

authorities are under pressure. Firstly, they are under pressure to de-institutionalise, particularly Rua Rua, in order to continue to attract Commonwealth funding. We understand that and support it, although South Australia's formal advice to me was rather belated. Secondly, that government is under pressure from its own guardianship board which is requiring Strathmont to provide individual development plans for each of more than 500 persons in that institution. This has challenged Strathmont in a way that could provide some embarrassment. As far as the South Australian government is concerned, the simplest development plan for Northern Territorians is to return them to the Northern Territory.

Related to this is pressure from an advocacy group in South Australia. This group is concerned about the status of and outcomes for all disabled people in South Australia and one of the issues that it has raised is that of the legal status of those people from the Northern Territory. I referred earlier to an agreement between the Northern Territory and South Australia on legal and financial liabilities. The Northern Territory act, under which people were transferred to South Australia, extends only as far as the Northern Territory border. Once these people are in South Australia, Northern Territory law does not apply. It is necessary that they come under South Australian legislation once they are within South Australia to provide any authority to hold them in institutions. The truth is that, as far as we can tell, the South Australian authorities have not placed these people within the ambit of their Mental Health Act or other more suitable legislation and hence the embarrassment, Mr Speaker.

Like South Australia, we no longer wish to provide for these people under mental health provisions, but the situation is that no action we could take in the Northern Territory would apply to or remedy their legal status within South Australia. It was only after the involvement of this advocacy group that South Australian authorities began suggesting, very loudly, that 1 of these people should be living more independently in the Northern Territory community rather than in 1 of the 4 facilities for 6 people which their suggested plan had encompassed late last year. Mr Speaker, I happen to agree but I also believe that you cannot transfer a person who has been institutionalised for over 20 years into independent living circumstances without appropriate training and support. I will not be bullied into bringing people back to the Territory until those supports which my department is currently preparing are in place. However, I become angry when watching a Territorian's desire to return being exploited on television by South Australian authorities and staff in order to avoid embarrassment for themselves.

Preparations also include planning for some small-scale residential facilities for the majority of these people who are severely or profoundly disabled. My department and officers of the Department of Lands and Housing have been discussing ways of achieving this over the next 2 years. A recent meeting between officers and disability service providers explored a range of quite exciting options which could provide some real choice for disabled people living in the community. It included grouped or cluster accommodation for mutual support and services, duplex arrangements with accommodation for care givers, small domestic group homes with facilities for support services as well as modified housing stock for families.

There are also several possible approaches for financing such arrangements from normal rental agreements to cooperative ownership, but let me explain one of the difficulties that I hope we will not have to face. I refer to the old NIMBY syndrome. The initials stand for 'not in my backyard'. The community

in general might agree that a normal life in the community is preferable to locking these people up in large institutions which can limit their development but there might be some who want to say: 'In the community, but not in my community, thank you'. We are not talking about dangerous criminals but about people with intellectual disabilities and several with such severe physical disabilities that communication and intellectual development cannot occur. These are people who will benefit from contact with family, from interaction with the community and from a more normal daily life.

To summarise, Mr Speaker, in the past, the intellectually disabled of the Northern Territory have been sent to institutions in South Australia because the facilities here were not developed or because the then cost of providing the necessary facilities was not cost effective for the small number of people concerned. South Australia, which has been caring for these people, although the cost has been borne by the Northern Territory government, wishes now to close some facilities and has a policy of de-institutionalising such people. Although I agree entirely with the basic principle, this is not a step to be taken lightly or hurriedly. We should never forget that we are dealing with people who have special needs. Each person requires an individual assessment of his or her needs and of his or her ability to live in a specific environment.

My department is undertaking this process with all the care and concern necessary for each individual's needs. The proposed facilities and support systems have been described and I assure you, Mr Speaker, that each person will receive the care and support appropriate to his or her needs and abilities. I should like to reiterate that media publicity of any sort may adversely affect the transfer of individuals from their current way of life to life in the Territory. Publicity may warp their view of community life and may raise their expectations beyond their capabilities. It may also affect those with whom they are to live and thus provoke adverse reactions. May I exhort all members not to encourage or endorse any media extravaganzas. The best way to help these people will be to allow the various authorities and agencies to develop their plans with thoughtful, caring dignity for all concerned.

Mr Speaker, the other side, those with a mental illness, will be the subject of a statement I will make at the next sittings. I intend that every member of this House will be aware of the needs and of the services available. By placing this matter before the House and the public, I hope to reduce the impact which irrational responses to people with intellectual disabilities and psychiatric illnesses can have on the people concerned. Mr Speaker, I move that the Assembly take note of the statement.

Mr BELL (MacDonnell): Mr Speaker, I preface my remarks by thanking the minister for making available a copy of his statement for my perusal prior to its presentation to this Assembly. I have a variety of comments to make. I note that various undertakings were given by the Northern Territory CLP prior to the last election. The opposition has been scrutinising those.

Mr Hatton interjecting.

Mr BELL: With the exception noted by the Minister for Health and Community Services in his statement, that perhaps is true in the case of the plan for respite and residential care for the disabled. I would point out, for the benefit of the member for Nightcliff, in the day and a half of these sittings, we have had one of the more spectacular examples where that plainly was not the case. I refer the honourable member for Nightcliff to the shared

equity scheme that was part of the housing policy. However, I digress. I merely point that out lest the member for Nightcliff or any member of the government should seek to take the moral high ground in that regard.

Mr Speaker, on the first page of his statement, the minister talks about definitions of 'intellectual disability' and contrasts them with definitions of 'mental illness'. I suggest that the way he does so appears to be rather confusing. It is clear that it has taken the minister several pages to become clear on those definitions himself. It is perhaps unfortunate that the minister has found it necessary to say that he is not a medical person because that suggests that one has to have medical qualifications to understand the distinctions and that the minister is focusing mainly on the medical model of intellectual disability. That is the approach which has caused so many problems.

For many years, people with intellectual disabilities were placed in South Australia through the application of the relevant sections of the Mental Health Act. Officers from the Department of Health and, later, the Department of Health and Community Services, made annual visits to South Australia to people placed in the institutions to which the minister referred in his statement. Those staff had been trained in the mental health services in the Northern Territory. Unfortunately, some people have a somewhat misinformed attitude in relation to people with intellectual disabilities.

As the minister said, the Adult Guardianship Act was enacted this year. I would point out, however, that it had a particularly long and tedious gestation. I congratulated the minister and the government on the passage of that legislation which appears to have been successful in its application to behaviourally-disturbed people in Alice Springs. The initiatives which led to the enactment of that legislation came originally from the Department of Community Development and reflected a social or community perspective on the issue of intellectual disability.

Unfortunately, the medical model appears to prevail in the statement which the minister has delivered today. Of particular concern to the opposition, for example, is the decision to collocate psychiatric and psychological services at the Tamarind Centre. This will reinforce the community's perception that people who have a range of problems are, to use a colloquial term, 'nuts'. This type of thinking needs to be attacked strongly. It suggests that the minister is prepared to allow this medical psychiatric model to dominate. That is exactly the model that has created some of the problems that exist in the South Australian institutions which the minister referred to, particularly the Strathmont Centre and Rua Rua.

The minister talks about the historical impracticality of providing suitable services for the intellectually disabled in the Northern Territory, stating that better and cheaper options were available. Those options, as the minister pointed out, were institutions in another state. For years, there has been a program of de-institutionalisation in most of the states. It is surprising that the government and the minister have suddenly realised that the pressure is on to relocate people from South Australia. My understanding of the matter and my recollection of debates in this House is that that pressure has existed for a number of years. The minister pointed out that we were lucky to miss out on the 19th century institutions. However, as he pointed out also, we were forced to use them nevertheless.

The minister spoke also of the increase in funds available for services for the disabled. I believe that this is one of the achievements of the

Commonwealth government. It is interesting that the Northern Territory government is prepared, in a debate on a particular day, to run the line that the Commonwealth can do no good whilst, in another debate on the same day, it suggests that some of the Commonwealth's policy initiatives are of value. This, of course, is one such example. In this area, the Commonwealth government has developed appropriate policies and programs and I appreciate the fact that the minister recognises them. I am impressed by the minister's reference to a planned approach to the treatment of intellectual disability but I wonder why, in the past, there has been an absence of an appropriate framework. I would appreciate the minister addressing that particular issue when he sums up comments on the statement.

The Northern Territory government made a number of promises prior to the last election and, in this particular case, it looks as though it is skating in on time in terms of meeting its commitment and establishing the facilities it undertook to establish. Of course, some 18 months have elapsed since that election but I am quite happy to go on the record as saying that, in this particular case, it appears that there has been some progress.

I would point out that, whilst the minister has made very strong comment about lobby groups in South Australia, he appears to imagine that there are no such lobby groups in the Northern Territory. It is clear, however, that much of the government's action has come about as a result of lobbying from distressed parents and from staff who are working under great stress in community-based facilities. For a long time, community organisations such as Somerville and the Spastics' Association have been talking about normalisation principles such as those discussed by the minister in his statement. They are not new ideas and those organisations have been lobbying the government for a long time to expand and develop appropriate facilities. I cannot allow the minister to get away with saying that South Australia is putting on the pressure and beginning to create a state of panic. The panic has been created because the minister has not listened to others and has not acted as quickly as he might have. The problem has existed for a long time and the minister has admitted as much.

We welcome the joint Commonwealth Northern Territory approach to planning for the needs of the disabled. This approach is common to a number of other program areas; it is not novel. A planned approach is essential in identifying priorities for action. Perhaps now the South Australian residents will get a chance to fit into the strategic directions to be adopted.

The minister's department does not have an enviable record in this area. He cannot continue to refer to decisions made 20 years ago, because some of those decisions were made by people who are still involved in the process of government in the Northern Territory and by people who have been involved in government administration since self-government. Time and time again, the government endeavours to suggest everything has been rosy since self-government. In this area, the government has acted less than speedily so far. It is my belief that the government's intention to relocate people should have been signalled a long time before this. As I said earlier, the move towards de-institutionalisation in all southern states has been occurring for some considerable time and I suggest that the minister's statement is somewhat belated in this regard. Many of the signals of the move towards de-institutionalisation were ignored. The fact that South Australia had 500 residents to plan for would suggest that it could in no way plan realistically for the future of each individual resident, particularly when the Northern Territory government was paying for their care. The criticism of southern institutions may be laudable. However, I believe that the Northern

Territory government had the opportunity to address the problem well before it did so.

The minister talks about the NIMBY syndrome - the not-in-my-backyard syndrome. It is a pity that he has failed to make sure that, in terms of public policy, the Northern Territory's backyard has been cared for satisfactorily. That is a matter of concern to the opposition. People placed in South Australian institutions are part of the minister's backyard. They are Northern Territory citizens whose long-term care needs should have been considered a long time ago, in terms of access to family, community-based care, developmental training and opportunities for normalisation. The evidence of neglect is an indictment of the minister.

I had the opportunity to visit the South Australian centres last year in company with Mrs Helen Burns, who pays a great deal of attention to the needs of a number of Aboriginal people, some of whom are involved in this particular class of people. Mrs Burns will be known to a number of members. Her younger brother, the Reverend Paul Albrecht, who also will be known to many members, was born at Hermannsburg. She grew up at Hermannsburg and speaks Aranda very fluently. Her visits to Aboriginal people from central Australia who are hospitalised for short-term or long-term treatment are much appreciated and I would like to place on record my appreciation for the time that she spent in allowing me to become familiar with some of the problems involved in this regard.

I am able to advise the minister that I am not addressing this issue in vacuo. I am aware that it is a problem of long standing. I believe that the minister's attention to the problem is, as I have said, long overdue. The minister's statement is a little like the parson's egg; it is good in parts. Equally, like the parson's egg, it may have been around for quite a while. With those perceptive comments about the strengths and shortcomings of the minister's statement, I conclude my remarks.

Mr TUXWORTH (Barkly): Mr Speaker, I had an opportunity to read the minister's paper this morning. I think most of the points made in it have been raised by the minister at some stage during the last few weeks, either in the media or during the last sittings in answer to questions. In the main, the statement is common sense and sets out directions which I believe anybody would take under the circumstances without regarding them as a particularly big deal. However, I do think it is important to acknowledge that some progress has been made.

In recent weeks, there has been a fair amount of controversy about the return of one of my constituents to the Northern Territory. She had been in Adelaide for a very long time - I think it was 19 or 24 years. Her situation highlights the complexity of the issues which confront not only the minister but all Territorians. I would like to run through the circumstances that have existed for a long time and which have caused many Territorians to be banished - for want of a better word - to another part of Australia without any opportunity to return. In the Northern Territory of the 1950s and 1960s, there was no psychiatric assessment. It was hard enough to get a broken arm or leg set properly, let alone obtain a psychiatric assessment. In many cases, people were evacuated from the Territory for assessment and never came back. After being assessed down south, they were placed in an environment which took over their lives and there was never an opportunity for their situation to be reviewed.

Over the years, the facilities available for psychiatric care and care of the mentally disabled in the Northern Territory have improved considerably. As the minister pointed out in his statement, there are quite a few facilities available now. They have become available only within the last 10 or 12 years. Some, which were being developed at the time of the 1974 cyclone, were knocked down and redeveloped after the cyclone. Those services have been able to cater for those people who were here. Those people who were not here before the development of those services have really had little opportunity to have their position reassessed.

With the rewriting of the Commonwealth states cost-sharing agreements for health and psychiatric care in the late 1970s and early 1980s under the Fraser government, a pressure started to develop because people interstate, and not only in South Australia, were not interested in caring any further for Territory patients because they did not want to be burdened with the cost. While it was very simple to ask us to take back our patients, many of the patients to whom this relates had no Territory environment to return to. The young lass from Tennant Creek is a fine example of that.

That does not remove the need, and the responsibility that we have, to take those people back if that is what is ultimately desired by the individual or by the state. If South Australia or some other state wants to shrug off the agency responsibility that it has carried out for the Territory, it is entitled to do that, and we do not have any recourse but to take the patients back. If the patients have grown and developed to a stage where they are independent by their own means or they have some capacity to return to some community life and be supervised in that community and provided with some dignity, those wishes of the individual are to be respected.

I read into the minister's statement that he is starting to progress down that path. While pressure groups in other states may have applied the heat recently and caused him to step up his momentum in this area, I agree that it was not an instant-pudding exercise. In fact, it is something that will be worked out over a period of time for the simple reason that the categories of patients with whom we are dealing are so wide and varied and the opportunities that exist for them in the Northern Territory are so different from the opportunities that existed when they may have left the Territory many years ago that, in some cases, there will be a need for a total review of how patients are to be handled.

On several occasions, the minister has suggested in the press that, when I was the Minister for Health, nothing happened and nothing was done. I would make the point to the honourable minister that the pressure for the return of patients did not really start until 1984 because it was the change in the cost-sharing agreement that brought on the pressure. At that time, if anybody had asked the South Australian government to indicate how many patients it had, what category they were in and what it wanted to do, it would not have had the faintest idea. Over the ensuing period, the South Australian state government got its act together and has indicated in pretty plain terms what it thinks should happen and how soon it should happen. There is no point in blaming me or somebody else or the South Australians. He has been minister now for several years and he needs to solve the problem. If he does not solve it, it will sit on his desk.

So far as constituents from my electorate are concerned, and I refer to patients who are out of Tennant Creek - and not necessarily interstate but perhaps in facilities in Alice Springs or Darwin - returning to a normal community environment in Tennant Creek will not be easy because many of those

people came from Warrabri, Yuendumu, Murray Downs and the Barkly Tablelands. A whole range of geographic areas is involved. When they were originally taken from those places, the family was in situ and now the family may have moved somewhere else and the social environment may be totally different. Resiting the patients back with their family will not be easy and the institutional care that the minister is so keen to avoid is something that may be with us for a while.

I will touch on the institutional side of it because it is not a dream that has just popped up and that people are responding to. It is fair to say that de-institutionalising patients really started following the Year of the Handicapped in 1982 or 1983. There was an enormous pressure build-up in that period for government and community-based organisations to accept that there were many people in institutions who did not need to be there, who could be leading a more dignified existence and that it was up to the authorities to ensure that that opportunity was available to them.

That situation faced the Territory government at the time with the number of people who were in the leprosarium. There were people in the leprosarium who did not need to be there. The bottom line was that we did not even need to keep the leprosarium open because those people were able to return to the community. It was a matter of saying that we would not institutionalise them any longer and that they could lead a family existence. After quite a bit of toing-and-froing, those people are now back in the community. The great stigma of leprosy that they have carried with them for most of their lives has been erased and the people who were involved in looking after them in that institutional environment, the health workers, the doctors and medical staff, are now spread through the community attending a whole range of illnesses among Aboriginal people that had never been addressed because of the manpower shortage.

I would say that the minister has a great deal of support for his desire to de-institutionalise these people, not only from the dollar point of view but from the point of view of dignity. He will not get any argument from me on that. I had hoped that the minister would address the issue of the mentally-incapacitated people who are being held in the ward at the Royal Darwin Hospital. I will look forward to his statement on that during the next sittings so that we can address the issues involved.

Mr DALE (Health and Community Services): Mr Deputy Speaker, I thank the 2 honourable members who have contributed to the debate today. I am a little disappointed that a little more was not said about the good things that this Northern Territory government is doing for such citizens of the Northern Territory, whether they are still resident in the Northern Territory or elsewhere. There is some confusion among the coalition opposite because the member for MacDonnell said that there has been pressure for many years from South Australia for these people to be returned and then his deputy spokesman within the coalition, the member for Barkly, said that pressure was not really on us until as recently as 1984. That was about the time that he was Minister for Health if my memory serves me correctly.

NOTE: Short break in transcript as a result of power failure.

Mr DALE: I became minister responsible for Health and Community Services some 18 months ago. That happened to be the time that this government's policies were coming to fruition. I have been fortunate enough to have the carriage of those policies and the implementation of some of the schemes. In particular, in relation to the people who are in South Australia, the one

outstanding goal that I will be pursuing is to ensure that the best interests of each of those individuals will always be my major concern. There is no easy way of coming to terms with whether or not some of these people should return to the Northern Territory. As I said in the statement, some of them in no way relate to the Northern Territory today. They have no relatives here or they have relatives who have not shown any interest in them for perhaps 20 years. Another fact that ought to be noted is that not all of these people have been in South Australia for all of 20 years. Some have gone down in much more recent times. The Northern Territory government has been unable to provide the various services that we now need to provide in the Northern Territory because of, to put it in simplistic terms, the economies of scale.

I will not go on. Suffice it to say that I believe that this statement today has indicated clearly to all of the people of the Northern Territory and the coalition opposite that we are heading in the right direction in providing appropriate services for these people.

Motion agreed to.

CANCER REGISTRATION BILL
(Serial 160)

Bill presented and read a first time.

SUSPENSION OF STANDING ORDERS

Mr DALE (Health and Community Services): Mr Speaker, I move that so much of standing orders be suspended as would prevent the Cancer (Registration) Bill (Serial 160) passing through all stages at these sittings.

Motion agreed to.

Mr DALE (Health and Community Services): Mr Speaker, I move that the bill be now read a second time.

This is a redraft of the bill which was introduced in May 1988 to provide for the mandatory notification of diagnosed cancer. The introduction of a redrafted bill was decided on after consideration of some minor changes which resulted in substantial changes to what is a short bill. The main thrust of the bill has not been altered and, therefore, this formal speech is similar to that given in May 1988, except for some minor changes reflected in the redrafted bill. However, this new bill shows clearly the final format of the proposals.

I am sure that all honourable members will agree that cancer is one of our major health problems. Indeed, it is one of the most important, unsolved health problems in the world today. Any steps which can be taken to help in the fight against cancer should be taken, and the provision of accurate information is the basis for this future action. For the study of diseases to be effective, it is essential to have accurate statistics and accurate information. Previous cancer statistics gathered in the Northern Territory have been supplied on a voluntary basis. Because of this, we do not know how completely or accurately they relate to our local problems. This is not a sound basis for either research or therapeutic program development.

There is now an Australasian Association of Cancer Registries which, in conjunction with the Australian Institute of Health, is setting up a national cancer statistics clearing house as endorsed by the National Health and

Medical Research Council in 1984. This national cancer statistics clearing house will produce periodic analyses of geographical variation trends over time and survival rates. A recent interim report for 1982 is available.

National Australian data on cancer mortality have been available for many years based on the information in medical certificates of causes of death provided to the Registrars of Births, Deaths and Marriages in the states and territories. This information is used by the Australian Bureau of Statistics to compile national mortality statistics on a year-of-registration basis. The only effective method of obtaining cancer incidence data is through universal registration of cancer cases. This is why this bill is being presented.

The bill places an obligation on those in charge of pathology laboratories to provide the necessary information prescribed. This bill also provides for the establishment of a registrar to record the necessary information as it is provided. Other information will be provided by the Registrar of Births, Deaths and Marriages. The need for incidence and follow-up information will allow researchers to evaluate the effectiveness of various treatments and the survival rates of various types of cancer patients. All of this will be of use to present and future patients who suffer from this disease. Without the accurate reporting of incidence, we cannot establish the malignancy rates of various cancers within our specific population - for example, the incidence and survival rate of skin cancer in our tropical climate or the problems of people exposed to hazards in nursing and other industries.

We may also wish to monitor the relative incidence of cancer in people of ethnic origin, for example, those Aboriginal people living a different lifestyle. The requirement for accurate information is reflected in the need for appropriate preventive and treatment services - for example, a recent proposal to expand screening for breast and cervical cancer will be of little use unless we use the results to monitor our own service needs.

Since 1971, each state and territory in Australia has sought to establish or consolidate cancer registration. The aim is to cover the total population of Australia and to proceed with national studies. The establishment of the Australian Association of Cancer Registries in 1982 and the national cancer statistics clearing house will facilitate the national network and enable more complete research to be undertaken.

Cancer registration differs from some statistic gathering agencies because of the need for identification of the patients in order to obtain follow up details. This bill ensures that such information will be kept confidential apart from statistical information which does not identify specific persons. For general publication only, numerical information will be supplied as it currently is. Voluntary information to the Cancer Registrar is kept confidential. Where specific information is required for scientific research, it will be provided only to persons authorised in writing by the Chief Medical Officer who is appointed by the minister responsible for the Department of Health and Community Services. Permission for names to be released will not be given except to authentic medical research workers from reliable establishments whose projects have been assessed by the ethics committee.

Cancer is a disease which may influence the lives of family, friends and colleagues. The use of a register will improve our knowledge of the disease and, through this, our provision of appropriate preventive and treatment services. I commend the bill to honourable members.

Debate adjourned.

HOUSING AMENDMENT BILL
(Serial 153)

Bill presented and read a first time.

SUSPENSION OF STANDING ORDERS

Mr MANZIE (Lands and Housing): Mr Speaker, I move that so much of standing orders be suspended as would prevent the Housing Amendment Bill (Serial 153) passing through all stages at these sittings.

Motion agreed to.

Mr MANZIE (Lands and Housing): Mr Speaker, I move that the bill be now read a second time.

The purpose of this bill is to empower the Housing Commission to provide non-recoupable advances for housing assistance to Territorians. It is the government's intention that the new Northern Territory Interest Subsidy Scheme, which I announced in my ministerial statement yesterday, will commence on 1 December 1988. The scheme will be prescribed by regulations which will complement this bill.

Honourable members will recall from my statement that the Interest Subsidy Scheme, which is designed to boost home ownership in the Territory, will provide an interest subsidy to eligible borrowers wishing to buy their first home in the Territory. It has been designed to assist people in the low- to moderate-income bracket and it will be complemented by the new Housing Establishment Grant. The Interest Subsidy Scheme will replace the existing Northern Territory Home Purchase Assistance Scheme which, because of a combination of adverse economic factors, has become unworkable in the present market conditions.

Honourable members would be aware that wages have declined in real terms in recent years, property values in the Territory have stagnated and interest rates have risen. I detailed the effects of these factors on participants in the Northern Territory Home Purchase Assistance Scheme in my speech yesterday. It is not clear whether or not the Housing Act presently provides for the advancement of non-recoupable funds such as the interest subsidy under the new scheme. The amendment proposed in clause 3, to section 26 of the principal act, will empower the Housing Commission to make such an advance under a prescribed housing assistance scheme. I commend the bill to honourable members.

Debate adjourned.

EDUCATION AMENDMENT BILL
(Serial 150)

Continued from 12 October 1988.

Mr EDE (Stuart): Mr Speaker, the bill before us can be divided basically into 2 broad sections. There are a number of consequential amendments that are required to be made which follow on from the setting up of the university and other changes in the tertiary education system. We have checked these consequential amendments with people involved in tertiary education and in the areas affected and we have no problems with them. Therefore, I wish to go straight to that area with which we do have major problems. I am referring to

clause 11 of the bill, which is headed 'Truancy'. The effect of this clause is to give police the power to act as truancy officers and that is a situation which has not occurred ...

Mr Perron: It wasn't a bad experience when you were a young fellow.

Mr EDE: The Chief Minister may have found it handy to be picked up by the police, thrown in the van and taken back to school occasionally. I do not know what it did for his education but it might have had some entertainment value for his school friends and it might have helped to give his teachers ulcers.

Mr Speaker, as far as I can work out, the only effect of the amendment circulated by the minister is to say, basically, that the members of the police force must be in uniform when they nab the children and that they do not need to have any identification. The very idea that police will be empowered to carry out the role of truancy officers is farcical. The police that I have spoken to about this are absolutely against the proposal. They say that they have enough work to do looking after law and order in the Northern Territory without racing around trying to pick up kids who may or may not be truant from school. The whole thing is a joke. It lends itself as a subject for incredible cartoons of police running around with catcher nets trying to chase kids down alleys, behind stores, and around the streets with the kids having a great laugh as they outrun the sergeant and his men and yahoo at them. What sort of a relationship are we trying to build up between the police force and young children? Heaven forbid that the good work that has been done by police involved in the schools program is to be undone by a proposal such as this. It is absolutely ridiculous.

The first assumption is that the police will be able to find the time and the inclination to carry out this duty. I am not saying that any policeman will decide that he will not do his duty but, in the course of their duties, policemen have to make a decision on priorities. For example, if they are engaged on an investigation of some nature, they cannot drop that and chase a kid down the street. If they are on traffic duty, they cannot drop that duty to chase kids down the street. Will the honourable minister provide more police, Mr Speaker? Will more police be recruited? Or is he saying, for example, that the police are underworked at the moment? Is he saying that, at the moment, we have too many police and they are all having a good bludge? Is there a bunch of them out there sitting on their tails with nothing to do, and he wants to get them out of those police stations and down the street chasing kids? Is that what he is saying? If he is not saying that and if his experience of the police force is the same as mine, that they are hardworking, their time is fully occupied and the force is undermanned, then he must recognise that they do not have the time to do this job.

Mr Hatton: Oh, come on!

Mr EDE: 'Come on', he says! If you can stand up and tell me that the police have the time to be able to carry out this function, I will be most surprised. Ask the police around the Northern Territory and I am sure that they will tell you, Mr Speaker, that they most certainly do not have the time.

However, let us assume that they have the time to carry out this function. In the committee stage, when we debate our amendment to delete clause 11, I will go into more detail on how this will work. Clause 11 states that the member of the police force may 'ask the child for his name and address, his age, the name of the school at which he is enrolled, and an explanation of his

absence from school and, if he remains of the opinion that the child is of compulsory school age and is not satisfied with the explanation offered by the child, escort the child to the school and into the custody of the head teacher'.

What child in this situation will give accurate information anyway? Will the police officer end up with a situation where an errant child that he has picked up at Palmerston somewhere says that he is from Nightcliff? Will the policeman put him in the back of the van, close the door and charge away from Palmerston all the way to Nightcliff only to have the head teacher say that the child is not from his school? What does the police officer do then? Does he lock the child up for the night? To be perfectly honest, this proposal is absolutely impractical. It is ludicrous.

Let us take another example and assume that the policeman is given the name of the correct school, and he has a band of kids in the back of the van. He trundles up to the school, delivers them to the principal and the principal lumps them back into the classroom. To be perfectly frank, some of them are perfect little horrors. They are disruptive. Prior to the education cuts, there were at least school counsellors who could handle this job, but their numbers have been halved now.

Mr Hatton: The decision is up to the schools.

Mr EDE: The schools decided that they needed teachers. When they decided to reallocate those resources in the face of the cuts by the Minister for Education, they did not realise that this measure would be lumped upon them. Enormous disruption will occur as children are picked up off the streets, brought to school and placed in the classroom. Mr Speaker, will they turn instantly into model students when that happens? Of course not!

My colleague asks whether the same thing will occur in bush communities. Does the minister believe that police in such places do not have enough problems already in trying to cope with the effects of alcohol on people, with violence, break and enters and so forth? Is the minister saying that, in addition, the police in bush communities will have this new function of looking after truancy and that they will be required to race around the outstations bringing kids back to the main community? Where will the line be drawn? Nothing in the bill offers any indication and nothing in the minister's second-reading speech gave any indication either. There is no indication that the minister has addressed those very practical problems.

This bill is an absolute joke. It shows that the minister has decided that he will not put any resources into treating the problem of truancy. He is taking the cheap option of handing the problem over to the police. The poor policeman cops it again! All of society's problems - family breakdown, health problems, juvenile problems - are thrown to the poor old policeman who is supposed to try to fix them. Despite all the training that police officers receive in the Northern Territory, I am sure that none of them has been trained to deal with truancy.

Mr Speaker, for the benefit of the minister, let us have a look at some of the causes of truancy. I hope that he will take these in and consider some of the measures he could take to address this problem rather than choosing this outrageous, cheapskate option. Truancy is not a simple problem. Honourable members opposite may believe that the kids leave home with their cut lunches after saying goodbye to mum and dad and, when they go around the corner, nick across the road, pinch a few mulberries and amuse themselves innocently before

going home in the afternoon. That seems to be the vision of members opposite. They think that a policeman can solve the problem by giving the kids a kick in the bum and sending them back to school, and that the kids will be all the better for it and will not do it again. Let us have a look at the reality of truancy, Mr Speaker. The reality in many schools in my electorate is that the kids cannot hear. They are educationally deaf. What is the sense of sending a policeman down to pick up a kid who is educationally deaf, putting him in a classroom where the noise of the air-conditioner is such that he cannot even hear the teacher and telling him to sit there like a stuffed mullet all day? There are numerous problems in bush communities ...

Mr Perron: The whole of the Territory population does not live out bush, you know.

Mr EDE: If the Chief Minister will give me a break, I will come to his patch.

Another problem in bush communities is that some students have grown up on outstations. They visit large communities sometimes but they have no early experience of going to school because, for part of each year, they live in places where there are no schools. Because Australia has had free, compulsory and secular education since the 1870s or so, members opposite might think that that has been the case in the Northern Territory. That certainly is not so. Many communities which have been established for donkey's years still have no education facilities. Sometimes children from such areas move to places where there are education facilities and often it is very difficult for them to adjust to school. Schools attempt to run special classes for them but there are always problems in getting them to attend school.

Another aspect of truancy relates as much to urban areas as to rural areas, and that is a poor parental attitude. It occurs often in broken families or families which have real problems, frequently related to alcohol. Often, parents in such families have little or no formal education.

Mr Setter: What would you do about that?

Mr EDE: I will come to that.

These parents form another group which needs particular treatment. Often, their own life experience does not encompass attendance at school every day. Perhaps they had some occasional schooling in their lives. The problem is that, when you talk to them, they say that they believe that their children are receiving a good education. They will tell you that they want their children to go on to university. However, when it comes down to the day-to-day application that is required by the education system, they do not have a clue what that is about. They say: 'Oh well, we sent them to school for most of this week'. When children in many such families come home from school, their first job is to look after a couple of younger sisters and brothers. Then they have to do a few jobs around the place and, by the time those are done, other people are coming around, often with a few beers under their arms. There is no way in the world that there is any insistence that such children complete homework and there is no support for them in their studies. That is a major difficulty.

Another category of children who may be involved in truancy are those who come from families which have no obvious problems and in which the parents are quite well-educated. Unfortunately, these children may have had a very bad experience in the early part of their schooling and have reacted traumatically

to it, developing a fixation about school. Some of these children may have attended quite a number of schools. I have talked to some people who have attended 10 or 12 different schools during their primary years. They find it extremely difficult to move into new situations where they have to make friends, where nobody knows their good and bad points and where the teachers do not relate to them. They often find themselves in real difficulty. Others may have stayed in the same school but got off-side with the teacher at some stage and earned themselves a bad name. Such children may decide that being rebellious makes them a force to be reckoned with but, if they do not wake up to themselves, they frequently move into wholesale truancy before leaving the system.

Peer group pressure is another powerful force which stops some children reaching their full potential at school. Unfortunately, any classroom contains the weak and the strong. Some children do not have the moral fortitude to resist when their peers say: 'Let's nick off. Be a hero. You don't want to be a wimp all your life. Come on, let's head off'. That often happens, not only with urban Aboriginal people but with poor, non-Aboriginal people in urban areas. A child may be attempting to achieve and the peer group will say: 'Hang on. You are one of us. Are you trying to be one of those rich white kids? Is that what you are trying to be?' The peer group applies this sort of pressure and it is very difficult for a child to stand up to it.

These are the sorts of problems that have to be addressed as causes of truancy and solutions need to be found. I have been telling the Minister for Education about ear problems since about 1984. The minister is only just starting to wake up. I have told the Minister for Health and Community Services that the problem is so bad in some schools that full-time health workers should be located there to address the problem, together with nutritional and personal hygiene issues. The situation has reached crisis level. It is the sort of crisis which other countries have tackled with emergency programs. For example, I know of a program which was initiated in Great Britain just after World War 2.

Mr HATTON: A point of order, Mr Speaker! The member for Stuart has wandered so far from the subject of this debate that the connection is unrecognisable. To say that the ear problems suffered by people in the Northern Territory have anything to do with empowering a policeman to pick up a kid who is absent from school defies logic. Mr Speaker, I ask that you direct the honourable member to stay on the subject of the debate.

Mr EDE: Mr Speaker, speaking to the point of order, if the member for Nightcliff had been listening at all during the last 20 minutes, he would have realised that I have been demonstrating that truancy has complex causes which cannot be solved by police action. I have detailed a number of the causes and I am now describing some alternative approaches to solving them so that truancy can be reduced.

Mr SPEAKER: There is no point of order but, I ask the honourable member to relate his remarks to the bill before the House.

Mr EDE: Mr Speaker, as I was saying, in Great Britain after World War 2, it was found that poverty in certain areas was causing nutritional problems which were linked to general health problems and low levels of educational attainment. There are clear statistical relationships between nutrition and children's ability to learn and absorb knowledge. When a child is not learning, there is a tendency to truancy. The action taken in that case took

the form of the hot-lunch program which ran for years and years. Children were given a full, hot meal at lunchtime. In essence, the aim was to force feed the young generation in order to ensure that they had sufficient nourishment to learn properly. One amazing result of that program was that, over a period of about 15 years, in certain parts of Wales the average height of children increased by a considerable number of inches.

Placing health workers with individual schools over a period of time would provide the only solution to the problem of middle-ear infection. The only solution we have now to middle-ear infection is the cleansing of the ears and teaching people personal hygiene measures and nutritional needs. I have said already that we need counsellors back in the schools. Their numbers have been cut by half and need to be returned to full strength. The minister must restore those funds that have been cut and return those counsellors so that, when people who have been disruptive do come back into the system, they are able to be counselled to determine the nature of the difficulty that they have with the school and their education. Then those problems can be addressed and those children can return to their proper place in the mainstream of education.

I have spoken before about home liaison officers. We had a home liaison officer from Alice Springs and the member for Sadadeen may recall her. I recall working with her when I was with the Central Australian Aboriginal Congress. She used to visit broken families and families which had poor parental attitudes. She would work with those families and educate them on how to bring up their kids. Often, she would have the children returned and, 2 or 3 months later, there would be another breakdown and she would have to try again. She did an incredible job. That service should have been expanded rather than dropped or severely downgraded.

Remedial workers are essential for those people who have had those interruptions to their education in early childhood or who, at some stage, have lost the whole thread and no longer believe in their own ability to learn. Often, their lack of application is the result of an experience that they had years ago. It is necessary to find out what that problem was and address it.

In some areas, there is a school bus that picks up the children. This is needed where there is a large group that is not attending school. The program was instituted at Yuendumu, for example, which had a very low rate of attendance over a number of years. At the beginning of last year, the teachers themselves went around and collected the kids. They did that for a period and until the kids became used to going to school. Since that routine was established, that school has had a 90% to 95% attendance rate which is excellent. That is better than the rate for most other schools in the Northern Territory.

These are the sorts of things that need to be done if the minister is serious about addressing truancy. It needs to be addressed as the many-faceted problem that it is and the answers will need to be many-faceted. There is no broad-brush answer. It is quite ludicrous for the minister to turn around and say that he will solve all the problems caused by the lack of experience, the poor parental attitudes, the peer group pressure etc in this way. His solution is to chuck the problem over to the police because it is too hard for him. That is what he is saying. The Minister for Education has given up on truancy. He will enact legislation that will dump it in the lap of the police. I will be interested to know how the Chief Minister, who is responsible for the police, will react to this. We had discussions with a senior police officer and he had not heard of it.

Mr Harris: Give us your grand plan.

Mr EDE: Mr Speaker, the minister will not listen when I tell him all the different problems that he has. He will not listen when I give him individual solutions to the individual problems. He wants a grand plan. There is no grand plan to combat truancy. It is a multi-faceted problem and it needs a multi-faceted solution.

Certainly, one facet of that solution is a concept I raised, particularly in relation to the disinclined students. This is a particular group in the higher primary school. This student just does not want to be at school. If he is forced to attend, he can be the biggest ratbag and will disturb a whole class. It is quite pointless to continue to force him to remain in that particular class. What is needed is to get those disinclined students together somewhere where a person-to-person assessment can be made of their problems. It is not good enough simply to consign them to the rubbish heap of history. They will come back at society in later life with a vengeance. They cannot simply be allowed to destroy the classes and the education of others. There has to be another institution which will try to solve their problems. That is another problem that needs to be looked at.

What we do not want is for the government to say that it is all too hard and any solutions will cost money. It definitely will cost money to determine real solutions. The money has to be found and the programs have to be put in place. If not, the problem will compound itself in the following generation and it will come back to haunt us as a social problem in the future. It will be reflected in the unemployment lists and in further broken homes later on. The idea of simply throwing the problem across to the police is ridiculous and the opposition opposes that completely.

Mr HATTON (Nightcliff): Mr Speaker, I rise to support this legislation. In doing so, I make the comment that, with the exception of clause 11, the opposition equally supports this legislation in all respects. We have just heard the member for Stuart speak for 30 minutes or more on a subject which has no relevance whatsoever to the bill that is before the House.

There is no doubt that truancy is a complex and difficult sociological problem that is facing the Northern Territory, and it is many-faceted, as the member for Stuart said. There is no doubt that a multitude of medical and sociological problems are associated with the learning experiences and school attendance of students right across the spectrum of the Northern Territory, from Aboriginal schools and outstation schools to urban schools etc. There is no question at all about that. It would be excellent if some useful and profitable debate on that subject were initiated by means of an MPI or some other mechanism. It would be useful to raise such a subject for discussion. I would be interested in participating in such a debate. I would like to discuss issues such as parental responsibility for children. Explain to me, Mr Speaker, how it is that a parent does not know his child is not at school when there are only 50 people in the community and the child is wandering around at home or becoming involved with petrol sniffing groups or whatever. That has a great deal to do with parents who are not carrying out their responsibilities.

I do not doubt that there is a problem but let us be very clear what this proposed amendment will do. It does not purport to address those issues comprehensively. What it does is make a small amendment to the existing Education Act to add the police to the list of those people who are empowered to act as truancy officers. With the amendments proposed by the minister,

those will be uniformed police. That could be done now. Every uniformed policeman in the Northern Territory could be authorised to act as a truancy officer at the moment but it would require him to be given that authority individually and in writing by the secretary of the department or the minister. This legislation says that police are empowered automatically.

I am not referring here to the circumstances in rural areas such as those in the Stuart electorate, but I will come back to examples of where it may apply. It may shock honourable members to know that, if a policeman who is on duty sees a group of kids gathered around a milk bar and he suspects that they might be getting up to mischief, he can do nothing about it. If the kids are not at school but are hanging around milk bars, there is a very high propensity for them to become involved in housebreaking and all sorts of mischief, but the policeman cannot do a thing about it. He knows the kids should be at school because they are 10, 11, 12 years of age. He knows there is a probability that they will get into trouble, but he cannot do a thing unless he catches them breaking the law. That is very frustrating for a policeman.

If the policeman in a community sees a group of young kids who should be at school and he has every reason to suspect that they are about to start a little game of petrol sniffing or getting into the grog, he cannot touch them. As a result of this legislation, he will be able to take them to the school and so break up that activity before it starts. It may be that he will be able actually to avoid problems and prevent those kids getting into trouble by putting them where they should be. It does not turn him into a truancy officer. It does not turn him into the social saviour of the world, but it certainly gives him a power that every member of society believes he has anyway. People believe that, if a policeman sees kids who are away from school, he should be able to pick them up and take them to school or take them to their homes, but in reality he cannot. This will empower him to do that.

This legislation is not intended to make police officers drop their normal duties and run around chasing kids up and down alleys because they are away from school. That is not what the intention is. It empowers them to do what society thinks they should do. I might advise honourable members that, earlier this year in my capacity then as Chief Minister, I attended a couple of public meetings in the Palmerston area when a range of serious community issues were raised. One of the things that was stressed by the community was that people were very concerned about the level of truancy. The kids were away from home and wandering around in the milk bars in Palmerston and getting into trouble. The people were equally concerned about the level of break-ins and crime. They asked: 'When the police see them whilst they are on patrol, why can't they pick them up and make them go back to school?' We had to say: 'Sorry, but they are not allowed to. They are policemen but they do not have the power to pick up kids who should be at school'. The policeman has to wait until the children break the law and then arrest them. That is a nonsense.

If we are serious about trying to avoid crime and guide people in the right way to live, why not give the policeman, in the course of his normal duties, the power to do what he himself knows will avoid a potential future problem? That is what this bill will do. As I have said, it does not address the health, medical and counselling problems, alcoholism of parents, child abuse, domestic violence and the multitude of issues that cause truancy and misbehaviour among kids. It does not address those, but it gives a policeman a power that he should have so that he can exercise it when it is appropriate in the normal conduct of his business. The amendment proposed in clause 11 will do that.

I endorse equally the amendments to the bill that have been circulated by the minister. There has been some concern that, if a policeman who was not in uniform had the power to pick up kids, that might be a vehicle for less desirable elements of our society to pretend to be police or truancy officers and thereby induce young children to enter into situations dangerous to themselves. The defences that will be built in by the proposed amendments should be welcomed by all members for that reason.

Do not swallow the argument that has been put forward that we should not give police this power. The people in the community want our police to be able to do their job. They would like to think that, if a policeman can see a situation where there is a potential for a problem - and we know that activities such as kids gathering round a milk bar in Palmerston or kids getting mixed up with bad elements in an Aboriginal community where petrol sniffing or alcoholism is a problem can indicate a potential for trouble - that policeman has the power to do something about it. We all know it happens. Why cannot we allow the policemen to pick those kids up, withdraw them from that situation and put them where they should be? Quite rightly, we are not asking him to do anything more than that. We only want him to use this power to hand those kids across to the Department of Education authorities who then have the responsibility.

It is about time we started to recognise the practical reality. That is all this legislation is trying to do. I do not want to decry the issues raised by the member for Stuart, but they have nothing to do with what this bill is trying to achieve. Why try to divert the debate away from what we are trying to achieve? We should be able to pass this unanimously in this House and give the policeman the ability to do what he would like to do. Mr Speaker, if you were a police constable on patrol and you saw a bunch of young larrikins, at 10 o'clock in the morning of a school day, meandering the streets of a suburb and yahooping around, wouldn't you say: 'There is trouble waiting to happen'? As a policeman, what would you like to do? You would like to pick them up and get them out of that situation. However, at the moment, the policeman is not permitted to do that. Our law does not allow him to do that. Why not give him the right to be able to do that? That is all we are asking.

I believe that it can apply just as effectively in the electorate of Stuart under the sort of circumstances I referred to as it can in the electorate of Nightcliff or in the electorate of Palmerston. The problem, the at-risk circumstances, exist to the same extent. Do not hamstring our police force by diverting the debate to some argument which, whilst it is important to consider, belongs in another circumstance to what is proposed by this bill.

Mr COLLINS (Sadadeen): Mr Deputy Speaker, truancy is certainly a problem which is devastating to the education system. If a person is away for even a couple of days when he is involved with a serious course of education and learning requiring a great deal of dedication and homework, that person can very easily drop behind. Once he falls behind, particularly if the truancy continues, it makes it virtually impossible for that child to catch up, understand what he is studying and be successful in the course. If children are not successful in a course or feel frustrated because they are not coping and not understanding because they have missed bits, the tendency will be for those children to feel that there is no point continuing and they will play up or play truant.

Of course, that sort of behaviour is very disruptive to the rest of the class and demoralising for the teacher. It is a problem which really needs to

be tackled, and tackled on as many fronts as possible. Mr Deputy Speaker, you know that I have had a little experience in the education field. Perhaps I lived in rather lucky times. For my own schooling, I attended a primary school in the Adelaide hills and later another at Victor Harbour and I completed my secondary schooling at Victor Harbour. The absence rate due to anything other than genuine causes was virtually zero. Truancy was almost unheard of. I believe that that was because the teachers were on the ball and the community was on the ball. You did not see kids out of school during school hours unless they had a note to the effect that they had a medical or dental appointment. Because it was unusual to see a child out of school between the hours of 9 am and 3.45 pm, people would notice it if they saw a kid of school age. They would ask the child why he was not at school. It was darned hard for kids to play truant.

However, Mr Deputy Speaker, I invite you to go to any of the areas around towns, in particular, during school hours and simply observe. We have become so used to kids wandering around. That situation is not helped by the fact that we see kids from interstate who are on holiday with their parents or Aboriginal children who have come in from the bush with their parents. We have become so accustomed to seeing kids trotting around everywhere that very few people take much notice.

I welcome this move for the police to be empowered to act as truancy officers, particularly the amendment that provides that they be uniformed police. In most cases, if a uniformed policeman were to pick up a student, I would like to be sure that there would be a marked police car there as well. Perhaps I have a sensitive imagination, but I can imagine it would not be all that difficult for a child abuser to pinch a policeman's uniform off a clothes line, iron it and pick up kids.

Mr Manzie: That is a bit far-fetched.

Mr COLLINS: It may be a bit far-fetched but, when you have had a little bit of experience in that area, you become a little more aware.

Mr Coulter: How many policemen's uniforms have you pinched?

Mr COLLINS: I think that is despicable and should be withdrawn. You should be ashamed of yourself. You are childish.

Mr Bell interjecting.

Mr COLLINS: The member for MacDonnell does himself no credit either with the stupid childish way that he is behaving.

In our community, there are people who are child molesters and people who are very despicable. It is not beyond the imagination of some of them to attempt that. Fortunately, in practice, when police are out and about in uniform, they are in marked cars anyway, but I know that I would certainly be telling my kids that, if they happened to be picked up by a policeman when they were out and about - not that I expect that they would be, but we all know that nothing is impossible - they should only get into a marked police car. I think that would be good advice for the whole community because child abusers are not nice people at all.

I have raised this matter in the House many times and I was surprised by the reaction of a fairly senior police officer in Alice Springs who said that the police had more to do with their time. As the member for Nightcliff has

said, one of the very useful matters which this bill will allow is for our police force to combat juvenile crime. Almost without doubt, apart from some late night business, most actual housebreaking would occur during school hours because often both parents are at work and their kids are at school and houses are unattended. They present an open target. Once school is out and kids are at home in the district, it is a darn sight harder for other kids to break into houses because someone will see what is going on.

A lady rang me a few months ago saying that the house next door to her own had been broken into 3 times in the previous few months. She was at home and there was group of kids whom she felt sure were casing her house. She rang the police who told her that they could do nothing until the kids actually broke in. As the member for Nightcliff said, that is totally unacceptable to the community. At that stage, it was a great surprise to me to find that the police could not do anything. Under this legislation, the police will be able to combat juvenile crime.

I do not expect that the police will have to drop everything in order to pick up truants. If other matters are more important at the time, the police will act accordingly. Once the police start the ball rolling, other adults will begin to ask children why they are not at school. A bit of pressure might result in a return to the situation in which I grew up when truancy was virtually unknown.

Mr Coulter: I can imagine the truancy rate when you were a teacher.

Mr COLLINS: I am certainly not going to comment on that ridiculous interjection. Good heavens! Mr Speaker, I can assure you that there was very little truancy from my classes.

Mr Bell: Did you have a police uniform on?

Mr COLLINS: I think that really ought to be put on the record so that people in Alice Springs can see just what a galah the member for MacDonnell really is.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The honourable member will withdraw that reference.

Mr COLLINS: I withdraw unreservedly, Mr Speaker.

Truancy is related to juvenile crime and a whole host of difficulties which kids get into. The taking of drugs obviously is a matter of concern to every member here. It can occur when kids get off on their own unsupervised. Many other moral issues also arise. We should be taking an interest. If a member of this Assembly sees kids wandering about during school hours, that should have an impact. Sometimes I am guilty of walking past such kids without saying anything to them. The whole community should be doing something about it and speaking to those kids. 'If you will do it for my kids, I will do it for your kids' - that should be the attitude. If everybody takes responsibility, the kids will be at school.

It is also important that school courses and teaching methods are meaningful to kids. Kids might bellyache about hard courses and teachers who are disciplinarians but, deep down, when a kid knows that he is making progress, he experiences a considerable degree of satisfaction. When children do not progress and adults give up on them, problems arise. The challenge of education is to have courses and teaching methods of such a standard that the kids make progress. Once that occurs, the urge to play truant will diminish.

It will not be easy. We have let the cat get out of the bag and it will take considerable effort on the part of many people to get it back under control. That is a problem for every adult and even for the more sensible students. They know that, when students attend only rarely, teachers cannot teach the courses in the most effective manner and cannot teach in such a way that the students who are attending can make maximum progress. It is in everybody's interest to work on this problem.

I welcome this step which means that every uniformed police officer is empowered to act as a truancy officer. It has many benefits. We should not take the view that the problem is now in the hands of the police. There are things which every adult person can do to put the wood on kids who are out of school without permission. It is also up to the schools to produce the goods and it will take some time for that to occur.

The member for Stuart said a great deal about poor Aboriginal children and poor white children and so forth. I am on the council of the Sadadeen Secondary College, as is your good wife, Mr Speaker. She would be able to tell you about a discussion we had 1 night in relation to the number of students who were truanting from that institution. Among Year 11 and Year 12 students, the truancy rate was a matter of some considerable concern. It horrified me to learn that. The problem must be worked on. There have to be reasons why these children between the ages of 15 and 18 are truanting. Something is badly wrong and it needs to be identified and acted on. The whole community needs to support that college and its staff and encourage them to work at it so that truancy rates drop to what they used to be in, dare I say it, the good old days. Truancy was virtually unknown then. Occasionally, somebody would sneak off for half an afternoon. They would brag to their children and grandchildren about that. These days, some students stay away for days on end or appear for the morning and disappear for the rest of the day. It has become endemic and it is very detrimental to our society. I welcome the move to involve police officers but it must not stop there. Let us all pick up the ball and ask our constituents to play their part in getting the kids back to school where they belong.

Mr TIPILOURA (Arafura): Mr Speaker, I did not intend to speak on this bill but the comments of the member for Nightcliff have prompted me to do so. As all honourable members are aware, there is a big truancy problem in both urban and rural areas. My experience in the community, on a day-to-day basis, is that it is very hard for a parent, a friend, a police officer or even a school principal to force kids to attend school. Some kids are not fed properly. Others do not get enough sleep because their parents get drunk at night or because the parents live out bush and have to drive very long distances to take the kids to school in towns. Those are the sorts of problems which exist on a day-to-day basis. Some communities have police or police aides and some do not.

As we all know, parents have a duty to make their children attend school but, because of problems such as the ones I have mentioned, that is often very hard. We are trying to solve the problems. Schools are developing their programs. Health workers assist by teaching the children about health and hygiene, encouraging them to have a bath or shower every day, 3 times a day. In some communities, children have to go to a well or a creek to shower and wash. Lack of clothing can be a problem resulting from unemployment in some communities. We believe that education is the most important area to spend money on in the communities. Education helps our kids to improve their situation and it also helps the parents. They need to battle to combat this thing which has taken hold of our community.

Before the white man came, we had had no problems. We had no special buildings called schools. Our education came from our grandfathers and uncles and the girls were taught by their aunties and their mothers. Living was simple in those early days. The system has now changed and people's attitudes have changed. In the early days, people were all happy. There were things to do every day. Nowadays, there is hardly anything to do. The parents are bored and therefore the kids become bored. With that attitude, they say: 'Why go to school? If my parents do not work, why should I go to school?'

Some communities have a police presence on a day-to-day basis and others do not. Perhaps the minister will give some powers to the police aides so that they can act as truancy officers also. Perhaps the same powers can be given to local community councillors. As I have said, most communities do not have a police presence on a day-to-day basis and therefore we need to look at what avenues we can use to improve the situation.

Health workers and teachers can only do so much. With financial help, maybe we can overcome some of the problems. We try to combat the problems ourselves. We are not sitting on our backsides. Every time I go out in my electorate, I make a point of visiting the mothers' clubs. I do that in every community that I visit. I talk to some of the men. I also talk to the teachers, both the Europeans and the local Aboriginal teachers, to learn about some of their problems. The teachers and the parents can only do so much.

I will tell you a sad story, Mr Speaker, about my nephew. He is now serving an 8-year sentence in Darwin Prison. He is only 17 years old. That is happening because he was flogged and hassled. Some local and European teachers - not all of them - did not give him a fair go and he stopped wanting to go to school. He lost his parents, and now he is spending 8 years in gaol because he misbehaved. That is an example of what we do not want to happen. I am trying to get the message across to my constituents that we have to try to help each other, with a bit of help from the Northern Territory government and the federal government, and solve these problems. I have made representations to our federal member, Warren Snowdon, and to Senator Collins and Senator Tambling. Truancy is making the communities aware that there is a problem. We are trying to deal with the matter ourselves but, if there is any money left over in any budget, it should be put into education. I think education will be the way that we will survive and do what we need to do on a day-to-day basis.

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH (Koolpinyah): Mr Speaker, before I comment on the contents of this bill, I will say that I am a bit of a purist in relation to definitions. Honourable members speaking in this debate have referred consistently and repeatedly to immature adults as 'kids'. At present, I have 31 kids in my care. They are 4-legged and each deserves the title of kid. I believe, in terms of the dignity of immature adults, that the least we can do is call them children or boys and girls.

In his second-reading speech, the minister set out quite clearly the reason for this amendment to the Education Act. He also enlarged on certain matters. He said: 'The purpose of the bill is to amend the Education Act consequent on the proposed abolition of the University College and the Darwin Institute of Technology and the establishment of the Northern Territory University on 1 January 1989'. We know that this decision to amalgamate the DIT and the University College was forced on the government because of financial considerations arising from decisions of the federal government which held the whip hand. Having established the University College from its own financial resources, increasing enrolments had forced the Territory

government to consider other options which would make federal funding accessible. I have spoken on a previous occasion about my grave reservations in relation to the merging of an institute of technology and a university college. That is probably because I was educated at a university college and am a graduate of the University of Western Australia. That has given me a deep philosophical objection, probably shared by other university graduates, to the combination of a university with an institute of technology. Nevertheless, financial considerations have forced the government to take that step. Whilst I accept it, I do not like it.

The minister said that the second purpose of the bill was to extend the powers of a truancy officer. I have no argument with that at all. As he said at the end of his second-reading speech, police officers are truancy officers in South Australia and Western Australia. That is probably a reason why I have no argument with it. To my knowledge, in Western Australia, police officers always have been truancy officers. It is an accepted fact of life over there.

No other honourable member has mentioned the fact that we have a very popular community policing system in our high schools. If the officers involved in that system had their powers extended so that they could act as truancy officers, that would be quite appropriate. There have been many popular police officers at Taminmin High School. I know that, in certain cases, they have spoken to parents and other people who stand in loco parentis with regard to children's attendance or non-attendance at school. With continued close cooperation between community policing officers, teachers, principals and school councils, I can see the system working very well to combat truancy.

The next consequential amendment that the honourable minister spoke about in his second-reading speech related to the fact that the Secretary of Education would not have power over the University College of the Northern Territory and the new university. That is appropriate. The university has to be independent of senior public servants such as the Secretary of the Department of Education, good chap and all that he is. His job does not include determining how the university shall or shall not be run.

Mr Speaker, having stated my reservations in relation to the merger of the University College and the Darwin Institute of Technology, I support the legislation.

Mr SETTER (Jingili): Mr Speaker, I was pleased to hear the member for Koolpinyah discuss issues apart from the clause relating to truancy because the bill contains a number of provisions which attend to housekeeping matters arising from the passage of the legislation relating to the University of the Northern Territory. For example, the bill allows for the representation of the Council of the Northern Territory Open College of Technical and Further Education on the Northern Territory Board of Studies and the Technical and Further Education Advisory Council. It also provides for the Community College of Central Australia to be renamed the Alice Springs College of Technical and Further Education. Indeed, the bill contains a number of other minor amendments.

The issue which most speakers have dwelt on was that of truancy. The member for Stuart prattled on about it for quite a long time. I found it quite difficult to follow much of his argument because, as is his wont from time to time, he wandered far and wide of the subject. I sometimes thought I was listening to the amateur hour down at Brown's Mart as I observed his

theatrics. Much of his presentation was very emotional although totally irrelevant. I did take his point, however, about the different situations in urban and bush communities, which was reinforced by the member for Arafura.

I have no experience with Aboriginal communities but I can talk about the situation in Darwin because that is where I reside. That is where my electorate office is located and that is where, from time to time, I see truancy occurring. There is no doubt that it is a matter for concern. I, for one, become very upset when I see young people wasting what I consider to be the very precious time which could be spent on furthering their education. I know that, in certain sections of the community, there is a real attitudinal problem. I hasten to add that I believe that is changing. I have been here for 15 years and I have seen a considerable improvement in the attitudes of young people in terms of their desire to improve their education. I believe that is due in part to the development of the core curriculum which was introduced a few years ago. We have seen the evolution of that core curriculum throughout the system and the attitudinal change which has occurred among students as a result.

With the passage of time, the desire of some children to nick off and wag school will dissipate. That will occur as the will to achieve builds up. In fact, since we have senior secondary colleges in Darwin, there has been a considerable attitudinal change. Indeed, that has also been the case at the junior secondary level. Most children now have a great desire to move on to senior secondary college and the last couple of years have shown that the kids are queueing up to enrol at Casuarina Secondary College. In spite of that, there is still a fair amount of truancy, which causes concern to my colleagues and myself, along with the Minister for Education.

The takeaway food shops in my electorate are focal points for kids wagging school. One can see them there at 10 am or early in the afternoon, playing the pinball machines, standing on the footpath and hanging around the toilet blocks. They can be seen in pinball parlours like the one in the electorate of the member for Nightcliff and, at Casuarina Shopping Square, they can be found on any day of the week, hanging around in the mall and wandering through the shops. They probably think that it is a real buzz to nick off from school and go there to dodge the teachers, the truancy officers or whomever.

The situation in relation to primary schoolchildren is quite different from that with secondary schoolchildren. The degree of daring they display varies markedly. I would think that truancy among primary schoolchildren is fairly limited. It is much greater among secondary school students. Nevertheless, whilst the kids get a buzz from nicking off from school and beating the system, it exposes them to the temptation of getting up to mischief. The member for Nightcliff alluded to this earlier this evening. They think it is great to wag school and to hang about the pinball parlours. However, they soon become bored with that and they realise that the machines require money. If they go to Casuarina Square and want to buy a milkshake, they need money. What happens? They form themselves into gangs and are soon involved in housebreaking.

When I first doorknocked my electorate in 1984, the complaint that was on everybody's lips was that almost all of the houses had been broken into. The people asked what the government intended to do about that. That was a result of truancy. I am pleased to say that I have heard that complaint less frequently in recent times. As a result of the initiatives of this government and the actions of the Minister for Health and Community Services, I think we have reduced the frequency of that offence considerably. Hopefully, the

actions that we are taking this evening to empower police officers and others to act as truancy officers will further minimise the opportunity for these young people to play truant from school and to get into trouble as a result.

Mr Speaker, have a look at the public toilet blocks and see the graffiti that adorns them inside and out. Much of it is quite disgusting. If you asked the Darwin City Council how much it costs annually to paint over that graffiti, I am sure the answer would be that it runs into tens of thousands of dollars. The unfortunate thing is that, as soon as it is painted over, the little devils return with their felt pens and it is back again. That occurs over and over again. We have to remove the opportunity for children to indulge in such activities. We all know that it is not the Darwin City Council that pays. It is the ratepayers who have to pay.

Another unfortunate result of all this is that some of these young people become involved in the drug scene, and that is sad. I do not think that there is anybody more admirably suited to act as a truancy officer than a policeman or a policewoman. I am not suggesting for one moment that, suddenly, those people will be burdened with the responsibility of moving around the community trying to pick up truants. The reality is that the police, particularly those on general duties, are in the community every day of the week and every night of the week. They cruise around the suburbs and the suburban shopping centres in their patrol cars and walk through Casuarina Square in the normal course of their duties. If they see young children whom they suspect should be at school, it is very simple for them to stop them, ask their names, ask why they are there, what school they should be attending and then take the appropriate action which they will be empowered to do when this bill becomes law. There is nobody better suited to do that than a police officer.

I know many police officers and they are not the ogres that some people would make them out to be. They are ordinary citizens who are doing a very difficult job. I am very pleased that, as a result of an initiative of this government several years ago, when constables were placed in our secondary schools and colleges, the rapport that has developed between the police force and students is very good indeed. I have spoken with school-based constables in my electorate. They have an excellent relationship with those students and, in fact, they become involved in counselling. Where a student has a problem, the constable often has his confidence and together they can try to sort the difficulty out. In fact, many problems that have the potential to result in criminal behaviour are identified at that point and the antisocial activity is nipped in the bud. There is a very good relationship between young people and the police force. I know that school-based constables spend some of their time in the primary schools as well. That relationship has flowed down to the little people who are attending primary school.

There is nobody better placed than a police officer to carry out this role. I hasten to add that, under the terms of this bill, principals and home liaison officers will also be empowered to act as truancy officers. This is appropriate because there are situations when those people will be in the right place at the right time and are suited to take whatever action is appropriate.

Under this bill, the authority of truancy officers has been extended as compared with powers of the truancy officers we had a year or 2 ago. The truancy officer will be able to speak to a child, ask the child's name, the name of the school the child attends and, if it is considered appropriate, deliver that child into the custody of the principal of that school. The principal would take whatever action he or she deemed appropriate at that time.

The truancy officer has no right to use any form of force. I would anticipate that the vast majority of young people who were accosted by a police officer or a truancy officer would be prepared to cooperate. The majority of these young people are not criminals at all. They are young people who have decided to wag school. There is a minority which makes a profession of getting up to mischief. I reiterate that that is a very small percentage of the young people involved. In 99% of the cases, the parents would have no idea that their child was wagging school. If the child refuses to accompany the truancy officer/police officer back to the school, that officer has the authority to visit the address given by the child and to ask the person in authority there the names of all the children residing there and the names of schools that they attend.

There is ample precedent around Australia for this development. When I heard the member for Stuart call clause 11 of this bill farcical, I thought that he was totally out of touch with the situation in some of the Labor states. In South Australia and Western Australia, police officers have been acting as truancy officers for quite some time. How he can say that it is farcical for the Northern Territory to bring in the same system is beyond my comprehension. However, that is not surprising because the majority of comments that the member for Stuart makes are beyond my comprehension also and, indeed, most of them are farcical.

I understand that New South Wales is about to introduce or has just introduced the same system of using police officers as truancy officers. The only states in Australia where police officers are not involved in acting as truancy officers in some form are Victoria and Tasmania. However, those states have truancy officers as such. I am very pleased that this bill is before the House. I anticipate that it will pass through this House this evening and become law in the coming year. I compliment the minister and support the bill.

Mr BELL (MacDonnell): Mr Speaker, I move that the debate be adjourned.

Motion negatived.

Mr BELL: I think it is unfortunate, Mr Speaker ...

Members interjecting.

Mr Harris: He is debating what?

Mr BELL: Yes, I am ...

Mr SPEAKER: Order! I think the honourable member should be rather more tolerant. He stood up to adjourn debate and now wants the call.

Mr BELL: Absolutely. My reasons will become abundantly clear.

Mr SPEAKER: When you get the call from the Chair.

Mr BELL: Absolutely.

Mr SPEAKER: The honourable member for MacDonnell.

Mr BELL (MacDonnell): Mr Speaker, I would like to point out to yourself, Sir, and to honourable members, that it had not been my intention to speak in this debate although I am personally familiar with the issues raised. I have

given considerable thought to them over many years, as a parent, as a teacher and as a member of this Assembly. It had not been my intention to deliver the House of my views in that regard except that the government was determined to proceed with the committee stage of this bill despite the fact that the shadow minister for education was forced to be absent from the House because of obligations to publicise the deliberations of this House.

Mr Hatton: The 7.30 Report.

Mr BELL: Yes, as the member for Nightcliff says, he is doing that by way of the 7.30 Report. I presume that that will not be regarded by the member for Nightcliff as a crime. I certainly trust that he will not be giving police further powers to ensure that opposition politicians do not spend too much time on the 7.30 Report. I suppose it has to be said that government members give so much grist to media mills that the opposition is flat out trying to explain the shortcomings of people who conduct the business of the House.

Quite obviously, the issue of truancy is a complicated one and cannot be separated from the issue of the societal obligation of compulsory education. For the benefit of contributors from the government benches, such as the member for Jingili, who seems to have such a shallow time depth when it comes to understanding many societal issues, a little history lesson is in order. One always has the feeling that the member for Jingili was actually born 50 years old. Whether or not he was born 50 years old, I am not quite sure, but he was certainly born boring. We have had to sit here for 15 or 20 minutes listening to him and that was certainly a painful process. Suffice it to say that I shall make it worth his while by putting the question of truancy in context. I am not sure whether the member for Jingili or other government speakers have heard me give a potted history of compulsory, secular education in the west. I will endeavour not to roam too freely over the historical landscape of the western world but will restrict my comments to that applicable in the Northern Territory.

At least some honourable members may be aware that concepts inherent in our legislation, such as compulsory education and the derivative concept of truancy, were embodied in the Education Acts enacted in the Australian states in the 1870s. It always interests me to hear the Minister for Education champion private education. If time permits, I will address exactly that question of private education as well. It is always interesting to hear the Minister for Education bewail the fact that so few of our students are in private educational institutions at the primary and secondary level. Of course, that implies much more strongly a lamentable lack of understanding by the minister of the historical forces at work. The fact of the matter is that, prior to these 1870s Education Acts that were enacted in all the Australian states, and would have applied to the Northern Territory prior to 1911, each of those states had compulsory education.

I think that those honourable members who are interested in a little historical and legislative research will find the phrase that was used at that time is still the phrase that is picked up in connection with education, often in journalistic circles: education was to be free, compulsory and secular. Of course, it was no accident that these pieces of legislation reached the statute books in the 1870s. It was an historic development with the population increase after the gold rushes and the cessation, for example, of transportation to Western Australia in 1868. I trust the Minister for Education will be able to pick this up when he comes to sum up the second-reading debate. Prior to those Education Acts, the only form of education that was available was private education and ...

Mr HARRIS: A point of order, Mr Deputy Speaker! We have a bill before us at the moment which talks about truancy as do the amendments. We are not talking about the private school system. If the honourable member wants to talk about that, that is fine, but let him do it in the adjournment debate not when we have a bill before the House. I ask that he be directed to stick to the subject.

Mr BELL: May I speak to the point of order, Mr Deputy Speaker? I appreciate that the Minister for Education is a worthy man and an honest man. The only criticism that I could possibly level at him is that he has too deep a passion for the here and now and for literalness. I welcome this opportunity to place the question of truancy in a historical context and there can be no doubt that my doing so and referring to the historical precedents in this regard are eminently applicable to a second-reading debate.

Mr HATTON: Mr Deputy Speaker, I wish to speak to the point of order. The honourable minister rose only moments prior to my own rising. There is no doubt in the mind of anybody in this Chamber or anybody listening to this debate that the member for MacDonnell is engaging in the most blatant filibuster this Chamber has heard in the last 5 years. He even told us why he is doing it. He is filibustering in order to waste the time of this Chamber until the Deputy Leader of the Opposition can return from his presentation to the 7.30 Report.

The nonsense the member for MacDonnell is going on with in the Chamber is certainly a digression from the subject of this bill, and there is no doubt that under ...

Mr Bell: That is an offence against standing orders in itself, Steve, and you should know it. To impute improper motives to a member ...

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order!

Mr HATTON: Mr Deputy Speaker, there is no doubt in my mind at all that the member is persisting with irrelevancies and tedious repetitions either of his own arguments or of the arguments used by other members in this debate. I would ask that the honourable member get down to what this debate is about and that he be asked to stay on the subject and not engage in these irrelevancies and this tedious repetition for the purpose of filibustering in this House.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: There is no point of order, but I would ask the member for MacDonnell to relate his remarks to the Education Amendment Bill which is currently before the House.

Mr BELL: Mr Deputy Speaker, I have not lost my train of thought. To reassure both the Minister for Education and the member for Nightcliff, I welcome this opportunity to address this question of truancy and I am endeavouring to give a historical perspective to it. If the Minister for Education would like to listen to me, he might learn a lesson. In fact, he might get a little education himself.

I was saying that, prior to the Education Acts of the 1870s, the only education that was available to youngsters in this country was private education. In fact, the alma mater of the Minister for Education dates back prior to the 1870s Education Acts. My alma mater does not, but then that is really neither here nor there. What is germane is that I find it difficult to accept that the Minister for Education can properly understand questions of truancy when he does not understand the historical development of the school

system in this country and the relationship between private and public education, because truancy and compulsion are the 2 sides of the 1 coin. The very part of the act that is to be amended by the bill covers compulsory attendance at schools. That dates back to the 1870s, and I am surprised that the Minister for Education can suggest that a consideration thereof is anything but essentially relevant.

In the development of western education in this country, if we have had problems with truancy and if we have had problems such as those that cause concern to the member for Jingili as he wanders around his electorate observing what occurs there and the children who should be at school, Mr Deputy Speaker, imagine how much more difficult the issue is for Aboriginal people. The whole history of Aboriginal people, of course, and the history of education of Aboriginal people and the education processes that Aboriginal people went through for 40 000 years in this country is something that does not appear to be well understood. We heard an excellent contribution from the member for Arafura who gave a very graphic account of some of the difficulties implicit there, and this comes directly to my criticism of this bill.

I believe that this bill is a bandaid measure. We need to look at the question of why kids do not attend school. I will raise a few questions for the Minister for Education. Let me put forward a hypothesis. I do not know whether it is completely true or not, but I will state it in its strongest form: truancy is a problem in our secondary schools but it is not a problem in our primary schools. As with all generalisations, I am sure the honourable minister will find some exceptions to that, but I would say that this is 1 of the questions that need to be addressed. Why is truancy a problem in our secondary schools and not a problem in our primary schools?

I suggest that the reason that truancy is more of a problem in our secondary schools than in our primary schools is because the directions and the objectives of primary education are well understood. There is a community consensus about what primary schools are there for. Kids clearly understand what primary education is for and what they are supposed to learn. They are at a time of life where being part of school is easier as well, in a simple psychological, biological sense if you will. That is 1 question that I would like the Minister for Education to address when he sums up. I would like him to address the question of why truancy is a problem with our secondary schools and not with our primary schools.

Only today, the Centralian Advocate contained a relevant letter. It may or may not have been written by a parent, but I will read it into Hansard. I think it illuminates this problem. The heading is 'Secondary education is not up to standard'. The writer states:

I am writing this letter in the hope that it will stimulate some discussion on education standards in Alice Springs, and hope that you will print it in your letters section.

How many times have you heard that we will not be able to live here once the kids reach secondary school? There seems to be consensus amongst most people with whom I associate that education, particularly secondary, in Alice Springs and in the Territory generally is second rate and not even close to 'southern standards'.

Mr Coulter: What has that got to do with truancy?

Mr BELL: Mr Deputy Speaker, I will pick up that interjection from the Leader of Government Business because I would have thought that it had everything to do with truancy. If kids do not believe that what they are doing at school is important or of value, it is a heck of a lot harder to keep them there. The problem with the approach taken through this bill is that truancy is regarded as a policing problem. Actually, truancy is a motivational problem. We are not asking, and we should be asking as a legislature, and the minister in particular should be asking as a minister, why our kids are not being motivated to stay at school. What this bill asks in particular is: 'How can we make sure those errant little beggars over at Casuarina Shopping Square can be dragged along to school so my constituents will get off my back?'

Mr Deputy Speaker, I suggest to you that that is a somewhat less than illuminating approach to take to the problem and that, rather than accusing me of filibustering, both the honourable minister and the member for Nightcliff should pay particular attention to what I have to say. The Leader of Government Business might learn something also if he listens.

I will go on with this letter because I think it is important. I hasten to add that I do not necessarily share the views of the writer, but I will come to that in a moment. I will read that last sentence again so honourable members who are listening intently will follow the context. The letter writer said:

There seems to be consensus amongst most people with whom I associate that education, particularly secondary, in Alice Springs and the Territory generally is second rate and not even close to 'southern standards'. I have heard nothing to convince me that this is not the case and now find myself and family planning to move south for this very reason. Can anybody provide evidence to defend the Territory education standards compared to other states? How about some positive promotion of Alice Springs schooling and the results of its students.

Name withheld by request.

There is a lengthy reply from Ms Bronwyn Sims who is the acting Superintendent of the Department of Education in Alice Springs and ...

Mr Coulter: You haven't got the telephone directory, have you?

Mr BELL: I am sorry, what was that?

Mr Coulter: How about the telephone directory? You will want to read out of that too, won't you? Have you got the 1978 telephone directory? Can you read that out to us please?

Mr BELL: Mr Deputy Speaker, Ms Sims refers to a number of excellent achievements and these are excellent achievements. To ensure that my comments in this regard are balanced, I will put Ms Sims' comments into Hansard as well. Ms Sims stated:

Standards in Territory schools, including Alice Springs, are certainly comparable with those in southern states. Indeed, the external examinations taken by Year 12 students are those set by South Australia. Following are a few examples of achievements by individuals or groups of students: Year 12 SAS English students have

twice won the award for best international entry in the world-wide, London-based The Times Network System's Newspaper Day; in the Westpac National Mathematics Award, Sadadeen Secondary College entered 22 students and achieved 6 distinctions, 10 credits and 6 passes; Year 12 SAS PES Drama 1988 Production, best in Territory and in South Australia's top 7; numerous American students leave Sadadeen Secondary College and enter US universities directly as a result of recognised high standards; US armed forces entrants from SSC have all been in the top 5% of entrants; national participation of SSC students in Australia's Futures Education Conference in Adelaide and there is excellent feedback about students, their positive and progressive approach to the conference.

There are numerous examples of how students have been selected into national and international educational programs as a result of acknowledged excellence, for example, the Bond University, the Australian National University, Armidale University, international exchange programs and an invitation to visit the UK to participate in the schools lecture tour this Christmas ...

Although these refer to students in their final years, it must be remembered that their achievements are the result of their previous studies at the high schools and primary schools of Alice Springs. It is unfortunate that your writer did not supply a name so that we could talk to him or her in more detail but, if contact is made with this office, we will be happy to do so. The 3 government schools in Alice Springs extend an open invitation to the writer and all other interested persons to attend the final presentation nights where excellence and hard work are recognised and rewarded.

I think those comments speak for themselves because it is exactly that area of confidence in the education system, not only on the part of parents but also on the part of students, that is crucial and much more important in addressing the problems of truancy in our schools. I believe that this particular approach is short-sighted and that some sort of qualitative assessment needs to be made of the different groups that are truanting.

Let me look at my own experience in that regard, as a teacher, as a parent and as a member for the Legislative Assembly, and let me identify a few of the possible groups. This is crucial. As a high school teacher in a school where there were very few parents who themselves had completed secondary school - and that is a key variable - where mum and dad have not completed Year 12 themselves or have not completed a substantial amount of secondary education themselves, it will be much more difficult for those children to perceive that secondary education is of value. That is not said very often in this Assembly. It is a point that I have made before, but I believe in this context ...

Mr Hatton: Exactly the same as with the working class in the last century.

Mr Coulter: You can sit down now, Neil. Brian is back.

Mr BELL: I will pick up that interjection from the member for Nightcliff ...

Mr Coulter: What about mine? Sit down, he is back. Relax.

Mr BELL: He mentioned the problems of the working class in the last century. That is precisely the reason for compulsory attendance. We were insistent, as a society, that everybody have a certain basic level of education prior to those compulsory, secular and free educational processes that were set up in that legislation in the 1870s. If you were a working class kid, you were probably down the mines for 12 or 14 hours a day. However, it has to be borne in mind that some of those problems of social class are still with us. I suggest that the question of educability, the question of who is able to benefit and the question of motivation of those kids who should be able to benefit is an issue that is not addressed by this bill. I believe that it is high time that the minister and this legislature addressed those aspects.

I trust that the comments that I have made in respect of this bill will not be seen simply as a filibuster. They certainly were not intended as such. I welcomed the opportunity to make some broad-brush comments about the education system in the Northern Territory. I could keep talking about my experiences as a school teacher with traditionally-oriented Aboriginal kids at Areyonga and the questions of motivation and the questions of why traditional obligations were more important in some cases for those kids than school attendance. I could talk at length about my experience as a high school teacher in a school where there were not many kids whose parents themselves had completed secondary education. I could talk at length about the problems of attendance of urban Aboriginal children at schools in Alice Springs because, in both those latter cases, in order to understand, it is important to understand the educational experiences of their parents, the life experiences of their parents, and the value that they put on the compulsory education that this part of the Education Act that we are amending in this bandaid fashion is attempting to address very poorly.

Mr LANHUPUY (Arnhem): Mr Speaker, I would like to make a few comments on the bill before the House. I believe that all members of the Assembly appreciate the fact that education is there for all children regardless of where they live, whether it is in Darwin or in the remote areas of the Northern Territory. It is more important in my people's case. The members in this House who represent people in the remote areas of the Northern Territory speak so often, sometimes emotionally, to try to make this government understand that education is as important to the people in remote areas as it is to the people in Darwin. I would like to stress that the way in which this government is going about trying to motivate those children to attend school is wrong, as the member for MacDonnell said. Mr Speaker, I will explain that to you a little later in terms of the remoteness of the areas that we represent.

When a policeman is living at a community like Maningrida, the community may have requested that a police officer be there for reasons other than for him to be a truancy officer. However, placing more powers and authority on our police officer will not only scare many of the people but also kids of that age and they will grow up hating those officers. The police will have authority not only as police officers but also to exercise their powers under this legislation. Children will be worried for the rest of their lives.

Mr Hatton: What! Because of what they are going to do? I don't believe this.

Mr LANHUPUY: Mr Speaker, they will be worried about their relationship with the police officers because ...

Mr Hatton: Nobody will get upset about police because there will not be any.

Mr LANHUPUY: I do not know how the member for Nightcliff interprets what I am explaining, but regardless of what interpretation we may put on it and what responsibilities we place on officers, whether it be as truancy officers or police officers, the government is giving them that authority ...

Mr Hatton: To police.

Mr LANHUPUY: I am talking about remote communities. Those people see police officers as officers who are responsible for the law. They are not supposed to be teachers. Parents there give that responsibility to the teachers.

Mr Speaker, I understand the importance of education. I certainly appreciate it because I have been through that scene and I would certainly like as many of my people as possible to go through the type of education that I have been able to achieve but, because of the way this legislation is framed, I am honestly concerned on behalf of my people.

Mr Harris: You should welcome it.

Mr LANHUPUY: I would like to hear from the minister whether this proposal has been discussed with the parents associations and all the people who are involved because they send their kids to the various schools throughout the Northern Territory. Why not create employment by seeking some advice from the associations throughout the Northern Territory? Why not ask them if they are able to say that they have a person in their area who is responsible and who would be able to do the job of truancy officer? I thought this government was into creating jobs. Jobs could result from the government asking people their views about the type of people who may be placed into schools as truancy officers. I would certainly welcome that and I am sure that my communities in remote areas would - places such as Nhulunbuy and Groote Eylandt and the smaller communities such as Elcho Island and Maningrida. Those communities would welcome the opportunity of a very reliable person in the community becoming a truancy officer.

To place this in the hands of the police certainly causes me concern. I would certainly discourage the type of legislation the Minister for Education is proposing. All it does is to take responsibility away from the schools. Responsibility should rest with the school concerned because parents put their children into the hands of the school. When I went through Kormilda College, my parents gave that responsibility to the principal. My parents and my community expected the principal to look after me for the duration of my stay there. If I wagged school while I was attending Darwin High School or taking courses somewhere else, my parents would have complained to the Department of Education, via the minister, that the principal at that specific school was not looking after me. There is no role for a police officer there. That is beyond my comprehension.

I honestly fear for some of the people involved. I could talk about outstations. Are police officers actually going to visit the 40 outstations in my electorate? Will the government send police to every outstation in my electorate to check on truancy? Will they go to ceremonies which involve kids of 12 years of age and say: 'Sorry, you are not allowed to attend your social and cultural activities. Where do you live?' Will they then take down the names and fine the people involved? Is that what the government is proposing,

or does it intend to take cultural differences into account? Remember, we are talking about a very large percentage of the Territory population.

Mr Hatton: Do you want your kids educated or not?

Mr LANHUPUY: Of course I want my children to be educated. Are the children of the member for Nightcliff involved in cultural activities, in bushwalking, swimming or whatever?

Mr Hatton: Not when they are supposed to be at school.

Mr LANHUPUY: I thought those activities were part of the program of educating children and developing their understanding. I believe that is part of their upbringing. The member for Nightcliff would not understand that because he comes from a suburban area. I hope he appreciates the fact that there are cultural factors which affect our lives on a daily basis. For example, we often have ceremonies which continue for months. Would the government send police officers to such a ceremony, take the kids away from it and send them back to their schools? That will not work and that is why members on this side of the House do not support this bill.

Mr HARRIS (Education): Mr Speaker, members of the opposition have shown their complete misunderstanding of what this bill is all about. We will not be sending police out to grab kids and bring them back into school. That is a complete misunderstanding.

There are 2 members on the opposition benches who are worth listening to: the member for Arnhem and the member for Arafura. They come up with some sound suggestions and comments in relation to their people. I wish that the member for MacDonnell and the member for Stuart would start to learn a bit from them. Other members of this Assembly were disgusted by the attitude of the member for MacDonnell. He stood there, pointing his finger and moved to adjourn the second-reading debate. He could have made his contribution. The member for Stuart had already made his contribution in the debate and the member for MacDonnell moved to adjourn the debate. Why? Who runs this House, Mr Speaker?

Mr Ede: The CLP club.

Mr HARRIS: I can assure you, Mr Speaker, that when the opposition sees fit, it runs to the media. As soon as the member for Stuart, the opposition spokesman on education, had made his speech, he raced off to the media and gave his little 30-second grab. The member for Stuart is a master of the 30-second grab.

Mr Ede: I beg your pardon! Can we have a vote on that?

Mr HARRIS: In 30 seconds, he says the exact opposite of what is really the case. He puts the fear of God into everyone. Tonight, he would have gone out and said that the police would be running around grabbing kids and putting them into school. That is the sort of thing that creates a fear in the community. He did the same sort of thing the other day in relation to DIGS. His 30-second grab was totally misleading and totally irresponsible. He stands condemned. He ought to lift his game up and start to talk about the issues as they are presented.

Mr Speaker, I was disgusted with the member for MacDonnell's contribution. I might say that I look forward to his support when we are discussing the

issue of excellence. He really put forward a good case today and I think that he will rise and support 'Towards the 90s', particularly the paper on excellence. I look forward to his contribution.

We are appointing police as truancy officers to give them the opportunity to question children who are away from school. It is not a move to create extra police positions and to occupy officers with bringing in the kids. The idea is that, in the normal course of their work, when police come across children of school age who are out of school during school hours, they can ask those children why they are not at school. There is a range of guidelines, and I will come to those in a minute. The purpose is not to give the police extra work.

The member for Arafura mentioned police aides. Police aides are police officers and, if they are in uniform, they will be appointed to act as truancy officers. There is a police presence in most communities and appointing them as truancy officers is a reasonable way of addressing a problem which exists throughout the Territory. We have to start somewhere.

As I listened for 30 minutes to the member for Stuart's contribution, I waited to hear about the opposition's grand plan to combat truancy. I am sure that honourable members would be aware of the grand plan to combat truancy that was introduced by the member for Stuart in June. He went for the quick fix. He had not thought it through. The opposition's plan had been slapped together on the spur of the moment and it created terrible problems. Just about everyone in the community opposed it. Even the Secretary of the Teachers' Federation was totally opposed to it. He said: 'Goodness me! What will Brian Ede's proposal do to us?' A multitude of questions were raised in relation to that plan and the member for Stuart could not answer any of them. He proposed that a regional network of special units be set up in the community. They would have needed trained specialists to look after them. That is what he wanted to do.

Mr Ede: That was 1 aspect of it.

Mr HARRIS: There were more questions, Mr Speaker. Who was to police this grand scheme? Who would identify the problem kids? What were the units to comprise? Were we talking about the major centres or were we talking about Aboriginal communities? What is the plan? We never even heard the plan, even though the member for Stuart has had ample opportunity to put it forward in this Assembly so that we can discuss it. I have often asked the member for Stuart, the shadow spokesman on education, to come forward with his views. We want to hear them.

Mr Ede: Bring on a ministerial statement then.

Mr HARRIS: You have plenty of opportunity to discuss it in an adjournment debate. You shirk it every time. You just do not have the guts to get up here and tell us what your plans are.

Mr Ede: You can bring one on at any time.

Mr HARRIS: Mr Speaker, we could also ask about the cost. The member for Stuart wanted to set up a new structure of special units employing specialist staff - the whole bit. One has to be practical in this world. We have to assess how to approach the issues and to know what can be provided and what cannot. Until the member for Stuart realises that, he will have a problem.

The member for Stuart implied also that all children who are truant are liars and hardened criminals. That is not so and he knows it. Many children play truant on 1 or 2 occasions but, in due course, they mend their ways and settle back into the school system. There is no doubt about that. They are not all bad. Many of those young kids want and deserve the opportunity to go back into the school system. Now the police will have the ability to question students who are out of school.

The member for Stuart spoke about cuts in relation to home liaison officer positions. Again, there were no cuts as such, and the member for Stuart knows it. Decisions in relation to those positions are entirely a matter for the schools concerned and, in many cases, schools decided to have 2. When we discuss the issue of home liaison officers in the context of staffing generally, we should be aware that a school has a great deal of work to do in deciding who those people should be.

There is no question about the fact that some students are problem students and that is an issue that has to be addressed in some areas. At Ali Curung, a 'nomads' class was set up to cater for the kids who kept staying away from school. It was set up by the community and that ended up being a top class. No one is denying the fact that there are problems. The member for Stuart made it sound as if he was raising these issues and that the government responded only when he raised issues.

Mr Ede: I have been raising them for years.

Mr HARRIS: Mr Speaker, I can assure you that I raised the same issues when I was Minister for Education previously, and there was no comment from the member for Stuart in respect of ways of solving these problems. All he did was spout about the problems, never about how to solve them.

Parental responsibility is very important. I have been making that comment for ages and I am very pleased to note now that some members of the opposition are starting to say that parents do have a responsibility and that it is necessary for parents to encourage their children to go to school. It should not be left up to the principals. The member for Arnhem raised the matter of the role of the principal. One of the problems that we have in some of the outlying areas is that children disappear into the bush and we have principals running around trying to find them. Docker River was a perfect example. When the people in the communities start taking an interest, that will change. At Willowra, there is now genuine interest by the parents. Such interest, coupled with the ability to appoint truancy officers, will change the situation considerably.

The member for Stuart also said that we were not doing anything in the community. He assumes we do not have any positive programs in place. That is absolute nonsense and he knows that it is nonsense. Nevertheless, he continues to spout about it in the Assembly. He will go outside and say again that we do not have any positive incentives or means of addressing these problems. We do have programs in place. I can refer to the pastoral care programs, the counsellors, the home liaison officers and the community liaison officers. There are special programs and FEPPi has had a great deal to do with those. FEPPi is concerned about the education of children in the bush areas and we share that concern. It has set in place breakfast programs and other programs. No education system in Australia does as much as we do in this regard. The honourable member should check that. All he does is run to the media and say that the government does nothing. He makes a 30-second grab and misleads the people in the community. He ought to listen to what we are saying.

Our problem is that we have not had an effective truancy system in place to complement the programs that are in place. We are following the lead of other states in introducing these measures and that has been mentioned by other members during the course of this debate. The member for Stuart should acknowledge the work that we do in the bush areas. If he gets down to the nitty gritty, he will find that we do a great deal there and that our programs are very positive.

The member for Arafura mentioned the problems in the towns as well as those in rural areas and the problems with Aboriginal children. I do not question what he said. I know that he is correct in what he says about nutrition and children not receiving the correct food, and the problems of children not having enough sleep at night and falling asleep in class. Those are problems that I acknowledge and that the Department of Education acknowledges. Most people recognise that we need do something about that. However, we must start somewhere in relation to the problem of truancy.

The Menzies School of Health Research is doing work on hearing problems that affect schoolchildren.

Mr Ede: 10 years time or 15 years time.

Mr HARRIS: The honourable member wants the big solution today. We cannot do that and he knows that we cannot do it like that.

Mr Ede: Bring health workers in. Talk to doctors.

Mr HARRIS: Those problems are being addressed very responsibly. There are schools that do have programs in relation to them. Special hearing aids are issued to some of the students. It is acknowledged that those problems exist, and that is something that I have never shied away from.

The member for Arafura spoke about his people's culture and the difficulties involved in meeting the requirements of both cultures. A problem in relation to the outstation movement is the ability of people to decide whether they want their traditional education or whether they want to be involved in our education system. We have allowed them to make that choice. The uncles can teach the children the traditional arts and skills. No one is trying to deny his people that activity. We will not be sending police officers hundreds of kilometres into the bush to try to pull kids in to go to school. He would have to be joking.

Mr Speaker, we are examining the problems in a responsible way. I believe that what we are proposing here is reasonable. It will assist our efforts to ensure more children attend school regularly. At least, they will be able to be questioned. In the primary school system, a teacher knows the children in his class and can tell very quickly if someone is away from school. Some will be absent with good reason. The police can ask those children why they are not at school, the reasons will be given and they will be judged accordingly.

Since drafting the original bill, the government has become aware of the community's concern at a possible danger to young children from bogus persons purporting to be authorised persons. In recognising the community's concern, the government has had to be mindful of the fact that it is responsible for the safety of children, particularly young children attending primary school, even when they are truants. Through its school system, the government must demonstrate clearly its duty of care to these children. The government must be assured that all children can identify readily those authorised persons who

may approach them in a truant situation. To this end, the government has decided to amend the truancy provisions contained in the bill, and I have circulated those amendments.

In no way will these additional amendments detract from the intention of the bill to return children to school. They are designed to ensure that truant children are not placed at risk by bogus persons. The government believes it has a special responsibility towards the truant primary school child. For this reason, it has decided that the only authorised persons legally empowered to pick up and return these children to their schools will be uniformed police officers and the truanting child's principal and/or head teacher. The restriction will not detract from the intent of the amending legislation but will complement the protective behaviour program currently operating in many of our primary schools which has the aim of encouraging children to resist accompanying any person not clearly identified to them. Further, they are encouraged to say no.

The secondary school situation is somewhat different. Each high school has on staff a home liaison officer. The home liaison officers have been authorised persons since the early 1980s and my department has not received 1 complaint regarding their operation. That is a fine record. However, to ensure that no young child is confused or put at risk, the home liaison officer's role regarding truancy will be restricted to the students of the secondary school at which he is based. Consequently, truants of secondary school age may be picked up and returned to their schools by the following legally authorised persons: a uniformed police officer, the principal of their school and the home liaison officer of their school. These measures should allay any concern that the community may have regarding the possibility of children not being able to clearly identify a legally authorised person.

In addition, there will be a series of guidelines and I will read out the relevant part:

Section 31 of the Education Act is amended as follows: (1) in this section 'authorised person' means (a) any member of the police force when wearing uniform; and (b) any other person authorised in writing by the Secretary of the Department of Education for the purpose of this part.

The other relevant section is section 7 which says:

It is the policy of the government that the only persons who will be authorised to be truancy officers, other than members of the police force when in uniform, will be, in the case of primary schools, community education centres and area schools, the principal and, in the case of high schools, the principal and the home liaison officer. It is also the policy of the government that truancy officers, other than members of the police force when in uniform, should only exercise the power conferred on them in respect of children who are enrolled at the school at which the truancy officer is a member of the staff.

Many people do appear to be misreading what this legislation is all about. The reason the government is moving to authorise police officers is that they are in many of the communities throughout the Northern Territory. This is not designed to increase their workload. It is purely to give them the ability to question a child of apparent school age who is found to be in another place during school hours. That is what this is about. To say that we intend to

lock up kids etc is absolute nonsense. In the member for Stuart's grand scheme, when he was talking about taking truants to units, the comment was even made that he was proposing to set up a network of jails. That gives an example of a 30-second grab: I could walk out of this Chamber and say that the member for Stuart is planning to set up a network of jails to solve this problem. I know that he did not mean that, but it is the sort of thing that people can say that creates problems in the community.

Mr Speaker, I thank all honourable members for their contributions except for the negative contributions from the member for Stuart and the member for MacDonnell. I was totally disgusted by the way in which the member for MacDonnell presented his case. He could have spoken earlier in the second-reading debate. He did not have to try to adjourn the debate. We have limited time in the Assembly and I am not in any way trying to gag debate. The issues must be debated and I am willing to listen. However, let us do it in the right manner, let us have respect for the parliament and let us carry out our job in a respectable manner.

Mr Bell: It was you blokes who did not want to do that.

Mr SPEAKER: Order!

Motion agreed to; bill read a second time.

In committee:

Clauses 1 to 10 agreed to.

Clause 11:

Mr HARRIS: Mr Chairman, I move amendments 53.1, 53.2 and 53.3.

As outlined in my second-reading speech, these amendments will ensure that only police officers in uniform are able to be appointed as truancy officers.

Amendments agreed to.

Mr EDE: Mr Chairman, this clause is indicative of the cheapjack attitude of this government to the whole problem of truancy and it flows across, I am afraid, into the education system. A couple of years ago, money was drawn off from the education system and put into the University College. Now that we have finally amalgamated the University College with the DIT to form the University of the Northern Territory, there is no indication that that funding will come back into the Territory education system. Instead, we have had another round of cuts. The attitude is that we will not treat the problem but pretend that it does not exist. That attitude runs right through the education system and it is most unfortunate.

If we defeat this clause, we can return to the situation that we had for some time. We had truancy officers who had identification cards and who had the power to do something about truancy. Those truancy officers could be trained specifically for the task and get to know the kids in the area. Mr Chairman, do you realise how many persons have been appointed as truancy officers with that specific task? None! There is not 1 truancy officer in the Territory today.

Mr Harris: Why were they removed?

Mr EDE: They cost money. That is why they were removed.

What happens now? The minister goes for the cop-out. The whole purpose of this amendment is so that the minister can say that he has done something. He can then go away, sit on his hands and pretend that the problem does not exist. He has taken action on truancy. He has put that problem back in its box and hopes that it will go away for a couple of years and not come back and haunt him.

He was talking earlier about parental responsibility. What he has done will cut back on parental responsibility by simply handing the problem over to the police. It is a fact of life that, when the honourable minister gives a power to the police, he says that it is no longer his problem but a police problem. When this government passes legislation about something, it has the tendency to believe that it has fixed the problem. Acts do not fix anything; acts provide a framework. Giving it to the police does not fix a social problem. It allows a cop-out. It allows parents to say that it is not their problem and that the police will do something about it. Society can say that the police will do something about it. The schools can say that the police will have to bring truants back in. The minister can say that he has handed the responsibility to the police.

I had hoped that, during the course of this debate, the minister responsible for police would outline his attitude to this legislation. As I said earlier, the police do not want this responsibility. They do not want to be continually wearing the problems that everybody else has decided are too difficult to handle. Society throws its problems at them and says: 'You are our muscle men. Get out there and do the job'.

This legislation will not solve anything. It is indicative of an attitude of mind of the government which I had hoped that the Minister for Education did not have. I have praised him in the past for some of the things that he has done in his portfolio. He is the best Minister for Education we have had since the last time he held that portfolio. He is a far better minister this time around than he was the last time because he has learnt to stand on his own feet and to have a go at the department when it tries to run him all the time. He is a far better minister this time than he was before. However, enough of that kindness. The fact is that, on this one, he is wrong. I will tell him when he is right and I will tell him when he is wrong.

Mr Chairman, I know that he does not intend to support us on this. However, I intend to ensure that it is on the record that I told him that it would not work. After the next election, when I will be sitting at that desk over there, I will move amendments to remove this power from the police and put into place programs that will work to reduce the horrendous problem we have with truancy. At that time, I will be able to throw it back in his face and say: 'That is what you said about it. This is what we have done about it, and now it is working'.

Mr COLLINS: Mr Chairman, over the last 20 years or so, it has become the norm that, in most households, both parents go out to work. Once upon a time, mum would be at home and there were mums dotted around the neighbourhood. If kids wagged school, home was not the place to go. As I said earlier, truancy was not a great problem. The experience of other teachers was pretty similar to my own. However, these days, both parents are away from the home. In the days when one parent was not working away from the home, there was an ability to keep far closer tabs on the kids.

Hopefully, making the police truancy officers will give a lead to the community. We need to foster community responsibility. I may not be able to keep tabs on my kids because I move around in the community, but I may see other kids who are known to me and who should be at school. I am not suggesting that I should be able to pick them up and take them to school because we are all aware of stranger danger. However, one can always ask them why they are not at school. If all adults supported the police in that way, that would be one solution.

When kids become regular truants, they miss out on their education. When they do go to school, they feel out of it because they are behind with the work. I recall being sick for a couple of days during my second year at high school. I had been forced to study Latin which I did not particularly like. There was a choice between Latin and drawing, but the principal tapped me on the shoulder and said: 'You will do Latin'. Although I did not like it, it helped me to appreciate the English language. An additional benefit has been that I was able to understand 'ex patria' when it was used in that great speech on Latin that we heard from the member for MacDonnell when he first came into the House. He never got round to finishing it. He only got to the 'patria' bit. He might take it up at some time.

Mr Chairman, my point is that a student returns to school after being sick for a couple of days only to find that he has been left behind in a subject. When I came back to a subject which, I confess, I did not particularly like, they were talking about the subjective conjunctive and I realised very quickly that I did not have a clue what they were talking about. At the end of the year, I dropped out of Latin and that was the end of that. I can well appreciate that, if a child does not have a very firm grasp of a subject and misses a few days here and there, that child will soon feel very frustrated and left out and will want to kick over the traces. However, if the whole community, including parents and every adult person, perhaps led by the police, makes a concerted effort to get the kids to attend school consistently, maybe we can start to break the cycle. If the kids attend consistently, they will start to learn a little.

Even if kids belly-ache about teachers who make them work hard, once they start to find that they are making progress, it is much easier for them to keep going. The situation has slipped out of hand and it will take a tremendous effort to get it back under control again. Unlike the member for Stuart, who sees the minister's initiative as all bad, I believe it could be the catalyst for action by the whole community. Members of this Assembly should get behind it. I will certainly be mentioning it in my next newsletter to my electorate. I will ask the people to get behind this move and support it for their kids' sakes, and I am sure that they will. If we all do that and get the kids to attend school consistently, the Department of Education and teachers will have the challenge to create the courses and to teach the kids in a manner which will engender success. When students start to experience success, they will be much less inclined to stay away from school. We can overcome the problem with a big effort from the total community.

I was very pleased to hear the member for Arafura suggest that police aides should be empowered to act as truancy officers, although the minister stated that police aides are members of the police force and are automatically covered. Let us hope they will give a lead in the communities. I am sure that, if the honourable member had had that power when he was an aide, he would have done a great job because he has a great personality. It is necessary to get the parents on side as well. They have to believe that education is important to them and to their children. I strongly oppose the

member for Stuart's amendment which would delete this particular clause. The intention of the clause is eminently supportable and the whole community should get behind it and make it work. It will only succeed with effort and energy. Mr Speaker, I commend the minister for this bill.

Mr HARRIS: Mr Chairman, I think the government's case has been put very clearly; but I would like to clarify 1 point because it provides a perfect example of where the member for Stuart has again tried to misrepresent our approach. He said that we have taken responsibility from parents and given it to the police. That is one of his typical comments. It is short and sweet, and can be misinterpreted. We have not said that at all and the media and the public need to be aware of that. It is not a matter of giving responsibility to the police and forgetting everything else. We are doing something about this issue.

The member for Stuart had enough time to talk about the issue. He has not put forward his grand plan because he knows it would not succeed. He mentioned that we have not taken action to solve a whole range of problems. In my speech this evening, I mentioned several problems that are being experienced in the communities. We will address those as time goes by, but we cannot say that we will wait until we have the grand solution to everything. We have to start somewhere and I believe we have taken a responsible and sensible approach. Mr Chairman, I can say to the member for Stuart that flattery will get him nowhere.

Clause 11, as amended, agreed to.

Bill passed remaining stages without debate.

STATUTE LAW REVISION BILL
(Serial 130)

Continued from 24 August 1988.

Mr BELL (MacDonnell): Mr Speaker, the opposition supports the bill in as much as we have had the opportunity to view the bill but not all the amendments. Today, the Attorney-General has circulated amendment schedule No 55 and, quite obviously, the opposition has not had the opportunity to assess that schedule. We accept that the amendments proposed do not incorporate any great policy decisions but are consequent on previously considered legislation. The opposition has done some research on the legislation that is amended by the bill rather than by the amendment schedule and is happy to accept it.

The only matter of any substance is the amendment to the Public Service Act enabling the appointment of an employee as a head of department or chief executive officer of a unit of administration where the incumbent is absent or unable to act. The opposition is quite happy to accept those terms so that, in effect, a first reserve is appointed on a stand-in basis for a departmental head or chief executive officer. The opposition is happy to accept that.

Motion agreed to; bill read a second time.

In committee:

Clauses 1 to 6 agreed to.

New clause 7:

Mr MANZIE: Mr Chairman, I move amendment 55.1.

The clause will ensure that the Aboriginal Land Act refers to the provisions of the new Fisheries Act. At present, it refers to the previous Fisheries Act.

New clause 7 agreed to.

New clause 8:

Mr MANZIE: Mr Chairman, I move amendment 55.2.

The clause relates to amendments to various acts consequent on the passage of the Northern Territory University Act. The acts are referred to in the new schedule 3 to the Statute Law Revision Bill. The amendments are minor and will take effect from 1 January 1989.

New clause 8 agreed to.

Schedule 1:

Mr MANZIE: Mr Chairman, I move amendment 55.3.

The amendment to schedule 1 is to allow for inclusion of minor amendments to the recently enacted Local Government Amendment Act. Recent amendments to the Local Government Act allow for the appointment of a commissioner, under section 276(1)(e) of that act, and it is proposed to amend the existing definition of 'commissioner' in the act to include a reference to the commissioner appointed under section 295(1)(e) of the same act. The heading of division 2 part IV of the Local Government Act is 'Specific Powers', and it is proposed to delete the word 'specific' from the heading more accurately to reflect the content of division 2.

Amendment agreed to.

Mr MANZIE: Mr Chairman, I move amendment 55.4.

These amendments allow certain omissions from the Motor Vehicles Act as these matters are now covered in the Traffic Act. They should have been removed at the time but they were inadvertently overlooked.

Amendment agreed to.

Mr MANZIE: Mr Chairman, I move amendment 55.5.

In the committee stage of consideration of the Small Claims Amendment Act 1988, the government accepted an opposition amendment to increase the small claims jurisdiction to \$5000. Section 5 was amended. However, section 7 should have been amended also and this amendment will effect that.

Conferring power to make the orders has been considered by magistrates who advise that it is defective and that the phrase 'other than the claimant' should be deleted. The phrase was taken from a Consumer Tribunal precedent where only a consumer can commence a claim. The effect of this in the Northern Territory jurisdiction, where a trader can commence a claim, is that, if the trader sues first, he cannot be ordered to repair goods.

Amendment agreed to.

Schedule 1, as amended, agreed to.

Schedule 2 agreed to.

New schedule 3:

Mr MANZIE: Mr Chairman, I move amendment 55.6.

This amendment inserts a new schedule that deals with those consequential and minor amendments referred to in new clause 8 as a result of the passage of the Northern Territory University Act.

New schedule 3 agreed to.

Title agreed to.

Bill reported; report adopted.

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

Motion agreed to; bill read a third time.

LIQUOR AMENDMENT BILL

(Serial 145)

Continued from 13 October 1988.

Mr BELL (MacDonnell): Mr Speaker, as honourable members will recall, when this bill was introduced to the Assembly during the last sittings, the opposition endeavoured to have it passed with urgency. At that stage, I explained to the honourable minister and to the government the precise reasons why the opposition was seeking urgency for this bill. If honourable members did not hear our comments at that time, undoubtedly they would have heard them on the numerous occasions when honourable members of the opposition have presented amendments along these lines giving exact reasons for them.

It is not my intention to chronicle, as I have done on a large number of occasions, what I Supreme Court judge referred to as 'an opportunity for manifest injustice'. I will place on record that this particular bill to amend the Liquor Act is long overdue and very warmly supported by the opposition, with the exception of the amendment that has been circulated.

The member for Nhulunbuy feels as strongly as I do about this particular bill. He has described the sort of injustice that he has seen at first hand as a result of the application of the forfeiture provisions. I hasten to add that the opposition, as it has been in the past, is a strong supporter of those forfeiture provisions in the restricted areas part of the act but, as we have said on numerous occasions, there have been numerous occasions when this section has been applied quixotically and unjustly and has had effects in the Aboriginal community in particular that do not enhance the respect of Aboriginal people for the law-making process in majority society. That is a matter of concern to me.

I have spoken in this Assembly on a large number of occasions about the difficulties that traditionally-oriented Aboriginal people have in coming to terms with a layman's understanding of western legal concepts. On many occasions, they believe that western law applies quite quixotically. Members

of the opposition experience many circumstances where we are involved in bringing together traditional Aboriginal law and western law. We do not always succeed but that is one of the important tasks of legislators in the Northern Territory, and I believe that it is one of the chief justifications for self-government for such a small number of people.

Where that process of rationalising 2 very different legal patterns unnecessarily comes into conflict, as it has done in the case of this legislation, I believe that all of us - not only opposition members, not only people representing constituencies which have a large number of Aboriginal people in them but all of us here - are held up potentially to ridicule. There have been circumstances where, quite quixotically, motor vehicles in particular have been restored to their owners by ministerial fiat. For example, I refer to the case where the member for Palmerston, as a former minister in charge of the Liquor Act, restored a vehicle at Santa Teresa. In the same breath, he refused to restore another vehicle for reasons that pass all understanding, certainly in the eyes of Mr Gus Williams of Hermannsburg who was told the minister was not able to restore a vehicle in that particular case.

I and other opposition members speak with a clear understanding of the very real human problems and problems of human understanding that have been occasioned by the absurd amendment passed in 1982 to what is basically, as we have said, good legislation. It is a shame that the excellent and thoughtful study carried out by Dr Peter d'Abbs into the Liquor Act, specifically into the dry areas part of the act, has not been fully implemented. I was not at all surprised to hear Dr d'Abbs expressing on the radio only this week his concern that the government had failed to implement his proposals. Dr d'Abbs said that many communities - and he meant in this case, I think, particularly Aboriginal communities - cannot understand why the courts can make decisions about people but have no power over cars which are often crucial links for remote communities.

As I have said on many occasions in respect of this legislative problem, I think that many people in the government fail really to appreciate, when they jet around my electorate in helicopters and light aircraft, that the only means of public transport available to my constituents are taxis or charter aircraft. For people who are substantially dependent on social security benefits, because of the position that they occupy in majority society and their relationship to the means of production, that means that they are not in a position to use those forms of public transport very often. In fact, there are not too many people in the Northern Territory who can. They do not have buses and cheap forms of public transport. Many of those vehicles that are seized under the Liquor Act are old bombs and the fact that they are old bombs, by and large, is an exact reflection of the socioeconomic standard of those communities.

Mr Manzie: I still drive an old bomb, thank you very much.

Mr BELL: The honourable Attorney-General tells me he still drives an old bomb. The difference between the Attorney-General and many of my constituents is that the Attorney-General has a choice in the matter and my constituents do not.

Mr Manzie: I do not either.

Mr BELL: If the Attorney-General would like to write me a letter and explain why, on a ministerial salary, he is forced to drive a 20-year-old

Holden that cost \$1500 and probably does not have a roadworthiness certificate, I will deal with the case sympathetically and I will address it in an adjournment debate. The Attorney-General's interjection indicates the lamentable ignorance of the social circumstances that this amendment addresses so belatedly. As far as I am concerned, it is a shame on this government that it has taken so long to propose this bill.

The 2 major changes that were recommended in the d'Abbs Report were, first, that we incorporate into this legislation the principle of temporary impoundment. I have no hesitation in endorsing that particular concept. I think that is one of the most powerful sanctions in an Aboriginal community. Because of the community's dependence on transport and the real social, economic and human need to travel round to various communities, the loss of a motor vehicle, even for a week, 2 weeks or 1 month, is a very powerful sanction. I would suggest that, in many respects, it is a more powerful sanction than prison.

Mr Perron: It does not seem to have quelled the offences much.

Mr BELL: In the context of this bill, I do not have the information before me on the number of offences. I would suggest that the contention the Chief Minister expressed in that interjection is not borne out by my experience. My experience is that the dry areas part of the Liquor Act has been successful. In fact, as I have said on a number of occasions in debate in this Assembly ...

Mr Perron: That was not my point.

Mr BELL: What was it?

Mr Perron: The number of breaches of dry areas legislation using vehicles.

Mr BELL: Right. I am not saying that, simply because we have the sanction, that means that nobody will breach the law any more than I would say that a sanction against riding pushbikes on a footpath means that people will not do so. I really do not understand what the Chief Minister is getting at. My understanding of the issues is not as thorough as that expressed in the d'Abbs Report but I would venture to say that I know more about the human problems occasioned by alcohol abuse in Aboriginal communities than most other members of this Assembly, and I would say that the dry areas provisions have had a very positive impact indeed.

The second important principle relates to the need for a distribution in terms of amounts of liquor involved. In the case of banned substances such as marijuana, courts make a distinction between possession for personal use and possession for the purpose of sale. I believe that the courts are in a position to make that distinction.

Mr Speaker, having praised the bill to some extent, its chief problem is the extent to which power is vested in the minister. We will now have a mechanism whereby forfeited vehicles can be returned. That is welcome. There no longer is the legal vacuum which meant that forfeited vehicles could not be returned. However, the opposition believes that it is crazy public policy for the minister to take on the responsibility of deciding whether forfeited vehicles should be returned. I know the corner where the minister's electorate office is located and, by golly, once people realise that the matter has been set down in black and white, he may be swamped. Certainly, when I become Minister for Health in charge of the Liquor Act ...

Mr Dale: Everybody will have given up drinking by then!

Mr BELL: I do not think that the minister realises that we have 4-year terms and that an election is due in a couple of years. After the next election, when I am Minister for Health and in charge of the Liquor Act, the last responsibility I will want is that of making decisions in relation to forfeited vehicles. There are many legislative areas, such as the Planning Act, in which ministers of the Crown endeavour to distance themselves from the decision-making process. Obviously, the member for Araluen has not had as much experience of receiving representations about forfeited motor vehicles as I have. I would much prefer to leave the matter to the courts. I do not see why the government distrusts the courts in this matter.

Apart from the administrative problems, a principle is involved. Courts are open to public scrutiny so that people can be satisfied that there is a consistent basis for making decisions. If the minister is to make decisions, how will people be able to accept that such decisions are made on a reasonable and consistent basis? The pros and cons will not be argued before the courts. What will assure people that the minister does not make decisions on the basis of personal favouritism? I am not suggesting that the minister or the Chairman of the Liquor Commission would take bribes. I am suggesting, however, that some people may come to believe that that is possible. That is why the opposition believes that this responsibility should lie with the courts. We accept that the minister will retain it, but the opposition is putting forward an amendment which will allow an appeal to the courts.

I draw the attention of honourable members to amendment schedule No 54 which has been circulated under my name. That seeks to create a new section 101(a) which will allow an appeal to the courts from a decision of the minister. I certainly hope that, for the reasons which I have outlined this evening, the government will accept the amendment.

In conclusion, the opposition's position is that it welcomes the bill. We believe that, although it contains faults, it is better than nothing. We hope that the government will accept our amendment.

Mr FIRMIN (Ludmilla): Mr Speaker, I rise very briefly this evening to support this amendment to the Liquor Act. Over the years, I have had some reservations about the problems connected with the forfeiture of vehicles in the Aboriginal community. I have been a member of the board of directors of the YMCA. The YMCA provided a number of services to Aboriginal communities, including vehicles which were provided for use in community recreation programs. On occasions, those vehicles were involved in illegal grog running, as we discovered when they were impounded. We lost the use of vehicles at Lajamanu and Papunya. As the member for MacDonnell has pointed out, communities suffer considerable hardship when vehicles which provide community services are withdrawn from use.

There have been many other instances in which local people have had their vehicles impounded. Earlier this year, I was approached by Roy Marika at Yirrkala, following well-publicised problems stemming from the family vehicle being involved in the illicit carriage of alcohol into Yirrkala from the town of Nhulunbuy. Roy agreed with me privately about the problems of enforcing regulations prohibiting the transport of alcohol into the community. However, some considerable hardship was caused by the impounding of that vehicle. There were mitigating circumstances which could possibly have allowed the vehicle to be released because it was used illegally by a third person. Of course, within the act there was no mechanism to allow for such a decision to be made and this amendment bill will change that situation.

Something which is often overlooked is that the act applies also to other modes of transport such as aeroplanes and boats. On one occasion, I travelled by plane to an Aboriginal community in order to meet a trawler vessel. Quite innocently, I was carrying some alcohol for the skipper. It was pointed out to me after I had joined the trawler and given the alcohol to the skipper that, having travelled in an aircraft to the Aboriginal community, I had probably broken the law. I had been in possession of alcohol whilst in the community, even though I was in transit and was travelling straight on to meet the trawler. Under the relevant provision of the Liquor Act, that aircraft could have been impounded. The amendment bill will allow the exercise of some flexibility in addressing such situations. With those few comments, Mr Speaker, I indicate my support for the bill.

Mr LEO (Nhulunbuy): Mr Speaker, the member for MacDonnell has canvassed the issues that have led to this amendment. I would like to remind all government members that it was after some 12 months of lobbying by this opposition that the government eventually commissioned the d'Abbs Report. We were promised that amendments would be made in line with the recommendations in that report. In fact, this government has made no amendments as a consequence of the recommendations of that report. Indeed, this amendment cannot be seen even remotely as a consequence of that report. This amendment does not support a single word or a single recommendation of Peter d'Abbs.

Whatever comments I may have to make about that report, I will reserve for this parliament. Nevertheless, that is a commitment that this government made to this parliament. It took us 12 long months to obtain even that commitment. Eventually, we managed to have the government accede to an inquiry into the entire Liquor Act. It must be almost 12 months to the day since the d'Abbs Report was tabled in this parliament and still none of its recommendations appears to have been adopted. I think that that is a sad indictment of this government. I really do not know why it bothers to commission reports.

The difficulty that I have with this legislation is that it does not address the fundamentals. Take the example of my constituent, Mrs Marika, who was not in Nhulunbuy when her vehicle was used to transport liquor without her knowledge. What if she had been in some other part of Australia or indeed some other part of the world when that had occurred and that case had proceeded with expediency? It is reasonable to assume that the perpetrators would have been prosecuted and, under this amendment, she would still have lost her vehicle. The amendment reads:

The owner or other person who, but for its being seized, would be entitled to possession of a vehicle, vessel or aircraft seized under this part may, before the trial of a person for the alleged offence in connection with which it was seized, apply to the minister for its release to the owner or that other person, as the case may be.

Basically, that means that application has to be made before the trial. That is my reading of it.

Mr Perron: Doesn't she want the car back instantly?

Mr LEO: What if she is in some other part of the world and she is not even aware that it has been seized by the police? By the time she gets home, it will have disappeared into the system. How can she make application if she is not even aware that it has been seized?

Mr Perron: She doesn't need it while she is overseas, does she?

Mr LEO: If my constituent was somewhere else and this vehicle was seized and those people were prosecuted with expediency, the vehicle would be gone and she would still be no further in front. If that is not the case, I would certainly like the minister to reassure me on that.

The fundamental fact that this bill does not address is that the perpetrator of the offence can receive no more than a maximum fine of \$500. If the government addressed that and said that the driver of the motor vehicle that was carrying the grog into a dry area would be fined \$10 000 or \$20 000 or would spend the rest of his life in jail or be forced to work in community service for the next 15 years, it would have my unqualified support. This legislation continues to miss the point that innocent persons are being persecuted by the laws of the Northern Territory. That is the bottom line. We will certainly accede to the passage of this legislation because it is better than what we have now, but it does not address the fundamentals. We still will not have a law that seeks to bring about just consequences for the breaking of a law.

I do not have to be told by any member of this House of the horrendous affects that alcohol can have on any Aboriginal community. I know what it does. I see it daily where I come from. I have nothing but the highest regard for those persons who, like Mrs Marika, fight constantly against this horrendous social disease. However, when innocent people are persecuted, our laws are unjust. That is the bottom line. I do not see that this bill will remove that injustice. It will not make persons who commit the crime pay any more and it will still require the innocent persons to pursue the minister. Why should the court not make the simple decision that the person is entirely innocent and should bear no penalty for something he has not done?

Mr Dale: They still have to go to court.

Mr LEO: Why should they have to go to the minister? The bill says that they have to go to the minister.

Mr Perron: It would be cheaper to go to the minister than to court.

Mr LEO: Okay, it will be cheaper and quicker to go to the minister. I concede that that may be so.

The problem that my constituents have is that the dispenser of justice will not be the magistrate, the person whom they sit in front of in a courthouse. It will be the minister - a remote individual. As the member for MacDonnell said, it is the last job that I would want. People will accuse the minister of playing favourites and there is absolutely no way of escaping that.

I do not think this is a very satisfactory resolution of this problem in terms of the pursuit of justice and in terms of the Crown as represented by the minister. We have a separation of powers within our system. There is the judiciary, there is the legislature and there is the Administrator or the Crown. That is the separation of powers. This legislation does not recognise that at all.

In private conversation, the minister has assured me there will be some degree of trial in relation to this. I congratulate him for that. As all legislation should be reviewed from time to time, there is nothing new about

that. I hope that, in the course of time, we can arrive at a reasonable and just resolution of this matter. Whilst the government may feel that this is reasonable and just, my constituents and I do not feel that it is reasonable and just. I hope that government members will support the opposition's amendment which will reintroduce the power of the judiciary in relation to this matter of seized property as a result of an offence against section 97 of the Liquor Act because I believe that, in the long run, that is the only sane solution.

Mr SETTER (Jingili): Mr Speaker, I have listened to the honourable members opposite put forward their arguments tonight and I must say that I have heard them on a number of previous occasions. The same arguments are regurgitated over and over again. I do agree with one thing that the member for Nhulunbuy said and that is that alcoholism in Aboriginal communities is a horrendous problem. If one moves around those communities, one can see the results of it. That result can certainly be seen in the white urban communities, particularly in Alice Springs, Tennant Creek and Katherine. In order to address that problem, in past years a number of those communities have declared themselves to be dry, and today many Aboriginal communities are dry areas.

It was very difficult to police a dry area. Those communities pleaded with the government to introduce this legislation which provided for the seizure of any vehicle that was caught carrying alcohol into a dry community. That has been in place now for some years and a number of vehicles have been seized during that period. In recent months, the minister has spent some time moving around Aboriginal communities and speaking with the elders to assess what their current thinking was on this matter. From what the minister said to me, I understand that the vast majority of those communities still want that seizure provision in place.

Having accepted that, I think we all recognise that there has been some difficulty with the existing legislation. Some hardship has been created from time to time and that has been particularly the case where the person who committed the offence did not own the vehicle involved, where the vehicle belonged to somebody else who perhaps lent it to that person who was subsequently charged and convicted of an offence. We all know that some of those vehicles have been impounded, particularly between the time of the offence being committed, the charge laid and the case coming to court. The person who owned the vehicle has been considerably disadvantaged.

I will not go over all that in great detail because other speakers have spoken about it ad nauseam. We are all aware of the situation. The important point is that the government has recognised that difficulty and is addressing it through the amendments that we have before us. It is totally appropriate that the discretion in this matter remain with the minister. The minister is a very responsible person and is ultimately responsible for the enforcement of what will become the amended act. I know that communities totally support what is occurring this evening.

Mr Speaker, my only further comment with regard to this provision, given that we have dry areas and that vehicles are being seized from time to time when alcohol is taken there, is that I would like to see this particular provision extended to cover the transportation of kava into Aboriginal communities because that is creating considerable problems in those areas. Perhaps we could consider that at some time in the future. I support the amendments and I am quite sure that this House will support the bill.

Mr LANHUPUY (Arnhem): Mr Speaker, like the member for MacDonnell, I have difficulties with the amendments proposed by the minister responsible for the Racing, Gaming and Liquor Commission. As the member for Nhulunbuy said, at the time when the original legislation was passed, it was welcomed with open arms and the minister then responsible for police, the then Chief Minister, Paul Everingham, did actually consult with many of those communities. I was pleased at the time that at last the Territory government had taken some notice of the communities concerned and had passed appropriate legislation in this House. Certainly, I supported it there and then.

The act has been in operation for some time now and I am sure that most ministers will agree with me that legislation does need to be reviewed now and then to bring it into line with the thinking of the community at large. After some prompting by the opposition, it was pleasing when the minister appointed Dr Peter d'Abbs to review the legislation as it related to restricted areas in Aboriginal communities.

As the member for Nhulunbuy said, sometimes we have difficulty in understanding why a person unknowingly loses a vehicle when he may not have been within the area. For example, if someone took the vehicle of the minister responsible for the Racing, Gaming and Liquor Commission and intentionally took grog into a restricted area, under the provisions of the act, his vehicle would be seized and auctioned by the commission. There is no provision under the act, as it stands now, that would allow him to fight for the right to his vehicle.

I know of a person at Maningrida to whom that happened. An elderly couple had saved their unemployment money for some time, together with some money gained through the sale of arts and crafts goods to the community at Maningrida. Finally, they saved up enough money for a car so that they would be able to travel between the Maningrida community and their outstation. A younger bloke who, in some way, was related to that elderly couple took their vehicle to Jabiru to get some grog. On the way back, the vehicle was carrying some liquor and the police seized the vehicle and impounded it in the police yards at Maningrida. It was heartbreaking for that couple, who were very elderly, to lose the car for which they had worked and saved for so long. They lost an asset worth well in excess of \$10 000, which is a great deal of money in their terms. We tried to explain the legislation to them; that there was grog in the car and it was in a restricted area. They could not understand the reason why they were being penalised for an action that someone else committed.

That is our argument. Although we are not pleased with the proposed amendments that the minister has circulated, at least this is a move towards what we have been asking for in that it recognises the right of owners of such vehicles to be given the right of appeal to the minister. It is the belief of members of the opposition that that is why we have a court system through which people can be penalised and fines imposed on them. The courts can decide whether that vehicle may be given back to the rightful owners or not. I believe that that discretionary power that the minister will have through this proposed amendment is too great. It certainly does not satisfy our arguments. Mr Speaker, I can assure you that the members of the opposition will pursue this matter until such time as the rights of people, especially those in remote communities, are recognised and their assets are returned to them, especially to those who have not been prosecuted by the courts. I refer to those people who have not been judged, who have committed no offence but who, though innocent, have lost their assets.

Mr POOLE (Tourism): Mr Speaker, I guess I should start by clearing up the matter raised by the member for Nhulunbuy relating to what happens before or after trial. He was under the misapprehension that these amendments did not clarify that situation. Let me make it quite clear that, under clause 5, section 101 will be amended to provide the minister with the option of returning a vehicle, vessel or aircraft after conviction. The same criteria apply as before the trial. The applicant must satisfy the minister that he had a legal or equitable interest in the vehicle, vessel or aircraft and that he was neither involved in nor had any knowledge of the offence since proven. Without this amendment, an innocent party who may not have had the opportunity to seek the return of a vehicle, vessel or aircraft prior to the trial would be disadvantaged and the government would appear to have addressed only half the issue. It is interesting to note that, even today, there was a report relating to this matter. A senior sergeant was giving evidence in a liquor hearing and, without going into any detail about that, he said: 'Communities want harsher penalties for those who bring grog in and had threatened to burn cars used for grog-running if the police would not confiscate them'.

I think all members on the government side are well aware of the concerns by Dr Peter d'Abbs in his report. In that report, he echoes this government's concern for the erosive effects of alcohol on Aboriginal communities and the need to take firm action. I have undertaken a round of talks with Aboriginals in various communities throughout the Territory. In addition, the liquor commission has received dozens of representations from community leaders, Aboriginal women's groups, church groups and concerned citizens. The Aboriginal communities reject any watering down of the vehicle confiscation threat. I use the word 'threat' because it is a no-holds-barred threat. If anybody uses his vehicle or permits his vehicle to be used for grog running, he will lose it; it will be confiscated. The vehicle could be worth \$100 or \$50 000, it would make no difference. I think the member for MacDonnell said before that this provision has had more effect on potential grog runners than any threats of fines or imprisonment.

To members of the judiciary versed in British law, the rights of individuals and Australian fair-go principles, this might seem unjust and even draconian. To the Aboriginal communities, the battle against alcohol abuse and all that goes with it - fighting, wife beating, child neglect and social disruption - that is beyond their understanding. In many instances, they would like to impose the penalties of traditional law on wrongdoers, penalties which would be far more draconian than western lawyers could ever understand. However, the communities are part of the Northern Territory and they want to live under our legal system as far as possible. They have asked for help. The help they wanted might seem to us to infringe basic human rights but, in view of the fact that alcohol has the capacity to wipe out their people, this government was prepared to legislate to help them. We enacted the confiscation laws and were praised by Aboriginal communities throughout the Territory for doing so.

Certain people, including a substantial group of people well-versed in western law, now want us to change those laws. They want magistrates to become involved and to throw the matter back into the courts. The Aboriginal elders have rejected this idea almost unanimously. It is obvious that inequities have occurred, but this not of concern to them. They want the law to stand. Use your car or let your car be used for carrying grog into dry communities and you will lose it: there are no degrees of blame and no escape clauses.

We did consider handing the confiscation issue back to the magistrates and we might do that yet if current amendments prove to be unworkable in time. Appeals to the courts could take months to resolve which could cause unnecessary hardship whereas, as minister, I believe I can make fairly swift judgments. In the meantime, we have an agreement with the Aboriginal communities that we will give the confiscation provisions time to work. If there is to be any relaxation of the stringent conditions of vehicle seizure, we and we alone will be held responsible for what happens. I believe that the minister who has this responsibility can be consistent in his opinions and that Aboriginals will feel comfortable dealing with one individual rather than with various courts or magistrates. That is why, for the time being at least, we will have to be responsible for determining when injustice is being done and when vehicles should be released. As far as the vast majority of sober, community-minded Aboriginals are concerned - and I assure you, Mr Speaker, that they are concerned - this government, and this government alone - not the judicial system or the Racing, Gaming and Liquor Commission - will be held responsible if we cannot control this iniquitous trade in alcohol. That is why, as the responsible minister, I will have to arbitrate in cases where someone has suffered injustice under the confiscation laws. The burden is one that, personally, I would rather hand to the courts but, at this time, to do so would undermine the commitment this government has made to the Aboriginal people. It might not seem right in the eyes of western law, in the eyes of Dr d'Abbs but I am afraid that this is what the people most affected, the Aboriginal people, want.

We will not be supporting the amendment proposed by the opposition, but I thank the members opposite and I am well aware of the sincerity of their contribution to this debate.

Motion agreed to; bill read a second time.

In committee:

Bill taken as a whole.

New clause 6:

Mr BELL: Mr Chairman, I move the amendment standing against 54.1.

In some ways, it is otiose that I should make any comment about this amendment.

Mr Poole: What is otiose?

Mr BELL: It is perhaps unimportant, irrelevant, that I should make any comment about this amendment which reflects the views that I explained in my second-reading speech saying that there should be a provision for appeal to the courts. I would not have dwelt on the matter if the honourable minister had not said that, personally, he would rather hand on to the courts the power to make decisions in this regard. He qualified that by saying that he had received such earnest representations from almost the entire Aboriginal community of the Northern Territory ...

Mr Poole: Every community that we spoke to.

Mr BELL: Personally, I do not believe that. In fact, I challenge the honourable minister to give chapter and verse of how he received those representations, where and what the substance of them was. Frankly ...

Mr Poole: I told him.

Mr BELL: ... I do not believe him. Let me rephrase that, Mr Chairman, because it may be imputing improper motives to the honourable minister. I would take some convincing that that is the case. My experience of the communities in my electorate would suggest that that is patently untrue.

Mr Poole: It is not.

Mr BELL: The expressed opinion, as the d'Abbs Report found, is that people want a strong law and they want to retain the forfeiture provisions. However, I have received no representation whatsoever in respect of whether the minister or the chairman of the commission or the courts should make the decision to restore or not to restore.

Mr Collins: You don't listen to them.

Mr BELL: I will pick up the interjection from the member for Sadadeen who has not bothered to contribute to this debate at any time. The fact is that I do listen to what my constituents have to say and I think I have reflected their views pretty accurately. It would take a great deal to convince me that people would say that they want the minister or the chairman of the commission to take the decision rather than the courts. To a large extent, with those sorts of issues, it depends on what questions are asked. Quite frankly, judging from the comments I receive about Aboriginal affairs generally and the way Aboriginal communities work, I do not believe any government member would know which questions to ask. They are obsessed by the idea that the magistracy is too soft and I believe they have passed that obsession on to their interlocutors. That happens frequently with all sorts of investigations of opinion in Aboriginal communities. However, I will leave it at that.

I believe that this amendment is appropriate in terms of the canons of public administration that should apply in cases such as this. I believe there should be an appeal to an open court from a decision of a minister and I believe that this Assembly should be supporting the amendment. It is a matter of great concern to me that members opposite will not do so.

Mr Coulter: How do you know that?

Mr BELL: Have you been asleep, Barry?

Mr Speaker, if ever I heard a justification for this Assembly to adjourn at 6 pm or 7 pm, that statement provides it. The Leader of Government Business has interjected in a manner which shows that he must have been sitting there comatose, somnolent or out of it in some way. I can excuse him for not listening to the ramblings of the member for Jingili, who said that the government would not support the amendment, but I find it difficult to accept that the scintillating prose of the minister responsible for the Racing, Gaming and Liquor Commission escaped him. The minister stated clearly that he would not support the amendment. The Leader of Government Business ought to have a word with his mate behind him, who is about to remind him of exactly what the minister said. If the minister stopped reading his speeches, the Leader of Government Business might listen to them but, then again, perhaps they should both get their act together and support this amendment.

Mr LEO: Mr Chairman, I will make my comments now to save the minister responding to us separately. I am deeply disappointed that this amendment will not go through. The magistracy ...

Mr Coulter: There you go, the ...

Mr LEO: Mr Chairman, can you control that mumbling buffoon?

Mr CHAIRMAN: Order! The honourable member will address his remarks pertaining to the amendment through the Chair.

Mr LEO: Will you ask that mumbling buffoon to direct his remarks through the Chair too?

Mr CHAIRMAN: Time is getting on. It is 9.50 pm.

Mr LEO: Mr Chairman, I have a simple reason for continuing to insist that the power over the forfeiture of motor vehicles should be invested in the magistracy. The fate of the person who takes grog into a community, the perpetrator of the offence, is decided by the court. The fate of the owner of the vehicle, however, is decided by the minister. Blind Freddy could see that that is illogical and legislatively insane! The problem is that different rules apply.

Mr Coulter: What did the car do wrong?

Mr LEO: Mr Chairman, would you please exercise at least some degree of control over the Leader of Government Business? You have that power.

Mr CHAIRMAN: I have been very patient with the member for Nhulunbuy.

Mr LEO: Mr Chairman, I do not believe that I have offended the dignity of your Chair at all.

Mr CHAIRMAN: I have still been very patient. You are asking the Chair for protection. I do not believe that protection is warranted at this stage.

Mr LEO: Mr Chairman, I will feel free to interject at a later stage. I do not mind an even-handed approach in these sorts of matters.

The reason for our amendment has been sustained by debate in this House, by reports of incidents by individuals in the community, by the legal fraternity and, despite the minister's words, by Aboriginal people within my community. Very senior people at Yirrkala insist that the power should rest with the magistracy, not the minister or the liquor commission. None of those people insists that the power should reside with the minister, despite the minister's argument that an overwhelming number of Aboriginal people support that approach. In my experience, his comments in that regard were patently incorrect. Indeed, not all Aboriginal people even take up the option of declaring their communities dry. That is an action taken by some Aboriginal people and some Aboriginal communities. If the minister believes that he has assessed correctly the views of the vast majority of Aboriginal people, he is deluding himself. That is the shame of it.

Mr Chairman, this amendment must pass. If it does not, we will continue to perpetrate injustice. That will be a crime in itself. The other result will be that a thousand lawyers will be richer and fatter as they pressure the minister on behalf of clients who are not satisfied with his determinations. It will be an enormous legal roundabout.

A member interjecting.

Mr LEO: If you want to jump in, Bozo, go for it!

Mr Chairman, we will see another enormous round of court cases - as we have under the provisions of the present act. It is lunacy. In 6 months time, we will be precisely where we are now. People will still be screaming 'Injustice!' People will still be insisting that they have been unfairly persecuted by an unjust law of the Northern Territory. That is a fact of life. If the minister and the bunch of cowboys opposite do not want to accept that ...

Mr CHAIRMAN: Order! I ask the honourable member to withdraw that remark.

Mr LEO: I withdraw.

Mr Chairman, members opposite may not want to accept that that will happen. It will happen, as sure as the sun will rise tomorrow. It might as well be inscribed in rock. What will happen then? The government will spend another 12 months deciding whether or not to commission another report. Then, when the report is finally completed, we will have to wait another 12 months while the government decides how many of the report's recommendations it wishes to implement.

As it stands, the bill will achieve absolutely nothing because this government will not direct the court. It has the power to set minimum fines for offenders. It can determine that the minimum fine for taking grog to a community is \$5000. It can ensure that the perpetrator of the crime is prosecuted. But, overall, the government prefers to take the soft option of commissioning more reports and crying when the judiciary does its job. For the sake of sanity, I hope that this parliament agrees to amendment proposed by the opposition.

Mr POOLE: Mr Chairman, I cannot let the remarks of the members for MacDonnell and Nhulunbuy go unchallenged. Whether they like it or not, every community which the commission consulted, and certainly those which I spoke to, 2 of which were those at Hermannsburg and Santa Teresa in the member for MacDonnell's own electorate, did not want the act to be amended in any way at all. When we discussed the matter of community vehicles that had been confiscated, the majority opinion in those communities was that the right thing had been done at the time. That is an indication of how seriously they regard the illegal practice of bringing grog into their communities. Whilst people in the community of Santa Teresa made further representations to the liquor commission in relation to the confiscation of community vehicles, at no time did they suggest that the act should be changed to take the decision away from the Chairman of the Racing, Gaming and Liquor Commission. The communities were quite unanimous in their support for that situation. I visited only a small number of communities ...

Mr Bell: I wish I had been a fly on the wall, Eric.

Mr POOLE: I can assure the member for MacDonnell that there was no leading of the communities. I sat and listened to what they wanted. They were asked about what they wanted to do. They certainly wanted no change to the act or to the responsibilities of the Chairman of the Racing, Gaming and Liquor Commission in deciding what happens to motor vehicles involved.

Mr EDE: Mr Chairman, I would suggest to this House that the honourable minister does not know how to consult. He does not have a clue about how to consult Aboriginal communities. The government hired Dr Peter d'Abbs, an

expert in such consultation, and he did a considerable amount of work. That was after we had proposed amendments to the act on 2 or 3 occasions. Dr d'Abbs is an acknowledged expert who has done some very good work for the Northern Territory government even to the extent that it has been accepted by the government in some cases. He made some proposals to solve the problems but the significant aspect of the bill is that it does not come to grips with them at all.

I will not speak for long. I say to the minister that, if he wants this power, let it be on his own head. In cases where people have been wrongfully treated in my view, I will be quite happy to send them along to the minister's house. I know where he lives. I will send them around to seek the minister's final view. I will advise them to take their swags and billies and to have a yarn with him because he has the final power to decide whether or not the confiscation of vehicles is just. I will do that when I think a vehicle has been confiscated unjustly.

Mr Poole: You would not know right from wrong anyway.

Mr EDE: I will say to them: 'The minister will make a decision one way or the other on your behalf. I suggest that you put your case forcefully, but fairly and persistently, to the minister. I am sure that, if you are forceful, fair and persistent enough, the minister will decide, at his home in Araluen, that you can have your car back'. I hope that the minister will carry out his function in such cases. I am sure that the member for MacDonnell will also be sending any similarly affected constituents to the minister's place. It is unfortunate that the minister decided not to accept our amendment which would have created, at the least, another step in the legal process. However, I am quite sure that the minister will earn every dollar of his salary from this day forward and that he will enjoy his portfolio immensely.

Amendment negatived.

Mr CHAIRMAN: The question is that the bill stand as printed.

The committee divided:

Ayes 5

Mr Bell
Mr Ede
Mr Lanhupuy
Mr Leo
Mr Tipiloura

Noes 18

Mr Collins
Mr Coulter
Mr Dale
Mr Dondas
Mr Finch
Mr Firmin
Mr Floreani
Mr Harris
Mr Hatton
Mr McCarthy
Mr Manzie
Mrs Padgham-Purich
Mr Palmer
Mr Perron
Mr Poole
Mr Reed
Mr Setter
Mr Tuxworth

Motion agreed to.

Bill passed remaining stages without debate.

ADJOURNMENT

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

Mr FINCH (Leanyer): Mr Speaker, I wish to speak on a matter I had intended to talk about during the last sittings. It was touched on in the House today and relates to senior citizens, the aged pensioners of the community. My comments pertain to the federal budget which had then just been handed down. In my view, history is more than likely to record that Treasurer Paul Keating's so-called 'bringing home the bacon' budget is the great Australian game of economic roulette. The August budget saw our Treasurer point a partly-loaded gun at the head of Australian taxpayers, spin the chamber and squeeze the trigger. The safety of Australian taxpayers is assured only as long as the gamble on high commodity prices, a low current accounts deficit and low inflation pays off and that, of course, is a great risk. As is the case with all games involving loaded weapons, if the game fails, there is one hell of a mess for somebody else to clean up afterwards. However, the presentation of the Keating budget spectacularly diverted attention from a number of sideshows to the main event. One such sideshow involved Australia's aged pensioners.

We all know that Mr Keating has a tendency to forget those matters that he considers unimportant, matters such as tax returns and passports, and therefore it was not surprising that he failed to mention in his budget speech that the government had decided to hit old age pensioners with an additional and retrospective income test on market-linked investments. But then, when you are in the spotlight, why let the troubles of tens of thousands of yesterday's workers spoil the evening? The information on the federal government's latest assault on old age pensioners was hidden away furtively in Minister for Social Security's budget information kit. The pensions of an estimated 50 000 people were affected by the decision. Thousands face the prospect of losing their pensions completely, along with their fringe benefits worth some \$20 to \$50 per week. For the sake of saving a lousy \$1.2m in this case, during this financial year, and approximately \$16m in 1989-90, the Treasurer has sold Australian pensioners down the river yet again. He has attacked aged pensioners continually since the federal Labor government came to power.

The returns from this latest exercise by the federal government were insignificant when compared with the \$7500m spent on old age pensions annually. People who had invested as little as \$15 000 were affected. To highlight what the scheme meant in real terms to old people affected, take the case of a married couple who have invested \$67 000 in one of the affected schemes. As a result of the announced changes, they stood to lose \$47 per week of their \$190 pension. Take the case of an 80-year-old war veteran who, with his wife, draws the princely sum of \$4000 a year from a government insurance office market-linked investment. Previously, only 15% of that amount was assessed for pension purposes but, under the new scheme, the couple's weekly income was to be cut to \$170 - that is, by \$80. That might not mean a great deal if they were on their last legs in a nursing home, but if they were endeavouring to continue a meaningful lifestyle independently, they would have suffered a virtually catastrophic loss. Then there was an example of a woman of 63 who had worked with a major company for some 16 years

and received a lump sum superannuation of \$20 240. This money was to be assessed at 15% growth which meant she faced the prospect of losing \$27 of her pension plus all fringe benefits, all for the sake of a \$34 per week return on her superannuation.

So much for the budget which was to keep faith with the battlers. So much for the Labor Party's much-vaunted concept of social justice. These people had purchased market-linked products in good faith, with assurances from the Hawke Keating government that such prudent investment would remain income test free. Mr Speaker, consider what was to happen. Although the new pension income test was to come into effect from 1 December, the government intended examining the performance of these investments over the previous 3 years and then calculating the rate of return for the purpose of assessing income after 1 December. It would be difficult to convince anyone that this is the stuff of which deep consideration for people is made. If the way in which the Treasurer tried originally to mask the fact that he was imposing a further tax on aged pensioners was not a sufficient indication of his contemptuous attitude towards pensioners, the 8 September re-think on the scheme would have convinced even the least cynical of observers that the Treasurer does not give a damn about Australia's aged people.

In the face of mounting pressure from the Victorian Labor Party which saw its electoral chances sinking in a grey sea, immediate changes were made to the market-linked investment rules. Social Security Minister Howe announced a backdown of a kind. Minister Howe had admitted his decision was motivated by concern about the future of the Cain government in Victoria rather than any compassion for the pensioners. But all that the Howe backdown achieved, apart from producing a flash of temporary sanity, was to ensure that those pensioners who already had market-linked investments would not be affected, but that those investments made after 8 September would be treated as income for the assessment of pensions. The decision typifies the political expediency which has highlighted the approach of the federal Labor government during its time in office.

Of course, the budget attack on pensioners should come as no surprise. The federal Labor government is responsible also for making decisions which saw both the means testing of pensions and increased taxation on lump sum superannuation payouts, all of which is more than slightly at odds with the Labor Party policy which states: 'Labor believes people past retirement age should have security of income and services which will allow them to enjoy their lives in leisure'. That comes from the Australian Labor Party platform resolution and rules 1982.

No one would argue against the government stopping any rorts in the system. That must be done, but what is wrong with people investing both to protect themselves against inflation and, at the same time, to preserve a certain amount of dignity by maintaining some economic independence of the system? Given the Labor Party's professed belief that senior citizens should have security of income and services, there should be no argument about people earning a little money on the side after a lifetime of hard work and paying taxes into the system. Without such an assurance, what is the point of people working at all? People must be offered the possibility of some comfort in retirement, not simply a life that is dictated by the size of one's source of income: a pension cheque.

Everyone, not only those in high-income brackets, should be encouraged to put money aside for retirement. As it now stands, only the really well off will find it worth while preparing for retirement. Under the existing rules,

those able to invest up to \$82 000 in property or stocks and shares will have their capital gain assessed on an annual basis, but only after the time of sale. Australia's highest taxing government is not satisfied with squeezing every last drop out of the workers of Australia, it also goes after people who are no longer earning money but who have paid into the system all their lives.

Of course, there has to be a political downside to all of this. After all, there are about 2 million old age pensioners in Australia. A government cannot expect to anger such a large number of people and not pay a penalty. A graphic example of the growing anger amongst Australian pensioners came on 19 September at a meeting at Sydney Town Hall. Some 3000 aged pensioners jeered Leo McLeay, who had the unenviable job of representing the government that day during a question-and-answer session on changes to the alterations to the pension test. The federal government clearly appreciates the dangers of the Pandora's box that it has opened. Already, it is making preparations for the next federal election, and 2 options are under consideration in a bid to stem falling living standards among Australian pensioners. These options include a higher tax threshold for pensioners or a possible increase in pensioner tax rebates, but this really should not be necessary. The fact that the government is forced to consider these options is an admission that it has been responsible for a reduction in the living standards of Australia's aged. Yet, the Prime Minister is still running around the countryside claiming his government has been responsible for improved living standards among Australia's senior citizens.

In fact, a comment made by Mr Hawke on 5 October about pensioners is worth noting. Certainly it would have created an interesting reaction if it had been made at the Sydney Town Hall meeting last September. Mr Hawke said: 'Under the Liberal government, they thought it was a fair thing to give pensions to millionaires. I put an end to that because we have got to save as much money as we can from those who do not need it so we have got enough for those who really need it'. No one could oppose not giving pensions to millionaires but it is not millionaires who are being affected in most cases. Ask the people who can no longer invest \$15 000 because it would set them back so far it would not be worth it. Let us not forget this bit of Hawkespeak was produced in the lead-up to a by-election. As pensioners realise, it is at times like this that members of the Hawke government tend to sound most reasonable on the question of benefits for the aged.

What is the Territory government doing for pensioners? The Territory government provides a concession scheme for senior citizens and pensioners which is open to permanent residents - women over 60 and men over 65. Other permanent residents who are eligible for concessions include TPI ex-service personnel. It is interesting to note that a branch of the TPI has now been formed in the Territory and its role is to look after those aged war service veterans who received injuries or illnesses through their service to the country. Among other things, pensioner concession card holders are entitled to assistance with electricity charges, council land rates, water rates, sewerage rates, motor vehicle registration, driver's licence rebates, interstate travel concessions of 50% every 2 years, spectacle concessions etc. That is the extent to which this government supports senior citizens in the Northern Territory.

What is more important than the rules and regulations pertaining to superannuation and retirement benefits is the ability of aged people to be able to adjust their program of providing for their retirement years. Whether we are talking about 6 months, 1 year or 5 years, that is too short a period for people to make drastic adjustments to their program of making prudent

provision for their future. Not only is this socialist federal government encouraging the young people of this nation to sit on their backsides and do nothing, also it is discouraging people in the work force from providing for themselves throughout their working career appropriate financial arrangements for their retirement years. I am confident that, the next time that the federal government is game to go to the polls, the grey power will see it done.

Mr EDE (Stuart): Mr Speaker, on 4 October, a fire destroyed the Alice Springs abattoirs. It made front page news in the Centralian Advocate for Wednesday 5 October: 'Fire Destroys the Alice Springs Abattoir'. On 5 October, in this Legislative Assembly, I called on the Northern Territory government not to delay in talking to the proprietors about the possibility of rebuilding and how the government could cooperate in ensuring that the abattoir got back on the road again. I was not alone in making that call. I recall that Mr Trevor Surplice of the AMIEU, the member for Braitling and the Flynn Branch of the Australian Labor Party made public statements calling on the government to provide some assistance to ensure that the abattoir was back in operation as soon as possible. On Friday 7 October, the headline of the Centralian Advocate was: 'Government Urged: Help Abattoir. Operators Refuse to Throw in the Towel'. The article read: 'The Territory government has been urged to assist the Alice Springs meatworks after the majority of the abattoir was destroyed by fire on Tuesday morning. Unionists and politicians on both sides of the political fence have approached the government on providing assistance to the beleaguered meatworks'.

By 18 October, the day on which the Flynn Branch of the Australian Labor Party actually called for government activity, the Minister for Primary Industry and Fisheries issued a statement saying that meetings would be held between the abattoir and the government. I recall that, after I made that statement here on 5 October, the Chief Minister said that he would send people down and that he really believed that we had to get the meatworks back in operation. After that statement on 18 October, the Minister for Primary Industry and Fisheries repeated that the government would assist and would talk to the operators.

The fact is that the only visit organised by the government was to send Mr Paul Scott, the Chief Minister's representative, to the abattoir about a week after the fire. Since that time - about a week after the fire - the meatworks has heard absolutely nothing - the big zero. It attempted to contact the member for Braitling, but without success. On 18 November, the meatworks operators wrote a letter to Hon Daryl Manzie, Minister for Lands and Housing:

Dear Mr Manzie,

You will recall my brother, Elton, and I visited with you and Trevor Gargan in March this year when we were endeavouring to purchase the Alice Springs abattoir.

These people are serious about getting a long-term commitment in Alice Springs. The letter goes on:

We have not been successful in our attempt to purchase the facility but leased it and commenced operation on 16 July 1988 on the assumption that eventually we would be able to effect a purchase. Unfortunately, on 4 October 1988, we suffered a devastating fire which totally destroyed the blast freezing, cold storage and processing areas.

Because of the commitments we have already made, we would like to continue with our plan to operate a beef processing facility in the Alice Springs district and would be grateful if you could assist us on the Northern Territory's government's current position on the existing Smith Street property and the relocation question. We have a keen interest in continuing to build on associations we have developed with pastoralists, agencies, the community and our work force and would like to pursue this without delay.

Mr Speaker, you know the long history of problems with the Alice Springs meatworks, you know of the times it has been to court, the problems with electricity bills, the disillusionment of cattlemen and you know of the industrial disputes. However, after a long delay, the current operators have been doing an excellent job in trying to ensure that they built up a relationship with the workers and with the cattlemen around the Centre to try to bring that abattoir into operation again. That is not something that a new operator could just walk in and do. It is a matter of trust and of building up relationships with pastoralists so that people know that the business will be around for a long time, that it will give them a good price and that it will be there when they go along to collect their money.

At the time of closing down as a result of the fire, that meatworks employed 138 people from Alice Springs. In Darwin, with its big city attitudes, some honourable members may not regard 138 people as representing very many jobs, but I would remind honourable members that, on a proportionate population scale between Alice Springs and Darwin, that number of jobs is about the same as the maximum that has been touted for the State Square proposal. These people were not employed during a peak of a construction phase only. They held jobs that were available during the season every year. The wages bill was in the vicinity of \$50 000 to \$60 000 every week. The turnover of the works was in the vicinity of \$1.5m per month. \$1.5m per month was going into the local Centralian economy, but that has been lost now. That is gone, and we cannot afford to lose it in Alice Springs. We know that the current abattoir is not well located. I believe that it should be located closer to the Brewer Estate or somewhere down that way, and I believe that, given the unfortunate fire that has occurred, it would be better not to rebuild it at its current location but to move it down to the Brewer Estate now. Some organisation will be necessary to overcome difficulties about the BTEC line, but we must ensure that we can get this operation back on the road again.

I have spoken in this House time and time again about the fact that we score only 20% of the numbers of beasts that we used to slaughter and that numbers are down. I have spoken about it so often that I have reached the point where I feel like a doom-and-gloom merchant as far as the cattle industry is concerned. But I am not, Mr Speaker. I am extremely positive about the pastoral industry and I do believe that we can get the industry back on its feet. However, to do that, we require processing facilities in the Northern Territory. It is for that reason that I am asking the government not only to issue a press release saying that people will be sent round and then do nothing about it. That is not the way to go. Those people are waiting for somebody to speak with them so that they can ask whether they will receive support. They want to know the situation regarding land, whether there is a way to fast track applications for land in that area and whether there is a means to negotiate with the government themselves to see if they can relocate in that area. They want to know what problems will be involved with BTEC when it comes to moving cattle from suspect properties north of the line, past the Rowe Creek yards down to Brewer Plains. Will that create problems or is there

some way round the difficulties that can be organised? If there is not, then people need to know that.

People need the answers on the land. People need to know whether they can commit the money and get going again. They want to build up an industry. We need the industry in central Australia and I would ask the honourable minister please to stop issuing press statements that say that people will be around there to help when the government is not sending anybody around. I appeal to him to mobilise his troops and get those people out among the pastoralists. Whether that is done by the Minister for Primary Industry and Fisheries or whether he says it is the responsibility of the Minister for Industries and Development, I still ask him to act. If it requires action by the Minister for Industries and Development, then let the Minister for Primary Industry and Fisheries give him a kick in the tail because his portfolio is the beneficiary of the abattoirs. Give him a kick in the tail and send some people around so that they can give the advice that people need in order to get the industry going.

If it is a matter of land, the Minister for Lands and Housing should get moving. If my assistance is needed, if there is something I can do in terms of talking with different groups to find out what the situation is, let me know. I think we should all be working on this to ensure that we get the processing industry back in the Northern Territory. Then we can get employment going again and bring what used to be the great industry of the Northern Territory back to its rightful status.

Mr REED (Primary Industry and Fisheries): Mr Speaker, after that performance, I think there is little that we would seek in the way of assistance from the honourable member. On 6 October, the day after the Chief Minister announced in the Assembly during the last sittings that arrangements had been put in place for officers of the Department of Industries and Development, Primary Industry and Fisheries and Lands and Housing to meet with the operators of the Alice Springs abattoir, those officers did hold that meeting. That was in the week in which the fire occurred. The fire occurred on the Monday and 6 October was the following Thursday.

A meeting was held between the operators and officers from those departments and, as a result of that meeting and with the agreement of the operators, it was decided that there was nothing that could be done until the insurance assessment was completed, and the insurance company had provided advice in relation to its assessment. That was the outcome of that meeting and we have been awaiting an approach from the company in relation to the insurance assessment.

I am aware of the fact that a large number of employees are involved. The honourable member referred to 138 as the number of employees, and I do not doubt for a moment that that represents a good number of jobs, and not only in Alice Springs. That would be a large number of employees in any single operation in Darwin. This government does not relish the thought of that number of people being thrown on the streets but the circumstances were beyond the government's control. Even if there had been an immediate injection of funds, it would not have been possible to reinstate the meatworks to provide ongoing employment for those people. The simple facts of life are clear.

The honourable member touched on some other issues that he raises frequently in this House: the slaughter of animals in the Northern Territory and the number of animals that are taken out of the Territory as opposed to those processed here. We are aware of those problems and are endeavouring to

do something to increase the number of animals slaughtered here and to establish down-the-line processing. No doubt, the honourable member will be pleased to hear that the Katherine meatworks had a record year and, last week, leading up to the closure it looked as if it would kill something in the order of 60 000 cattle, and that is no mean feat. It is an all-time record for that meatworks.

Mr Ede: And a record low number of employees.

Mr REED: Yes, that is right. To pick up that interjection from the honourable member, there was a record low number of employees and that clearly illustrates the ability of meatworks operations to be effective in the Territory, to be efficient, to provide employment and to ensure ...

Mr Ede: To provide less employment and less money flowing into the local economy.

Mr REED: ... that there are meatworks operations to provide services to producers in the Northern Territory. It is all very well for the honourable member to say that they engage fewer employees but we can be sure that, under the circumstances, the employees who are working at the Katherine meatworks will continue to work there and, over the next few years, we can continue to look to a productive operation.

There is no need, as the honourable member suggested, to give the Minister for Industries and Development a kick in the tail in relation to this matter. As I have done since the fire, I will check the situation out again tomorrow. On the last occasion that I did so, which was late last week, there was still nothing we could do. We were waiting on further advice in relation to the insurance assessment and, until such time as we receive another approach from the operators, there is little we can do. With those comments, I will leave the matter with the honourable member and I will get back to him if there is anything further to add.

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH (Koolpinyah): Mr Speaker, I am only sorry the Minister for Primary Industry and Fisheries did not wait until he heard what I have to say because I would like to hear his comments. This morning, I asked the honourable minister a question regarding the possibility of preventing cattle from infected properties being at the showground prior to the slaughtering for the carcass competition. We all know that the showground is a declared clean area and all cattle have to be clean to go there. It is one of the few occasions when I did not know the answer to the question I was asking. Usually, when I ask a question, I know the answer so that, if I do not receive the correct answer, I can tell the minister the correct answer. In this case, I would like the honourable minister to give me the information.

Turning to the importance of the buffalo and cattle industry to the Territory and the vexed question of BTEC with its recent adverse publicity, I would like to say that I attended, if only for a short time, a meeting of extremely disgruntled pastoralists and others associated with the industry at the Travelodge last Friday afternoon. Unfortunately, I was not able to be there for very long but I was there for part of the time that the minister was there. Unfortunately, the minister was unable to hear what the people had to say after he left. It was very interesting to hear what people had to say, both when the minister was there and after he had gone. I have contacted a couple of people who were at that meeting and I have their permission to use their names. I do not usually use people's names and information about them unless I have their permission.

The owners of Woolner Station were at that meeting and their presence was known by officers of the Department of Primary Industry and Fisheries. What happened? Buffalo were shot on Woolner Station while the Groves were at the meeting. There were 8 buffalo shot - 5 were dead on the boundary and 3 were just inside the boundary. Because of a technicality, the Groves were unable to take out an injunction against the government for this action but I understand a writ for damages will be issued. Since government officers knew that the people were away from home and knew that they could not be approached in relation to the shooting of the buffalo, I think that those actions were completely reprehensible. It was really sneaky and utterly low. I would like the minister to indicate whether it was completely legal.

It was said at the meeting - I do not think it was said when the minister was there, but I have been given the same message by telephone - that Department of Primary Industry and Fisheries officers have said: 'We will shoot your stock first and argue the toss afterwards about damages'. I condemn absolutely these Rambo-like actions of the Department of Primary Industry and Fisheries officers. I think the officers of the Department of Primary Industry and Fisheries, and the government - mainly the government - stand accused of killing an industry that they are paid to support professionally. It is rather like doctors killing a patient and then saying to the relatives: 'Sorry, but never mind, we will pay you compensation for the child we killed'. I am not comparing buffalo to children but, if somebody did that to stock that I had cared for and reared and they were mostly clean with about only 1% incidence of tuberculosis ...

Mr Reed: If they had 1% incidence, they would not have been shot.

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH: ... I would be very concerned.

For the honourable minister's information there was a gentleman at that meeting called Mr Charlie On. I heard him say afterwards that he had sold something like 1500 head of clean cattle off his property in the last 2 years. While he was at that meeting on that Friday or the beginning of this week - and I have to be polite here - he was extremely worried that his property would be shot out by the government. The reason why he thought his property would be shot out was because he did not have all the feral buffalo on his property behind subdivisional fencing. He felt that concern despite the fact that the pastoralists here are supposed to have until 1992 to eradicate TB and despite the fact that they have been given to 31 December to clear their properties.

Mr Reed: They have done absolutely nothing.

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH: Mr On has turned off 1500 head of clean cattle in the last 2 years. You would not know what work on a cattle property involves.

Mr Reed: It was 900. I checked today as a matter of fact.

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH: Mr Speaker, these people are living in fear and trembling that their properties will be shot out, that the industry will be shot out and that they will have no income.

I believe the government is literally jumping the gun by directing that these shoot-outs occur before 31 December. It has said that all feral buffalo on extensive properties have to be behind subdivisional fencing before 31 December or they will be shot out. Nevertheless, it is shooting them already. This does not apply to all pastoralists because some have been able

to obtain a deferral. I am not saying they know somebody who knows somebody, but I would like to know why some pastoralists can obtain deferrals to clean up their properties and some cannot. It is like some ghastly lottery.

I know that, by speaking out against the decision taken by some senior officers in the Department of Primary Industries and Fisheries, I may have closed those of my personal avenues of information that they control. However, I will not worry about that.

Mr Tuxworth: You will find others.

Mr Reed: I hope you find more accurate ones than you have had.

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH: For the information of the honourable minister, for the first time in 29 years in the Northern Territory, I was refused information by a public servant, and he happened to be a senior public servant in the Department of Primary Industry and Fisheries. I rang up and asked him for an innocuous piece of information that I had been asked to find out for a constituent. It was not very confidential information and I did not intend to use it in any illegal way. I intended to relay the information to the inquirer. This public servant felt that he could not give me that information and that I should obtain permission from the minister. I believe that he was standing on what little dignity he had. Of course, I thanked him kindly but, mentally, I told him to take a running jump, rang up somebody else the next day and obtained all the information that I needed.

I believe that the honourable minister and his senior officers need to take a strong look at themselves and their actions because their actions show that they have little regard for the farmers and pastoralists who are trying to make a living out of the buffalo industry. It appears to me that they are making arbitrary office decisions which pay no regard to the reality on the ground: the pastoralists' income, the future of our buffalo industry and the sadness and grief of caring farmers and pastoralists who have to stand by and see their stock shot out for no reason.

I do not like speaking out so firmly against public servants in the Department of Primary Industry and Fisheries with whom I have had a close liaison over all the years that I have been in the Territory. However, if certain of their decisions are seriously disadvantaging primary producers, then their actions and decisions have to be aired. I am not having a go at the men and women from the Department of Industry and Fisheries who are on the ground. They have to obey orders or lose their jobs. I would like to ask the honourable minister to think how many good vets and stockies have left the Northern Territory. The only good thing to come out of this is that 1 good senior veterinarian, who has now left the Northern Territory but who was at the top of the BTEC program here, is now one of the senior vets in charge of the national BTEC program.

Mr Reed: And still very supportive of our program.

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH: He is one of the bright stars on the horizon. He is known to be very sympathetic to the plight of the buffalo producer and even suggested the formation of a buffalo protection group some years ago.

This buffalo eradication by our Minister for Primary Industry and Fisheries is a good war with plenty of shooting: the excitement of chopper warfare and, what is best, the enemy cannot shoot back. I will bring in the Minister for Conservation. I believe he should have more regard for practical

conservation. The shooting of buffalo has been happening for the last 8 years and it is only now that the conservationists and the ANPWS are on record as saying that the feral pig population has increased in numbers and therefore it will be necessary to shoot out the pigs. What will happen now? They will shoot out the feral pigs and the dingo population will increase. When the pigs have been shot out, the dingo population will still be increasing. They will start to eat the native wildlife, mainly the wallabies, kangaroos and other marsupials, and a complete imbalance will develop among our wildlife.

Mr Speaker, I have been told that a herd that has a TB incidence of about 1% has been shot out. Grave dissatisfaction was expressed at the meeting of some 60 people that I attended.

Mr Reed: How many were producers?

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH: I did not say they were all producers. I am not a producer, but I was there.

It was said by all the people at the meeting that the Buffalo Industry Council was ineffective at representing their views. In support of the views put forward by these people, a very prominent veterinarian in Darwin, in fact one of our premier vets not only in small animal practice but also in the Turf Club scene, Dr Mornane, is gravely concerned at the progress of the government's eradication of the buffalo industry and this view is shared by other private vets, Department of Primary Industry and Fisheries vets and some stock inspectors to whom I have spoken. I believe that the minister needs to enlarge his circle of information on the matter.

I would like to convey to the honourable minister the views the people expressed at the meeting after the minister left. They all agreed he was a nice chap. He was friendly. He listened to them. He was intelligent and honourable. I know he is honourable. But I understand that the minister did not put forward any strong views. He came with no answers for these 64 people. The minister has to become more of a leader and he has to take the interests of these people to heart. Not only does he have to listen to his public servants, he has also to listen to the industry that they are supposed to be servicing.

In the short time that is left to me, I would like to comment on the fact that there is TB in the United States. We will never eradicate TB in Australia and any prominent vet will tell you that. It has not been possible to eradicate it in the United States and therefore, if TB is prevalent there, why are conditions imposed on the importation of our meat? When we have made the effort to clear our herds of TB and tell the United States that we are practically free from it, it will immediately put other conditions on the import of our meat into the United States.

I come now to the government's buffalo industry grants. The buffalo industry made great play of the fact that it was giving a \$10 000 loan to individuals which would become a grant after certain conditions were met in a number of years. I believe 45 applications have been received of which 7 have been successful, but only 1 has received a letter regarding the loan and I believe that was with regard to a renegotiation of terms. The renegotiation of terms is not nearly so generous as the original offer. I understand that no money has changed hands yet and I am asking, and the buffalo producers are asking, whether the government is having second thoughts about its original generous offer because, if the government does not hurry up and get in on the act and give some money to these buffalo producers, there will not be an industry to support.

Mr FIRMIN (Ludmilla): Mr Speaker, tonight I would like to touch on some matters that I have gleaned from the final report of the Constitutional Commission which came over my desk the other day, particularly with respect to aspects that concern us in the Northern Territory regarding the composition of the federal parliament and the Senate.

The Constitutional Commission has been sitting for some considerable time, as most members know. Several preliminary reports have been brought down on the Constitution and some of the additional items brought down in this final report tonight make for interesting reading in themselves. I will touch on those at another time, but you may remember, Mr Speaker, that we had a referendum that was lost several months ago. It is interesting to note that several of those referendum items that were lost are actually recommended by the Constitutional Commission in this report. It will be interesting to see how the federal government deals with those when it handles the final report by this commission.

Tonight, I want to touch particularly on the recommendations by the commission on the representation of the territories. The report touches on the historical relationship between the states and representation in the House of Representatives and the Senate and agrees that House of Representatives representation should continue in the same manner as it has in the past, having 1 representative for each 100 000 of the population in each state. The commission recommends that the number of Senators be retained at 12 for the original states.

It comes then to representation of the territories. It talks about population increases around Australia, the size of parliaments and so on. In relation to territories, it says:

The entitlement of territories to representation in the House of Representatives and the Senate should be prescribed in the Constitution. The number of members of the House of Representatives chosen in each territory which is entitled to be represented should be in proportion to the population of the territory, provided that at least 2 members of the House of Representatives should be chosen in the Australian Capital Territory and at least 1 member in the Northern Territory. A territory should be entitled to its own representative in the House of Representatives when its population is in excess of 50 000.

It goes on to talk about residents being qualified to enrol as voters and so on. Then it comes to the Senate. It says:

Each territory should be entitled to representation in the Senate on the basis that it returns 1 Senator for every 2 members it is entitled to return to the House of Representatives, subject to the following: the Australian Capital Territory and the Northern Territory should each be entitled to representation in the Senate by at least 2 Senators, and no territory shall be entitled to be represented in the Senate by more than 12.

This is the current situation with the Northern Territory. The report expands on the argument to some extent ...

Mr Hatton: You need 2.4 million people.

Mr FIRMIN: That is exactly right. The interjection by the member for Nightcliff has put it quite succinctly. We require a population of 2.4 million people in the Northern Territory before we achieve equality with the states. It is interesting to note that, from my brief knowledge of the population of the states at the moment, under those recommendations, Western Australia, South Australia and Tasmania would not be entitled to 12 Senate representatives even in the current situation.

The report goes further to say that the commission does not consider that to be unfair, and it talks about other territories that may emerge in the future. Representation of new states is discussed and recommendations are made on the entitlements of new states. Again, I believe that it is referring to the possibility of the Northern Territory emerging as a state. The report says that the situation for a new state should be as described for the territories, and each new state should be entitled to representation in the Senate on the basis that it returns 1 Senator for every 2 members it is entitled to return to the House of Representatives, subject to the following:

A new state should be entitled to representation in the Senate by at least 2 Senators and again no new state shall be entitled to representation in the Senate by more than 12.

In my view, the argument for that is quite unfair. The argument is that the commission sees no reason to provide that a new state should have an equivalent, guaranteed, minimum representation in the House of Representatives as the original states have, nor equal representation in the Senate. It says the only reason such provisions exist is that they provided an incentive for the original colonies to federate. The commission considers that none of these reasons applies in the case of new states and that is its rationale for recommending that we do not have equal representation if we take our rightful place as a new state in the Commonwealth.

There is only one bright aspect to the Constitutional Commission's recommendation in relation to our endeavours to become a state. That appears at page 30 where it recommends that the Constitution be altered to provide a more precise and simplified means for the creation of a new state. In particular, it recommends that section 121 be altered to make it clear that the federal parliament has the power to create or establish a constitution for a new state, established from a territory, formed by the separation of a territory from a state, by the union of 2 or more states or parts of states, or by the union of parts of a state and a territory, and to make the federal government's approval of the constitution of an independent body politic a condition of the admission of that body politic as a new state. It recommends that sections 121 and 124 be altered to clarify the situation in relation to the formation of new states.

The commission states also that the possible origins of potential new states should be made clear. The report says:

It should be put beyond all doubt that a territory surrendered by a state and accepted by the Commonwealth under section 111, as are both the Northern Territory and the Australian Capital Territory, may become, at an appropriate later date, a new state in the Australian federation'.

It further states that:

Entitlement of a new state to membership of the House of Representatives and the Senate respectively should be unequivocally established in the Constitution itself and not left, as it is now, to political negotiation.

Mr Speaker, I would have thought that the membership of the Constitutional Commission comprised some of the best judicial minds in Australia as well as a number of people whose approach was fair and democratic. Given that, it would have been reasonable to expect that the recommendations relating to the future of the Northern Territory would be framed in a very democratic manner. Unfortunately, that does not appear to be the case.

Mr TUXWORTH (Barkly): Mr Speaker, I rise tonight to talk on a matter which is probably of great importance to many rural Territorians. Certainly, it is of great importance to those in my electorate. It relates to the options available to particular remote communities when the government decides that it is no longer able to justify funding their schools. Every year, officers of the Department of Education visit the existing schools and carry out a head count. They say things like: 'It does not look good for next year. You have only 7 students and you will need 10 or 11. We may have to close the school'. The people immediately bring in a family with 3 or 4 children and the department then says: 'That is terrific. You can now keep your school'. Everybody nicks off during the Christmas holidays and, at the start of the following year, the school commences with 2 children. Alternatively, there is an indication that only 2 children will be at school in the next school year. The department says that it cannot provide a teacher or a school for 2 children but, on the first day of the school year, 15 children appear and there is no teacher, no books and no school program.

Mr Speaker, it is time for the government to develop a policy which gives parents in remote communities a clear indication of what will occur from one year to the next in relation to the education of their children. I appreciate the problems. It is quite understandable for the department to say: 'You will not have enough children to justify our providing a school'. That is quite understandable. However, it is not acceptable for the government to say: 'You do not have enough children to justify a school in your community. We will not provide a teacher in your community and we do not really know or care what happens to the education of your community's children because there are only 5 of you. We will give you a \$500 grant or pay for the odd air fare but, in reality, you are on your own'. That approach might be acceptable in the case of people on stations who have dual incomes or other resources and have relations in large centres where their children can attend school. However, when we start to serve that sort of tripe up to Aboriginal communities and Aboriginal families living on stations, it is beyond a joke. It is a nonsense which has to be attended to.

Mr Speaker, I would like to hear from the Minister for Education. I would like to hear him give an undertaking that he will develop a policy that gives people in remote areas some pretty clear guidelines about what they can expect in terms of education services. It does not matter if 1 or 2 children are involved or if it is 20 or 30: people in communities must know exactly what the situation is. In other words, they need to be told: 'If the numbers are in this bracket or that, this is what you will get'. They should not be told to whistle 'Dixie' through you-know-where, Mr Speaker, simply because the government finds it hard to handle small numbers.

I have already had a couple of run-ins with the minister in relation to the provision of facilities for children in the Nicholson River area. I

regret to say that there are now 67 children in that area, between the ages of 5 and 14, some of whom have never been inside a schoolroom and have never seen a school teacher at work. That is a pretty lamentable state of affairs in 1988, but that is the way it is. It concerns me that we are now saying to children in smaller communities: 'There are too few of you. It is too hard. We do not know what you can do but we wish you well'.

I have indicated that I think the minister could develop a policy which relates to specific numbers of children in communities but I would also like to address the issue of cost. I think that we need to get away from the system of providing a travel allowance, a living-away-from-home allowance, a book allowance and so forth. I believe that we should be fair dinkum with the people and say to them: 'It costs us \$3500 to educate a child in Darwin, Alice Springs or Tennant Creek. We will give you the \$3500 in the form of a voucher, or however you want to do it, and it will be your responsibility to make arrangements for your child'. Alternatively, the department could say to a station manager: 'It will cost \$X to run a school here for 5 children. We will give you the money and you can organise it because, with only 5 children, it is too hard for us to supervise'.

Many stations would prefer to organise their own schools and employ their own teachers because it gives them some control over what is occurring. I must confess that things have improved tremendously in the last 7 or 8 years but, for a long time, a number of stations did not want departmental teachers. At least one station in my electorate ran its own school in a galvanised iron shed and employed a teacher from Queensland at its own expense. It had an informal liaison with the Departmental of Education in Tennant Creek for the supply of books.

I am prepared to predict that there will be an increasing number of situations on remote cattle stations and small Aboriginal communities where the number of children does not justify a departmental school building or the presence of a departmental teacher. We need a formula which will allow the government to say to the station or the community: 'Here is an amount of money that we will pay you to take over the responsibility of educating these children. You can use the money to send them away, to buy the services of a teacher, to build a schoolroom or whatever you like'. Certainly, we cannot persist with this business of telling people that they will not receive an education because there are too few of them living in this spot or that spot.

I discussed this matter with the Minister for Education earlier this year and I have not raised it with him again because I thought he might be doing something about it. I was absolutely stunned to hear that this matter was raised again, formally, by the ICPA on the basis that the government should give remote area children an amount of money that is similar to the cost of educating a child in town. The ICPA was arguing that that money be given to the parents for the education of the children and the suggestion was wiped by the minister and the department at the ICPA conference as being unacceptable. The minister might think it is unacceptable today, but I would like to foreshadow to him that it will become a pretty willing issue in the next 18 months or so because some balance has to be brought back into this for people in remote areas. It is becoming impossible for people to recruit to remote areas anybody who has children under the age of 10 years because the financial disadvantage of educating their children is so great that people cannot afford to go there to work. That is how bad it is. If we are to have a cattle industry, a tourist industry and places that service the outback, and we are to have young families in them, we will have to arrive at a formula for educating small numbers of children in remote areas.

Mr Speaker, I have addressed the question of small numbers and how money might be paid on a per capita basis for the education of children in remote areas. Another issue that needs to be addressed is how allowances can be paid to enable children to obtain books, have reasonable accommodation and travel occasionally into the major centres for ...

Mrs Padgham-Purich: Social integration.

Mr TUXWORTH: Yes, social integration with their peers, and generally to benefit from the facilities available in the major communities. I have said on many occasions that I believe we should be working much more strenuously to use the satellite to provide radio transmission for School of the Air. Whilst I understand the technical problems and the cost involved, I am amazed that very little has been done.

Mr Firmin: We are about to start some trials.

Mr TUXWORTH: Mr Speaker, that is terrific. But, it is time that we moved on from the 'about to start' and got on with it because the honourable member knows that the concept was examined as far back as 1985-86. We are now in 1988, and we are 'about to start some trials'. We need a service.

I do not know whether the honourable member is aware but there are some areas in my electorate that cannot get School of the Air or RFDS from anywhere at all - Mt Isa, Alice Springs or Katherine - because of their isolation. I do not think it is acceptable that we say that that is too hard and ignore them. The time has come when, if we have identified places in the Territory that have that geographic problem, we must use the satellite despite the cost. I have no doubt that, in the course of time, most of our stations will move on to the School of the Air via the satellite and that will be a great thing.

Mr Speaker, the minister's proposal to remove interstate assistance for children who go away after 1990 will result in most of the kids going away next year. In order to benefit from the existing policy, people will send 6-year-olds, 7-year-olds and 8-year-olds interstate and they will be out of the Territory for the next 10 years. The reason why they will go at such an early age will simply be to take advantage of assistance for interstate travel. If they leave it later than 1990, they will not qualify. Parents know they will not be able to afford to stay in remote areas and educate their children at their own expense. They will move on too.

Anybody who attended the ICPA conference would have noted that these people are looking seriously at the options in respect of how they can stay in the bush because they cannot afford to educate their children from the remote areas on the levels of assistance that are being made available. I say again, for the benefit of the Minister for Education, that I would appreciate it if he would develop - and I would expect it to happen sooner rather than later - a policy that will enable all such people to know what options and possibilities are available for them to educate their children in remote areas, however large or small the school numbers are and however large or small the cost is likely to be.

Motion agreed to; the Assembly adjourned.

Mr Speaker Vale took the Chair at 10 am.

STATEMENT
Surveillance of Exotic Diseases
in the Northern Territory

Mr DALE (Health and Community Services): Mr Speaker, I rise in the House today to address the issue of surveillance for the prevention and control of exotic diseases in the Northern Territory. There are a number of serious human diseases which occur in other parts of the world which, if introduced into the Territory, may cause epidemics and be difficult to control. The Department of Health and Community Services, in conjunction with the Commonwealth, maintains a constant quarantine and surveillance program to prevent the entry of these diseases and, should they enter, to prevent their establishment.

With some diseases, such as malaria, the Territory has an extensive prevention program in place because the tropical environment is ideal for the mosquito which transmits the disease. Other diseases whose introduction would be grave concern are those which require human quarantine enforced by international law and the Australian Quarantine Act of 1908. These diseases include lassa fever, marburg virus disease, ebola, plague, rabies and yellow fever. Smallpox is no longer a concern because it has been eradicated worldwide. In order to maintain constant surveillance, quarantine officers liaise with the Commonwealth to maintain a strategy for human quarantine and to ensure that procedures are appropriate for the Northern Territory. Close liaison with other states is also necessary for the prevention and containment of communicable diseases.

Lassa, marburg, ebola and crimean congo virus infections have emerged from central and west Africa in the past 20 years as serious life-threatening diseases. These are the major quarantinable diseases in Australia. No immunisation is available against them and quarantine measures therefore require detention of persons who are ill on arrival, and subsequent isolation until the condition is diagnosed or cured. A highly sophisticated system of transit isolators can transfer patients, without risk to the community, to a specially built high security infectious disease ward at Fairfield Hospital in Melbourne. Two of these isolators are based at the Royal Darwin Hospital. Each isolator is essentially a stretcher mounted on a trolley and covered with a plastic tent. The detail is complex and provides an environment where the patient can receive medical attention without direct contact. A whole system, constantly on alert, is provided jointly by my department and the Commonwealth Department of Community Services and Health. A senior medical officer from my department is appointed by the Commonwealth department to take charge of such an emergency, should it arise.

Mr Speaker, diseases of concern which are transmitted by mosquitoes include malaria, dengue and yellow fever. Malaria may be transmitted to or within the Territory, via the anopheles mosquito, by travellers from malarious areas, migrants or illegal immigrants with malaria parasites in their blood or new anopheles vectors with parasites arriving at international airports. There continues to be a worldwide upwards trend in malaria and each year sees an increase in the number of cases imported to non-malarious countries. This is a result of the resurgence of malaria in many countries resulting from deterioration of malaria control programs, resistance of strains of malaria to the commonly used antimalarial drugs, insecticide resistance by certain anopheles mosquitoes and increased overseas travel.

There were 603 cases of imported malaria in Australia last year. In the Northern Territory, there was a 50% increase from 20 cases in 1986-87 to 30 cases in 1987-88. The threat of reintroduction of malaria is of real concern in the Northern Territory. The World Health Organisation certified the eradication of malaria from Australia in 1981 but northern Australia remains receptive to re-establishment of the disease. The receptive area covers regions where malaria vectors can breed. The Northern Territory is both receptive and vulnerable to malaria with: a history of indigenous malaria up until 1962, during which time many epidemics occurred with many lives lost; widespread breeding of all known major vectors of malaria in Australia, particularly the anopheles mosquito; the breeding of anopheles mosquitoes close to urban areas; and regular tourist traffic from malarious areas such as South-east Asia, Papua New Guinea and the islands of the Western Pacific.

In the Northern Territory, overseas travel is often cheaper than an interstate holiday and, as more holiday destinations and low-cost package deals become available to Territorians, the possibility of reintroduction of malaria increases. The re-establishment of malaria in the Northern Territory could result in extensive morbidity and mortality in a non-immune population. The maintenance of Australia's malaria-free status is a total health responsibility which involves medical practitioners, laboratory staff, entomology staff, community health staff, communicable diseases staff and the general public. Vaccination requirements for travel to many overseas countries have been removed and travellers frequently do not feel that it is necessary to visit general practitioners or vaccination centres before departure. There is, therefore, often no opportunity to provide people with advice enabling them to protect themselves from malaria in endemic areas. Early this year, a Territorian almost died from malaria following a short working trip to Timor. Care and proper precautions can save lives and needless misery.

Public awareness campaigns are of major importance. The Department of Health and Community Services works, in close liaison with Commonwealth departments, to provide up-to-date information on all aspects of malaria to the general public including advice on areas safe for overseas travel, prophylactic antimalarial drug regimes and self-protection measures to avoid mosquito bites. General information has been provided to overseas travel agents and the department has offered to provide further information on all aspects of safe travel including general discussions at the request of the agents. Advertisements promoting safe overseas travel have been placed in newspapers throughout the Territory at regular intervals. Pamphlets have been developed for travellers which provide suitable information prior to travel and on return to Australia. Information is also distributed to incoming passengers to inform them of the individual and public health risks posed by the re-establishment of malaria in Australia. Malaria information notices have also been updated and placed on billboards in prominent positions in the international hall at Darwin Airport.

Quarantine spraying of international aircraft is essential. The malaria surveillance program carried out by the Department of Health and Community Services also provides radical treatment for high risk groups from malarious areas, including migrants or refugees. Malaria surveillance operations, which include case notification and all activities required to prevent the transmission of malaria in the receptive areas of the Northern Territory, are very important.

It is compulsory for medical practitioners to notify all cases of malaria to the Communicable Diseases Centre. Pathology staff in the Royal Darwin Hospital provide a diagnostic species identification service for the public and private laboratories throughout the Northern Territory and report the results immediately to the Communicable Diseases Centre by telephone. Every malaria case is fully investigated soon after notification. The department has recommended that all malaria cases are admitted directly to hospital both as a public health measure and to ensure that adequate treatment is given. Continual liaison with the general practitioners is necessary to ensure that this requirement is acted upon. All contacts who travelled with the patient have malarial blood films taken and are followed up as necessary. There have been several occasions where contacts have had malaria parasites in their blood films and have required immediate admission to hospital.

Entomological investigations are carried out for each malaria case detected. This investigation involves examination of vector control maps or other mosquito distribution data, including the location of significant breeding and harbouring areas near the patient's residence. Investigations concerning a malaria case may include a visit to the person's residence or any areas the person has visited where transmission may occur, to set up carbon dioxide baited mosquito traps. An entomological assessment report is necessary. This covers such matters as the extent of probable patient vector contact, the risk of infected mosquitoes and the risk of subsequent transmission. Further action may be required - for example, fogging operations around the immediate residential area or the nearest mosquito-breeding or harbouring area, limited contact surveys around the area and the distribution of malaria-warning pamphlets to nearby residents, explaining the possible risk of malaria transmission.

The Medical Entomology Branch plays a vital role in the prevention of malaria transmission. In 1972, the Northern Territory Department of Health established a small entomology section to investigate and organise the control of insects of medical importance in the Northern Territory with emphasis on the mosquito vectors of malaria. The Northern Territory was one of the first states or territories to set up such a unit. Assistance was provided from the Commonwealth through the National Diseases Control Program and this funding, to my dismay, was discontinued in June 1988. The National Diseases Control Program played an integral role by providing moral support, coordination, training and funding. This program was an excellent example of cooperation between the 3 tiers of government and underscored the importance of an Australia-wide coordinated effort in attacking both endemic and exotic mosquito-borne disease. The destruction of the NDCP has dealt a body blow to mosquito monitoring and control programs in most states. There is now little coordination of activities in the states - the essential role of a federal government - and there is no national training facility for mosquito control workers. The federal government's shortsighted attitude could prove extremely costly if an outbreak of exotic disease occurs across northern Australia.

This government has realised the importance of maintaining such a vital program and has given a commitment to maintaining the Northern Territory's component of that program. The Northern Territory Disease Control Program is now funded totally by the Northern Territory government. An important component in the malaria control program is the reduction of the receptivity risk in the Darwin urban area. Darwin is home for nearly 50% of the Northern Territory's population and a reduction in receptivity through source reduction measures such as draining and filling mosquito breeding areas has a maximum cost benefit.

There has been an increased incidence of dengue fever worldwide. In Australia, outbreaks of dengue fever occurred in 1955 and 1981. The only indigenous vector of the dengue virus in Australia is the *Aedes aegypti*, the dengue mosquito. At present, the Northern Territory remains free of the vector. The Medical Entomology Branch has to expend considerable effort to maintain this status. The *Aedes aegypti* vector could be reintroduced to the Northern Territory from overseas or from Queensland in the form of larvae in tyres or other containers carrying potable water on yachts, commercial vessels, fishing boats or road traffic. Vector adult mosquitoes may be introduced via planes from Queensland or overseas areas. The Northern Territory has a history of dengue and *Aedes aegypti* was present until at least 1956.

The Medical Entomology Branch has confirmed that the species has not become re-established since at least 1973. However, prevention of the disease depends on keeping the vector out of the Northern Territory and an extensive dengue surveillance program is maintained. This program includes regular mosquito monitoring programs and surveillance operations to intercept and prevent possible introductions of the species. This involves reducing available breeding sites in town as well as intercepting mosquitoes at likely points of entry - for example, caravan parks and interstate transport terminals. It also includes a surveillance program which has been set up at the wharf and airport under the operation of the Commonwealth Quarantine Service. Commonwealth officers regularly submit mosquito larvae to the Medical Entomology Branch for identification. All incoming overseas boats are inspected by the quarantine service for the presence of mosquito larvae. All overseas planes are sprayed routinely for exotic insects. The quarantine service, in cooperation with the Medical Entomology Branch, conducts coastal surveillance operations. Medical entomology ovitrap surveillance programs are conducted within the Territory in all towns between Darwin and the Queensland border to detect possible introductions.

The vector responsible for transmitting yellow fever is also the *Aedes aegypti* mosquito which, as I mentioned previously, has not been found in the Northern Territory since 1973. Non-vaccinated travellers from areas of high yellow fever risk are required to remain in a geographical area known to be free from *Aedes aegypti* for a period of 2 weeks after leaving the risk area.

Rabies is a fatal disease transmitted by virus-laden saliva introduced by a bite or break in the skin from a rabid animal. Dogs are an important reservoir. However, other wild domestic animals, including biting mammals, bats and monkeys, may also carry the disease. Australia is the only continent which remains free of rabies, through the maintenance of strict quarantine procedures. In 1987, in Queensland, a 10-year-old boy died from imported rabies. His travel history indicated that he had been to India, Singapore and Thailand. Post-exposure prophylaxis is available for persons who may have been infected whilst overseas. This requires 7 injections over a 3-month period at an approximate cost of \$652 for each course of injections. During 1987-88, 20 persons in the Northern Territory required post-exposure prophylaxis following animal bites received whilst overseas. The cost of such treatment is now the responsibility of the Northern Territory government. This was a Commonwealth responsibility until June of 1988. Ongoing public education for travellers to endemic areas is essential.

In conclusion, it is vital for the Department of Health and Community Services, in liaison with the Commonwealth, to maintain the surveillance control programs as outlined. Some of the information I have provided today

will interest some honourable members although I recognise that some would not have seen this as a subject of major immediate concern. The reason our efforts in this area need to be discussed is that Darwin is the northern gateway to Asia. The Top End coastline is a destination for many Asian fishing vessels. Many Northern Territorians prefer to travel to Asia for holidays or on business rather than to travel south.

Clearly, it is vital for the Department of Health and Community Services, in liaison with the Commonwealth if it is interested, to maintain the surveillance and control programs that I have outlined today. It is necessary for us to maintain a high level of expertise in these areas, as well as high-quality programs. All this effort is very costly. An outbreak of exotic disease in Australia, either human or animal, would constitute a major threat to public health and the economy, particularly many rural industries. The Northern Territory's record in the maintenance of good public health practices and surveillance against exotic diseases is one we should be proud of. Mr Speaker, I move that the Assembly take note of the statement.

Mr BELL (MacDonnell): Mr Deputy Speaker, much of the minister's statement was highly commendable. The only exception, I would say, is the last paragraph. During these sittings, the opposition will be proposing for discussion, as a matter of definite public importance, the minister's administration of his portfolio. We will be clearly demonstrating that his administration of some areas of his portfolio leaves much to be desired. I believe honourable members would be aware of the substance of that matter of public importance debate.

We will not be talking about mosquito-borne diseases, which the honourable minister discussed at length in the context of the danger posed by exotic diseases although, obviously, the Northern Territory's record in the maintenance of good public health practices is questionable. The government's refusal to act in the case of the sewage ponds in Alice Springs and in relation to the related risk of mosquito-borne diseases, which was brought to its attention by the opposition, is something of which the government should be a good deal less than proud. I was extremely surprised when a statement containing otherwise very important material was finished off in an absurdly self-congratulatory way by the minister when, barely a month ago in this Assembly, the opposition drew the House's attention to the government's neglect of a situation in Alice Springs which posed potentially disastrous consequences in terms of mosquito-borne diseases.

You will recall, Mr Deputy Speaker, that, during its budgetary deliberations, the government was told that there was an immediate need for an allocation of funds to ensure that the population of central Australia was no longer at risk from mosquito-borne diseases. The government refused to make that allocation in its budgetary deliberations and it was only when the Flynn by-election became a factor that it was prodded into lifting its game.

Mr Tuxworth: And then it was too little too late.

Mr BELL: To pick up the interjection from the member for Barkly, it was too little too late. That was certainly the case as far as the voters of Flynn were concerned, and they gave the government a message. I doubt that the voters of Flynn would be impressed by the minister's self-congratulatory remarks. They do not believe that his record on public health matters is anything for him to be proud of although they are pleased that, on at least some occasions, the government is kept honest by an aggressive, perceptive, analytical, articulate and generally able opposition.

Mr Dale: What was that you were saying about self-congratulatory comments?

Mr BELL: Mr Deputy Speaker, lest I appear to be hypercritical, let me say that there are many areas of this statement with which the opposition concurs. We accept that it is vitally important to ensure that the people of the Northern Territory, the people of Australia who travel through the Northern Territory and our visitors are protected from diseases such as malaria which have been substantially eradicated in this country. The opposition therefore supports the processes outlined by the minister.

The minister made some very serious charges when he claimed that my colleagues in the federal government had sloughed off their responsibilities. On the basis of the minister's statement, I will not make a judgment one way or the other in that regard. Suffice it to say that I will be making inquiries of the federal Minister for Community Services and Health and, if the minister's charges can be sustained, I will be more than happy to be involved in bipartisan representations to the Commonwealth government. However, I will be doing my homework in that regard, as is my wont and as is the wont of every opposition member. It is vital to get to the truth of the matter because, so frequently, the Minister for Health and Community Services proves to be a master of obfuscation. It would be a most inastute opposition spokesman who would take what he said at face value.

Mr Dale: And you are certainly that.

Mr BELL: I appreciate that accolade. I pride myself on my astute approach to the portfolio areas for which I have shadow responsibility.

I heartily share the concerns of the honourable minister about malaria. It is not potentially a problem in the area where I live, but I have first-hand experience of it. I notice that the minister referred in his statement to a Territorian who almost died from malaria following a short working trip to Timor. I know a Territorian who almost died from malaria after a short trip to Papua New Guinea. In fact, he is my son. I therefore have some first hand experience of ...

Mr Dale: I would have thought that the shadow spokesman on health would have been able to advise his son on how to take precautions.

Mr BELL: Mr Deputy Speaker, that was a particularly cheap shot. It occurred some 10 years ago now, but the recollection is vivid. I dare say that the Deputy Leader of the Opposition could fulminate on the subject of malarial complaints.

I raise this next question very seriously because I know there has been comment about the matter in the press. On page 8 of his statement, the minister said that 'quarantine spraying of international aircraft is essential'. I presume he was referring to the habit of customs officials wandering down ...

Mr Firmin: Quarantine officials.

Mr BELL: Quarantine officials wandering down the aisles of incoming aircraft with a spray can in each hand going 'tsshht' in the general direction of the luggage compartments. I am not sure how Hansard will spell that but I suggest 'tsshht'. I have always wondered whether that practice was more ritualistic than effective. I know there has been comment about it

in the press and I simply wonder to what extent it occurs in other countries and how effective it is. The minister made the bland assertion that it is essential but I must admit that I have always had a question mark in my mind about the practice.

To reinforce my concern about Commonwealth responsibilities, quite obviously this is one area where the Territory government should be more than happy to accept that the Commonwealth has an important role to play. A national approach is needed. As the minister pointed out, it is necessary not only to have a fortress Australia mentality in relation to exotic disease but to have an internationalist approach. This is obviously a period in human history when unprecedented numbers of people are travelling between countries and travelling in areas which they would not have been able to visit 50 years ago, let alone earlier. Obviously, new problems have been created as a consequence of that and the minister's statement touches on those problems. It is vitally important for there to be an approach at the highest level of government. I suggest that it is not really appropriate that this Assembly be discussing this question. It really is a national and international issue.

Mr Deputy Speaker, in our bicentennial year, I cannot help but refer to the question of exotic diseases in Aboriginal communities in this country, particularly those in the Northern Territory and more particularly those which I represent in central Australia. There is no doubt that exotic diseases have historically caused tragic losses in Aboriginal communities and that is a cause for great sadness. In the case of exotic diseases, one feels as though one does not invite them on oneself and therefore there is a greater degree of resentment when either oneself or one's relatives suffer from them. Diseases such as pneumonia and influenza, followed by disastrous smallpox epidemics, ravaged Aboriginal populations in central Australia and, as far as traditional Aboriginal people were concerned, they were all exotic diseases. We need to be aware of that in forming a true historical perspective on exotic disease in the Territory.

With those comments, I conclude by saying that I appreciate the minister's statement, with the exception of his final paragraph, the absurdity of which I amply demonstrated with my reference to the mosquito-borne diseases problem in central Australia. Finally, I give an undertaking to pursue the question of cooperation and responsibility with the Commonwealth government.

Mr EDE (Stuart): Mr Speaker, the minister said that he thought his statement might not provoke much interest among honourable members. I found it extremely interesting and I would like to thank the minister for his suggestion that kiaps were never bitten by mosquitoes. Perhaps it was because their proboscises went blunt when they tried. Actually, I was only a cadet kiaps when I was bitten and, perhaps because I was not thick-skinned enough, I was infected with the dreaded malaria. I can assure the minister that it was no fun at all.

Like the member for MacDonnell, I have had a child infected by it. Avoiding malaria is not quite as simple as the minister suggested in his interjection about not looking after kids properly. As he should know, being a person who has lived in malaria-ridden areas, suppressants such as nivaquin and camoquin used to be administered. They were only suppressants and, when children suffered minor complaints, doctors quite often instructed that they be taken off those drugs. I recall being on leave and travelling around north Queensland with my eldest daughter. She had been off the suppressants for some time because of a mild childhood sickness and suffered a bout of malaria in Mt Isa. I took her to the hospital, where I spent 2 incredibly frustrating

hours trying to convince the doctor that she had malaria. He just kept repeating that there was no malaria in Australia and, therefore, she could not have it. That was some 15 years ago. I believe matters have improved since then - even in Queensland.

Stories are rife of people who have had bouts of malaria and have been thrown in the back of police wagons for being drunk in a public place. The symptoms of a bad attack of cerebral malaria are quite similar to drunkenness. It is almost impossible to stand up, your mind wanders and you break out with the hot and colds.

Having seen the difficulties that Papua New Guinea faced and still faces when malaria becomes rife, I would be the first to say that we must do everything in our power to prevent its reintroduction in the Northern Territory and the northern part of Australia. It is a truly horrible sickness. Many people have died from it. In fact, I was once told that it was the second greatest killer among all diseases. In Papua New Guinea, programs went on for years, including widespread spraying with DDT, in an attempt to get rid of the anopheles mosquito. Campaigns encouraged people to take camoquin and nivaquin. Eventually, another strain appeared of malaria in the Trans-Fly region. It had built up resistance to both suppressants and large numbers of people died throughout that area.

We must do everything in our power to prevent such outbreaks in Australia. I certainly hope that the member for MacDonnell will be able to find out why the Communicable Diseases Centre has lost its funding. In the meantime, I think that the Northern Territory should get in touch with Queensland. I believe there may also be some areas in the very top end of Western Australia where anopheles mosquitoes exist. I think that tri-state programs should be in place. The honourable minister assures me that that is the case, which is excellent. We have to ensure that, if there is an outbreak, we do not just rely on the slender resources of a single state or territory. It must be treated as a national disaster, applying the maximum amount of resources to ensure that it does not become established.

I will not speak at length but I wish to add my support to anything that the minister is doing to ensure that diseases such as malaria continue to be kept out of Australia. We in Darwin are particularly susceptible because of the vast numbers of people coming through here from malarial areas. The same applies to Cairns which has a direct flight to Papua New Guinea. Large numbers of people move in both directions between Papua New Guinea and north Queensland. We have to watch these areas very closely to ensure that an outbreak does not occur.

As health workers and medical staff arrive from the south, we need to ensure that they are trained to recognise cases of malaria so that they can quickly isolate patients to prevent them becoming vectors for the spread of the disease. The minister states that training programs are in place and I would hope that they will continue and that he will continue to inform this House about the status of exotic diseases. I believe that we should receive an update about once a year in respect of persons who have been in contact with or infected by exotic diseases and the status of our defences.

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH (Koolpinyah): Mr Speaker, I was interested to hear the honourable minister deliver his statement on the surveillance of exotic diseases in the Northern Territory. Unlike other honourable members, my remarks are not directed at making mozzies miserable. Rather, I want to take up the minister's remarks about the use of post-exposure prophylaxis as a treatment for people who have been bitten by rabid animals.

Having kept dogs for as long as I can remember and having quite a few in my possession now, and having quite an extensive knowledge of the canine world here, I am in a position to say that it would be an absolute social and community disaster if rabies was found in the Northern Territory - in Darwin or anywhere else. It would mean a complete eradication of the total canine population for many hundreds of miles around. If the disease got into the wild and infected our dingo population and other native animals, it would be practically impossible to eradicate it. I realise, however, that the Quarantine Section of the Commonwealth Department of Primary Industry is responsible for forbidding the entry of dogs and other animals from overseas into the Northern Territory without quarantine, and that our Department of Primary Industry and Fisheries has a contract to work with that section.

Together with several other members of the canine fancy, I went to a lecture by a very well-known doctor on the subject of rabies. He said that, once a person was infected with rabies, the condition was irreversible. He said that it was an extremely painful illness which always resulted in death, and that the victim remained conscious until the end. In those days, the treatment consisted of a 14-day series of very painful abdominal injections which may have helped a little. Generally, however, the disease was irreversible. The minister mentioned post-exposure prophylaxis; it appears that the treatment has become slightly gentler over the years.

I believe that the Department of Health and Community Services has to work in close cooperation with federal Department of Primary Industry and our own Department of Primary Industry and Fisheries to continually ensure that strict quarantine observance is maintained with regard to the entry of dogs and other animals into Australia, particularly the Northern Territory. I may be inclined to bend the rules in some matters when my personal freedom or the personal freedom of my constituents is at risk but, on the matter of quarantine of animals, I maintain strict regard for the legal requirements.

I support the statement. I would like the minister to reiterate that there will be continued liaison between the relevant federal and Territory departments to ensure that rabies does not enter the Northern Territory, thus ensuring that post-exposure prophylaxis will not be necessary.

Mr DALE (Health and Community Services): Mr Speaker, I thank all honourable members for their contributions, particularly those on the opposition benches who have yet again wholeheartedly supported one of my ministerial statements on the administration of health and community services in the interests of the people of the Northern Territory. I have made several statements in this House whilst I have held the portfolio of Health and Community Services and I will certainly welcome the chance to speak for another half hour later in the day when, I believe, the shadow spokesman on health issues will be giving me an opportunity to inform people about the very positive things we are doing in the delivery of health and community services.

I believe that only one point needs to be taken up in terms of the response to my statement. It was interesting to note that the shadow spokesman spoke for only 13 minutes. Either he does not know much about the subject or he was simply too lazy to contribute anything more. He did, however, state that he would check with his comrades in Canberra to see whether or not I was telling the truth when I said that the federal government removed funding from the National Disease Control program across the top of Australia at the end of June 1988. Let me assure the honourable member, before he gets his boss to jump on an aeroplane on another furphy mission to Canberra and returns suffering jet lag ...

Mr Manzie: He looks a bit jet-lagged.

Mr DALE: Yes, he is suffering badly from jet lag. Just to save a little more jet lag, the member for MacDonnell can check the minutes of the last Health Ministers Conference and he will find that I raised the issue at that conference after Hon Dr Blewett, the Commonwealth Minister for Community Services and Health, stated that he would be withdrawing the funding. There was no prior consultation whatsoever. Perhaps the Leader of the Opposition might talk to his comrades in Canberra about consultation with members of the governments of the Northern Territory and Queensland and, for that matter, his other comrades in Western Australia.

There was no consultation. I concede that the amounts involved are not great. The fundamental issue, however, is the total withdrawal of the federal government from its role in coordinating the prevention of what could be a major problem for all Australians. People experience problems caused by mosquitoes all the way down to Victoria. The top end of Australia is the gateway to the eastern part of Australia in terms of access from malarious areas to our north. I made strenuous representations to the federal minister, not only by letter, but through strong and vigorous representation on ministerial councils throughout the year. The minister's response was simply arrogant. He said: 'I have decided to remove it and that is it'.

I believe that the federal minister has put the people of Australia at great risk. Certainly, he has placed much more responsibility on state and territory governments for the coordination of preventive measures as far as exotic diseases are concerned right across Australia. Simply because the state and territory governments are doing a good job in preventing the introduction of exotic diseases, as one would expect, he has the luxury of shrouding himself in a cloak of apathy, lolling back and saying: 'We can forget about the north of Australia. We will sit here comfortably by Lake Burley Griffin, watching Terry Smith walk across it on his furphy missions. We can forget all about north Australia'. I implore honourable members opposite to make another trip to Canberra to talk to the federal minister in between cups of coffee at the poolside. If the shadow spokesman for health was able to convince the federal minister of his responsibilities in this matter, it would be his first worthwhile achievement since taking responsibility for this portfolio about 12 months ago.

In spite of the difficulties we face, we will steadfastly continue to monitor the situation in our area of responsibility. We will continue to consult across the borders, despite the fact that that federal minister seems to believe that all the problems of exotic disease can be solved by erecting mosquito nets along the borders. We will continue to monitor the situation in a very professional and responsible manner.

Motion agreed to.

REQUEST FOR LEAVE TO MAKE STATEMENT

Mr SMITH (Opposition Leader): Mr Speaker, I seek leave to make a statement concerning my recent visit to Canberra.

Leave denied.

STATEMENT
Kakadu National Park Stage 3

Mr MANZIE (Conservation): Mr Speaker, I rise to make a statement about the possible inclusion of Kakadu Stage 3 on the World Heritage List. Honourable members would no doubt be aware of recent media coverage of this government's earlier intention to send a delegation to the meeting of the World Heritage Committee in Brasilia next month. I would like to begin this statement by making perfectly clear to honourable members the reason why that delegation was considered necessary. The reason was, very simply, the federal government's determination to ignore the Territory government's attempts to find out what it was doing.

In the past 3 months, the Territory government made repeated attempts to get an answer from the federal government concerning its intentions in relation to the possible nomination of Stage 3 of Kakadu for inclusion on the World Heritage List. Prior to last Friday, the only answer we had received was silence. To put it bluntly, the federal government was playing dumb. It was not until after the Territory government's submission opposing listing of Stage 3 at the next World Heritage Committee meeting was presented to 12 of the member countries of the World Heritage Convention, that we finally got a response from the Prime Minister. It may have been coincidental that the letter to the Chief Minister arrived at the same time as a nationwide teleconference to discuss concerns with the Hawke government's environmental politics, but I doubt it. That letter made it possible for this government to cancel the delegation to Brazil. Indeed, we were very pleased to do so. The Prime Minister's letter says:

My government has not taken action to date on a possible Stage 3 nomination because of the need to resolve a number of issues connected with the conservation zone. We do not propose to raise the matter at the December 1988 meeting of the World Heritage Committee.

Let me make it quite clear that the federal government is negligent in terms of its electoral responsibility. Had that assurance not been given by the Prime Minister, the Territory government would have been forced to send a delegation to Brazil to protect the interests of Territorians.

I can state unequivocally that the Northern Territory government does not oppose the World Heritage Listing of environmentally unique areas in the Territory. However, nominated areas must meet the strict criteria set down under the World Heritage Convention and they must be nominated with this government's agreement. We cannot and will not accept the way in which the federal government has used its external affairs powers to force its political will on Australians regardless of their needs and aspirations or the wishes of their democratically-elected state or territory governments.

Let us not forget how the federal government is enforcing these decisions. It is able to unilaterally take decisions regarding the nomination of so-called World Heritage areas purely as a result of its external affairs powers. It is being held in the High Court that the federal government has the power to enforce decisions taken as a result of agreements between it and other countries even in the face of opposition from the states that those decisions affect. What this means, as honourable members know only too well, is that the federal government can misuse this power to override its responsibilities to the states under the Constitution.

Much is made of the value of the Constitution. It is supposed to be the foundation of fair and democratic government in Australia. Now that this federal Labor government has discovered the external powers loophole, it is too bad about outdated concepts such as consultation and democracy. Territorians have been subject to this kind of paternalism for decades, Mr Speaker, but that does not make the pill any less bitter to swallow. We can empathise with the governments of Queensland and Tasmania which, until a few years ago, believed that their constitutional status gave them some standing when dealing with the federal government.

The arrogance of the federal government regarding world heritage matters is highlighted by the fact that it is not only circumventing the Constitution but blatantly breaking its own world. Until recent years, the federal government's official position was that it would not take any unilateral action to nominate state or territory areas for World Heritage listing without the agreement of the relevant state or territory government. This position has been restated on a number of occasions, particularly between 1984 and 1986. The federal government affirmed this position when assenting to the agreement of the Australian Council of Nature Conservation Ministers, known as CONCOM, in 1984.

The recent history of the Kakadu National Park tells the sorry story of just how worthless that agreement was. For the benefit of honourable members, I will briefly run through that history. There was no consultation between the federal government and the Northern Territory before Kakadu Stage 2 was nominated for inclusion on the World Heritage List. That was despite the fact that the procedures to be followed before a property in Australia is nominated were agreed to by the federal, state and Territory governments in 1984. Those procedures are set out in an agreement reached at the CONCOM meeting in July 1984.

Indeed, a description of that agreement is included in the publication 'Australia and the World Heritage Convention' which was published by the federal Department of Arts, Heritage and Environment in February 1986. That publication includes the following statement: 'The Commonwealth government has indicated, however, that it will not take unilateral action to nominate areas for World Heritage listing without the agreement of the state or territory concerned'. That would seem to be a very clear undertaking by the federal government and, in fact, the Territory government was also provided with specific assurances by the federal government that the CONCOM agreement would be adhered to in any consideration of the listing of Kakadu Stage 2. This was confirmed in correspondence dated 26 June 1986 and again reaffirmed in a letter dated 16 September 1986 from the federal Minister for Arts, Heritage and Environment to my colleague the Minister for Mines and Energy. Both letters state categorically that, should the federal government decide to pursue World Heritage listing of Kakadu Stage 2, the Territory government would be consulted in accordance with the CONCOM agreement before any approach was made to the World Heritage Secretariat in Paris.

However, on 16 September 1986, the same date that the letter promising consultation was sent, the federal Minister for Arts, Heritage and Environment and another federal minister issued a joint media statement stating that immediate steps would be taken to nominate Kakadu Stage 2 for inclusion on the World Heritage List. It is understood that the nomination of Kakadu Stage 2 for World Heritage listing by the federal government was lodged with the World Heritage Committee the day after the minister's letter, promising consultation, was sent. There can be no better example of double-dealing than the federal government's behaviour over the listing of Stage 2. Not only did

it fail to observe the CONCOM agreement of 1984, but it said one thing and did exactly the opposite on the very same day.

It must not be forgotten that it was Territorians, not Canberra bureaucrats, who fought long and hard to establish the Kakadu National Park. They were doing so well before there was any interest in the area from the federal government or the Australian National Parks and Wildlife Service. In 1965, the Northern Territory Reserves Board put forward a plan to create a major park of some 2475 square miles in the Alligator Rivers region. The core area was subsequently proclaimed a wildlife sanctuary and was managed by local rangers for a number of years.

In 1975, the Ranger Uranium Environmental Inquiry was established under the Environmental Protection (Impact of Proposals) Act, with Mr Justice Fox appointed as the presiding commissioner. The Aboriginal Land Rights (Northern Territory) Act was passed in 1976 and Justice Fox's commission was extended to examine its effects on his inquiry. Given the powers of an Aboriginal Land Commissioner, he found in his 1977 report to the federal government that there were valid land claims to part of the Alligator Rivers region within the area which was to later become Stage 1 of Kakadu National Park. Unfortunately, his report, like the earlier Woodward Report, showed little, if any, appreciation of the federal government's policy of introducing self-government in the Northern Territory. Justice Fox recommended that the area deserved national park status and referred to the federal National Parks and Wildlife Conservation Act as a suitable legislative mechanism to achieve that status. In doing so, Justice Fox ignored the long history of conservation management of the area by Territorians.

The Northern Territory (Self-Government) Act commenced in 1978. It is worth noting that, under section 35 of that act and its regulations, the matters on which Territory ministers were to be given full executive authority included: environment protection and conservation, including parks, reserves and gardens and preservation of historical objects and areas; flora and fauna; land use, planning and development; and tourism. The intention of these provisions seems very clear. It was intended that the Territory government should administer these areas. But, paradoxically, the federal government retained the Kakadu area under its jurisdiction.

In November 1978, the ANPWS entered into an agreement with the Northern Land Council for the management of areas leased from Kakadu land trusts. Of course, the agreement was carefully worded to exclude the Northern Territory Parks and Wildlife Commission from having any role in the park's management. This agreement was drawn up without any consultation with the Territory government, despite previous assurances from the federal government to CONCOM that there would be prior consultation on any dealings with Aboriginal land in relation to national park proposals. Stage 2 became a separate park in 1984 and was combined with Stage 1 in 1985. In the face of opposition from this government and conflicting assessments of the area's merit as a world heritage item, its name was inscribed on the World Heritage List in 1987.

I would like to spend a few minutes discussing the way in which the federal government nominated Stage 2 of Kakadu for World Heritage listing. Honourable members may be aware that the world Heritage Committee has an annual schedule for considering nominations to the World Heritage List. However, the process of nominating properties to the list is an ongoing one. Nominations can be submitted at any time during the year. Normally, nominations received before 1 January of a given year will be considered during that year. Those received after 1 January will be considered in the

following year. The normal deadlines for the submission and processing of nominations do not apply in the case of properties where the bureau considers that the property in question would unquestionably meet the criteria for listing but has been damaged either by natural events or by human activities. Where properties have suffered such a disaster, their nominations will be processed as a matter of urgency.

The federal government originally asked for nomination of Kakadu Stage 2 in 1986 to be deferred. But, on 16 November 1987, the federal government asked the nomination to be reconsidered at the World Heritage Committee meeting to be held from 7-11 December 1987 - that is, less than a month after renomination. Kakadu Stage 2 was quite clearly not subjected to a disaster, apart from the federal government, and there was no justification for setting aside the normal timetabling arrangements except perhaps to steamroll the Northern Territory government.

1986 also saw the proclamation of Stage 3 of the park and the establishment of the conservation zone. Since then, the Gimbat and Goodparla pastoral leases have been acquired by the federal government and included in Stage 3. Last year, the federal government claimed that the 'cowboys from the Territory' had achieved nothing by their lobbying efforts in Paris against the listing of stage 2. However, solely as a result of the Territory government's submissions, the World Heritage Committee noted:

When examining the proposal to extend Kakadu National Park (Australia), the committee recognised that there were no indications in the 'operational guidelines' for states parties in proposing extensions to sites inscribed on the World Heritage List. The committee therefore requested the Secretariat to incorporate such indications, particularly concerning the documentation to be available for examination by the bureau and the committee.

As a result of that request, the secretariat prepared amendments proposing that extensions to a property already on the World Heritage List should be treated as a new nomination, except in cases where the extension amounted to a simple modification of the boundary.

As can be seen, far from achieving nothing, the Territory government made significant advances towards having the rules governing extensions to World Heritage items tightened up. But it is important to point out that those changes are not yet in force. They will come up for ratification at the coming meeting of the World Heritage Committee and, had the Territory government not elicited a specific undertaking from the Prime Minister that Stage 3 would not be nominated, it would have been essential for this government to have representatives at that meeting to monitor the federal government and to protect the interests of Territorians.

It is unfortunate that, in the wide open spaces of Australia, the magnitude of the federal government's land grab is lost on many members of the public. The simple fact is that the combined areas of Stage 1, 2 and 3 and the conservation zone total a staggering 20 000 km². In the submission that I presented last week to embassies of the countries which are signatories to the World Heritage Convention, and which I will table today, there is a list of no less than 43 countries and city states whose entire areas are less than that. We are talking about an area of land which is bigger than Fiji, Swaziland, Kuwait, Vanuatu or Jamaica - and those are the larger countries on the list. It is double the size of countries such as Lebanon and Cyprus. There are hosts of other countries which are far smaller than Kakadu. Can you imagine

the uproar, Mr Speaker, if the ruling bodies in those countries calmly announced to their people that, in order to satisfy the wishes of a vocal minority group and to give themselves warm inner feelings, they had frozen all future development or change for the entire country? There would be civil war, and understandably so.

Is it any wonder that this government is highly suspicious of the federal government's intentions regarding the nomination of Stage 3 for inclusion on the World Heritage List? The federal government has shown itself to be draconian in the extreme. It has forced its east coast political agenda on Territorians without giving the slightest regard to the wishes of the government they democratically elected. Now we have another meeting of the World Heritage Committee fast approaching and - surprise, surprise - we were unable to get any response from the federal government about whether it intended to nominate Stage 3 for inclusion on the World Heritage List. I had to travel to Canberra and knock on doors before we got a response out of the Prime Minister.

As I stated earlier, the Territory government does not oppose the concept of environmentally-unique areas being included on the World Heritage List, but we have severe problems with the way in which the federal government has gone about the process of nominating areas. It is quite clear that no area should be nominated for the World Heritage List without the support of the relevant state or territory government. In the case of Kakadu, the federal government has not only failed to seek the Territory government support but has goose-stepped ahead in the face of our active opposition. I derive some comfort from the Prime Minister's assurance that:

I appreciate the Northern Territory government's interest in any action taken by the Commonwealth in relation to the park. I am also aware that, in November 1987 and July 1988, the Council of Nature Conservation Ministers reaffirmed the procedures established at its 1984 meeting about nominations by the Commonwealth for World Heritage listing being undertaken, as a matter of principle, in consultation with the states and the Northern Territory.

I can therefore assure you that, prior to any action being to nominate Stage 3 for World Heritage listing, your government will be consulted.

As I said, I derive some comfort from that undertaking but I do not forget the events of 16 September 1986. I am also very aware of the policy of the Australian Labor Party, as ratified in 1988, which states under the implementation section that:

Labor will nominate Stage 3 of Kakadu for World Heritage when final boundaries are determined and it is incorporated in the park in accordance with the recommendations of the Ranger Uranium Inquiry of 1977.

There is nothing in that policy about consultation with the Territory government before the nomination is made, and we will be monitoring the federal Labor government very closely in this regard.

The second factor that must also be considered is whether or not the area to be nominated is actually worthy of inclusion on the list. For the benefit of honourable members, for an item to be included on the World Heritage List, it must be of 'outstanding universal value ... either from the point of view

of history, art or science ... or from the aesthetic or scientific point of view ... or from the point of view of science or conservation or natural beauty'.

It is not clear if any areas of Kakadu Stage 3 meet these very rigorous criteria. What is absolutely certain is that some areas do not. It would make an absolute mockery of the World Heritage List if the whole of Stage 3 was nominated without some sort of meaningful assessment of the area. Procedures are laid down under the World Heritage Convention to allow for such assessments to take place, and it is the view of this government that such an assessment of the World Heritage value of Stage 3 must take place before it is nominated and, furthermore, that the Territory government must be given the opportunity to assess and comment on any such application. Indeed, the rules of natural justice surely demand that we be given such an opportunity.

Mr Speaker, I can make a clear commitment that this government will participate in and make submissions to any impartial assessment of Kakadu Stage 3. There can be no justification for this assessment to be carried out in haste, behind closed doors and without contributions from all the relevant parties. Whether or not Stage 3 meets the criteria set down by the World Heritage Convention should be assessed objectively and scientifically and the motivation should not be some kind of political grandstanding for people living 3000 km or 4000 km away.

I am pleased that the Northern Territory government has succeeded in winning this victory for Territorians. It is no mean achievement that we have obtained this undertaking from the Prime Minister. At long last, it is recognition that this government is succeeding in forcing the federal government to acknowledge that we have legitimate standing regarding matters within Territory borders. It is no comfort that, in order to win this victory, the Northern Territory government has been forced to embarrass the federal government on the international stage. The countries who are members of the World Heritage Convention are frankly astonished that a so-called national government would actively promote these disputes in such a prominent and public arena. Certainly, the ambassadors and high commissioners whom I visited last week clearly understood why the people of the Territory wanted a fair go. That is all we have ever asked for. We can only hope that the present federal Labor government will one day embarrass itself to such an extent that it is forced to treat the Territory fairly.

However, we must lose sight of the fact that this is a temporary victory only. There will be other World Heritage Committee meetings and chances to nominate Kakadu Stage 3 for the World Heritage List. I pledge to Territorians that this government will be vigilant in the matter and will fight to ensure that Territorians and the government they elected get due recognition before any attempt is made to nominate Stage 3.

Mr Speaker, I table the submission which has been distributed to representatives of countries which are signatories to the World Heritage Convention and I move that the Assembly take note of the statement and the submission.

Mr LANHUPUY (Arnhem): Mr Speaker, once again, I rise to speak on a matter which concerns many Territorians. Some unique parts of Kakadu should be preserved, not only for members of this House and the population of the Northern Territory but also for tourists and other people who may wish to come to look at them. We have often heard the government claim that Kakadu National Park is nothing but buffalo country and is not worth saving. I must

admit that the Minister for Conservation said that he was willing to look at some of the areas that are worth saving, in consultation with the federal government.

Many people would know that the area that we are talking about - Kakadu National Park Stages 1, 2 and 3 - was closely examined during the early 1970s when the federal government initiated the Fox Inquiry at a time when there was considerable interest in the mining of uranium in that region of the Northern Territory. Extensive consultation took place throughout the Northern Territory, with representations from this government and the community at large, particularly the people who now reside in the Kakadu area. I remember that, even then, the Aboriginal communities in the area of what is now the Kakadu National Park requested the federal government to consider the inclusion in the proposed park of the area now known as Stage 3.

Once again, the Minister for Conservation has indulged in Canberra-bashing, in a style we know only too well. I thought that, when he was down in Canberra knocking on the doors of the embassies, he would at least have taken 5 minutes to talk to the Prime Minister about the letter that was coming from the minister to advise him about the withdrawal of the nomination of Kakadu Stage 3 for the World Heritage List. I am sure that, if he had had any courtesy, he would have sat down with the minister responsible, Senator Richardson, and spoken with him about the matter. However, he had to make a clown of himself in Canberra. He made a nuisance of himself by knocking on embassy doors and pre-empting the decision of the federal government.

I am sure that he knew that he would receive a letter. Meanwhile, he went ahead and organised a trip to Brasilia which the member for Nightcliff was supposed to undertake to represent the views of the Territory government. Perhaps the government was trying to get rid of the member for Nightcliff for being so outspoken and so determined to get back on the frontbench. I believe this was a sop to the member for Nightcliff because he had been shot down in a ball of flame.

The people who live in the area of Kakadu Stage 3 - as I am sure the member for Arafura will agree - certainly would like it to be included in the World Heritage List. Mr Speaker, you and I do not know how many art sites are there. Those sites, which were created many years ago, are very precious and completely irreplaceable. The young kids in communities today do not know the techniques used by the people who created those sites.

In his statement, the minister read out the criteria which the World Heritage Committee uses when it decides whether an item is worthy of listing. Historical value was among them. I am certain that the opposition would support the nomination of Kakadu Stage 3 for World Heritage listing. I believe it would protect a unique and beautiful area of land, along with its wildlife, for future generations. If we do not support such listings, we will be responsible for the degradation of our own land and, in years to come, our children will not be able to appreciate how we value our land in the Northern Territory. I do not support the statement presented by the Minister for Conservation.

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH (Koolpinyah): Mr Speaker, I was very interested to hear the contents of the minister's statement and I agree with his very polite remarks about the land grab by the federal government. In 1988, our bicentennial year, we heard quite a lot about the landing of white settlers in Australia in 1788. We heard about what some people perceive to be the dispossession of Aboriginal ownership of the land. None of the people who

made those statements so vociferously has said anything about the federal government's land grab of 2 very extensive areas of the Northern Territory - Kakadu and Uluru. We are not talking about Uluru at the moment; we are talking about Kakadu.

If my memory serves me correctly, and perhaps the honourable minister would have a better knowledge of this, I believe part of Kakadu Stage 3 was even described by an ALP federal minister as consisting mostly of clapped-out buffalo country. We know all the buffalo have been shot out from Kakadu now.

Mr Manzie: That was Harry Butler, Noel.

Mr Collins: And a good judge too.

Mr Hatton: And Gareth Evans.

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH: I think Hon Gareth Evans agreed with what Harry Butler said.

Mr Speaker, the federal government wants more and more land under its control. It has control of Kakadu Stage 1 and Stage 2. Now it wants control of Stage 3. The foremost consideration of the Australian National Parks and Wildlife Service seems to be its desire to have more and more land under its control. People who do not know the Northern Territory situation as intimately as we do might perhaps say that the officers of ANPWS are good conservationists and just want to look after the land. A person would have to be blind in one eye and unable to see out of the other not to see, on a visit to Kakadu, that the whole place is riddled with noxious weeds. The spread of the noxious weed *Mimosa pigra* is causing enormous problems out there. A person involved in mining in that area told me some years ago ...

A member: Fisher.

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH: No, it was not Fisher. He is not the only person who has been involved in mining in that area.

About 4 years ago, this person told me that *Mimosa pigra* was beginning to spread in Kakadu Stage 1 and 2. But did officers of the ANPWS pay any attention to the problem? No, they did not. All they were interested in was big-noting themselves to the detriment of their caretaking responsibilities in Kakadu. Not only do we have *Mimosa pigra*, we also have the problem of water hyacinth in the waterways. If the ANPWS continues much longer with its so-called caretaking of our land, we will not only have clapped-out buffalo country but a clapped-out, weed-infested national park.

Mr Smith: That is rubbish!

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH: It is not rubbish.

Mr Smith: It is.

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH: It is not rubbish. I know more about noxious weeds than you do.

Mr Smith: You don't know anything about national parks if you say that.

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH: Mr Speaker, I agree with what the minister said. The haste to get more and more land under federal control is to appease the small,

very vocal, greenie minority in the cities. I sometimes call myself a greenie but at least I am a practising greenie, conservationist, unlike all those other people who just talk about it. The federal ALP government should have realised that catering to that minority was a contributing factor in the ALP's loss in the New South Wales election.

Perhaps I have not read this list through properly, but I would be very interested to know the names of the countries which are represented on the World Heritage Committee which considers the status of areas in this country. I would like to be assured that those countries had similar governments to our own and were sufficiently competent to consider the situation in the Northern Territory, because I have serious doubts about whether some of them know bees from a bull's foot in relation to national parks.

I believe that, until now, members of the general public were not very interested in who owned the national park. When grandad and grandma come up for holidays, their children whiz them out to Kakadu and show them Obiri Rock. On the way back, they have a drink at the South Alligator and fill up with petrol. That is the extent of their visit to Kakadu. Now, however, those people have been threatened with a \$10 fee to visit the park. It has been reduced to \$5 but I agree with the Minister for Tourism, which I do not do very often, when he says that it will effectively be \$8. When the general public realises that a visit to Kakadu will cost \$8 per head, they will begin to realise the effects of this federal land grab.

The Minister for Conservation should not only be doing what he is doing in relation to Kakadu but pushing the attractions of Litchfield National Park which is under the care and control of the Conservation Commission. Without exaggerating, I believe that that park will run rings around Kakadu when it is opened up to the public with proper road reticulation and services for visitors.

I really feel very strongly when somebody casts his greedy eyes over my land, as was done in 1973. We got our land back but these dirty little land-grabbing grubs from the federal government really get on my goat when they decide that it is our land they want. They cannot get land for more national parks in the states; they can only get it in the Northern Territory. That is one of the reasons why we must push for statehood. We must get other areas of concern under our control and national parks in the Northern Territory must be controlled by Territorians. I would back our Conservation Commission against the ANPWS any day. It runs rings around the ANPWS in land management and park management and its staff should be looking after parks in the Northern Territory, not as dogsbodies at the beck and call of ANPWS people from Canberra, but as independent park managers. I support the minister's statement.

Mr COULTER (Mines and Energy): Mr Speaker, in rising to support the statement of the minister, I would also like to support the contribution that the member for Koolpinyah has made to this debate. I hope that members of the opposition will also rise so that we can clearly understand their position in relation to the World Heritage Listing of Kakadu Stage 3 and, in particular, the conservation zone, which is such an important subject of discussion these days. Perhaps when the Leader of the Opposition recovers from his jet lag later this afternoon, he may rise to tell us about the outcome of the meeting of senior ministers which the Prime Minister called yesterday to address the issue of the mining in the conservation zone. Perhaps he did something constructive in Canberra and will tell us about the outcome of that meeting, which concerned an area which is worth millions of dollars to the Northern

Territory in terms of resource development. However, Mr Speaker, I will not hold my breath.

I have been to Paris on 2 separate occasions to argue against World Heritage Listing of Kakadu and I have an in-depth knowledge of the workings of the World Heritage Committee and also of the International Union of Conservation and Nature which is based in Geneva and which I have also visited. Before I became Minister for Mines and Energy, I had the courage of my convictions in placing on the public record my concerns in relation to Kakadu. I will read from page 301 of the Hansard of Tuesday 5 June 1984, which records my comments on the issue, so that members opposite will understand exactly what I am talking about:

With the use of aerial photographs, topographical maps and Landsat studies, an estimation of the proportion of different land forms has been made of Kakadu Stage 3. As you would be aware, Mr Speaker, Kakadu Stage 1 is famous for its wetland environments and komolgie sandstone escarpments.

However, these environments represent only 20% of Stage 3. The wetland areas of Stage 3 are not good examples of this type of environment and are restricted to the north of Stage 3 along the South Alligator River floodplain. In comparison to the wetland areas between Cooida and the South Alligator estuary in Kakadu Stage 1, the wetland areas of Stage 3 are simply not worthy of national park status.

Harry Butler was mentioned earlier. We all know what happened to him when he stood up and said the same thing, together with Professor Mellanby, a well-known world authority on national parks. What happened to Harry Butler for telling the truth? His reward was to be kicked off the bicentennial committee. That is what happened.

When I get around to writing the story of the politics of resource development, it will be full of the problems which have been created for no other reason than people's desire to play political games which have nothing to do with the real issues and, in this case, nothing to do with whether or not Kakadu should be a national park. It is simply a matter of politicians making decisions to appease the consciences of people in suburbs like Vaucluse and Toorak so that they can roll over and go back to sleep feeling comfortable. The federal government sees the Northern Territory as a social playground which it can use to appease the consciences of those people. We have Aboriginal land rights, sacred sites, national parks. How many of those occur in Victoria and New South Wales? Look what happened to the Labor Party in New South Wales when it tried to turn national parks into a political issue. The result was that it lost every seat surrounding a proposed national park, some of which had been held by people from the families of the sitting Labor members for 2 generations. I want to hear some contribution from the opposition as to where it stands on national parks and, in particular, the conservation zone which houses Coronation Hill and its estimated \$1200m-worth of mineral wealth.

As I said in June 1984, the wetland areas of Stage 3 are simply not worth national park status.

Mr Smith: Is this a scientific assessment?

Mr COULTER: We have many scientific assessments.

Mr Smith: Where is the scientific basis for this judgement?

Mr COULTER: I am happy to provide that to the Leader of the Opposition in the form of the submissions which I took to Paris. These were high quality scientific documents and were recognised as such by members of the World Heritage Committee.

Let there be no nonsense that this is something that I have dreamed up since I have become the Minister for Mines and Energy. This was written well before that. I continue quoting from Hansard:

The komolgie sandstone produces spectacular escarpments in Arnhem Land and Kakadu Stage 1. However, these escarpments are actively developing and so produce a sheer face. Of Kakadu Stage 3, only 5 km show a sheer face. Komolgie sandstone plateaus are well represented in Kakadu Stage 1 and also in the Katherine Gorge National Park. The cretaceous sandstone plateau is covered by thick sandy soils and tall open forests. The topography is flat and monotonous and represents 8% of Stage 3. The majority of Stage 3, 72%, is represented by the Koolpinyah land form system which comprises undulating land with striped ridges and is typical of other areas - in fact some 66 000 km² of similar land forms can be seen elsewhere in the Pine Creek geosyncline. The only areas of scientific beauty in Stage 3 are UDP Falls ...

I might say here that that area is now known as Waterfall Creek because nobody could tolerate the word 'UDP'. The U, of course, stands for uranium and that is why we had a change of name.

... and an area along Koolpin Creek. UDP Falls is covered by a reserve and the scenic areas along Koolpin Creek are only accessible to 4-wheel-drive vehicles. Kakadu Stage 3 is therefore not spectacular, unique nor indeed the best example of land forms and cannot be justified as a national park.

Mr Speaker, I read that back into Hansard for the benefit of honourable members. As I said, this is not a bandwagon that I jumped on yesterday or 2 minutes before I went to Paris or after I became the Minister for Mines and Energy. It was well before then.

A number of other politicians can be quoted as saying what I was saying in 1984. Among them is Hon Gareth Evans, the Minister for Foreign Affairs, who is on record as saying that he considered Kakadu Stage 3 to be 'clapped-out buffalo country'. There are a number of other famous quotations from the Hon Gareth Evans. One of them is that he is 'a multiple land use person'. That is important. As I said in this House 2 days ago when introducing the Mining Amendment Bill, the Northern Territory must encourage the policy of multiple land use.

Honourable members might be interested to know that the owner of Gimbat Station has not been paid yet. His land was compulsorily acquired after notice of that was given by the Fraser government. He has not been paid and he has not been able to make any money on that property. You cannot just walk in and take over without understanding what has occurred there.

If you go to the International Union of Conservation and Nature in Geneva, people such as the deputy director of the organisation, with whom I have spoken, will tell you that they are multiple land use people. They say that

there is no problem in having a mine in a national park. Let us remember that the Ranger Uranium Mine occupies 4 km². Actually, the park surrounds the Ranger Uranium Mine; it is not in the national park. It takes up less than 1% of Kakadu's 20 000 km² and is visited by some 100 000 people a year, making it one of the biggest tourist attractions in the park.

I have also spoken with Senators in the USA which also has a multiple land use policy. In fact, last year, mining to the value of \$US200m was conducted in national parks in the USA. In such large expanses of land, there is no need to completely prohibit mining. Most of the countries represented on the World Heritage Committee would fit into the 20 000 km² of Kakadu. They are amazed. They ask why we cannot develop mining within that area. In this day and age, we cannot afford to throw away the wealth that exists in Kakadu Stage 3, particularly when equivalent land forms can be found throughout the 66 000 km² of the Pine Creek geosyncline. Another Coronation Hill, however, cannot be found anywhere to the east of the geosyncline.

The scientific evidence - and I can provide this to the Leader of the Opposition - indicates that the value of known, recoverable minerals in Kakadu Stages 1, 2 and 3 is \$100 000m at today's values. Even the Leader of the Opposition could add it up. Jabiluka has \$15 000m-worth of uranium sitting in the ground and 11 t of gold. If the opposition is taking the line that Australia is so well off that it does not need that wealth and that the Northern Territory is so well developed that it does not need it, it is wrong.

Mr Hawke promised us 1300 jobs and \$70m for tourist development. I was the minister responsible for the Jabiru Town Development Authority and I know how hard it was to have the crocodile hotel built out there. Nobody wanted to build it. I am now having enormous problems in getting a power line through Kakadu to supply power to Jabiru. To his credit, Senator Richardson, speaking in relation to Queensland, said that national parks would not interfere with public utilities including water catchment areas and roads. Mr Speaker, as you know, I was in China recently and was interested to notice that the powerlines run virtually parallel to the Great Wall. That is a significant place in the world but there was no stopping the erection of a powerline in the vicinity. I sincerely hope that the opposition will support the government's efforts to bring power to Jabiru as well as the development of a much-needed 200-bay caravan park. The present situation, in which tourists have to be turned back, is disgraceful.

The area around Coronation Hill and El Sherana is the Territory's golden mile. Most of our considerable wealth is locked up there. The Commonwealth has acquired even more land for a bombing and artillery range at the edge of Stages 2 and 3. If there is ever a proposal for a Stage 4, that range might stop it. In that area, on the fringe of the supposedly pristine fragility of Kakadu, guns will be firing and tanks will be racing around. The environmental impact statements have said that that area, right next to the supposedly fragile park environment, is ideally suitable for that type of activity. What a joke!

What a joke Australia has become. It locks up its wealth in the hands of the World Heritage Committee which contains representatives of countries with wonderful track records, such as Cuba and Libya. That committee passes judgment on areas in Australia. Honourable members would be well aware of my views on the Canadian conspiracy. The fact is that the motion to list Kakadu Stage 2 was moved by the permanent Canadian Ambassador, Ambassador Clark, at a time when the Canadian Minister for the Environment was the facilitator of the World Heritage Convention. The motion was seconded by

one Charles Mott, the Australian Ambassador. Meanwhile, back in their own country, the Canadians were blowing up Cigar Lake, tearing into mountains and blocking up huge valleys to reach their considerable uranium wealth. Already, they have taken 30% of the market away from Australia.

Mr Speaker, I could go on at some length about the politics of Kakadu and why it was declared a park in the very early days. The original meeting on the subject of the possible declaration of a park took place in the suburb of Nightcliff and I have a copy of its minutes. Kakadu was the largest area of available land. That is why it was declared a park in the first instance.

We have heard about the Greenhouse Effect and how the seas are to rise. When that happens, much of Kakadu's wealth will be covered by 1 m to 3 m of water. It would be offshore. Do we think about that? Do we think ahead in Australia? Will we just become quarrymen and grain growers for the rest of the world or will we get into the high-tech realm that is available to us through the value-added downstream processing of our vast mineral resources?

Mr Speaker, there are some spectacular areas in Kakadu Stage 1. The spectacular areas in Stage 2 and the escarpment in particular occupy some 5 km² and are not good enough to warrant World Heritage listing. The Pine Creek geosyncline contains 66 000 km² of the same sort of land. The World Heritage listing of Kakadu Stage 3 is a joke, and anybody who does not go on the public record to say so will be regarded as a joker when Australia comes to its senses. I look forward to hearing the comments of the opposition in that context.

Mr EDE (Stuart): Mr Deputy Speaker, if Stage 3 can measure up to the very harsh criteria which have applied for World Heritage listing in the past, it should be listed. The conservation zone, however, should not be included. We have to organise the boundaries so that the zone provides rational protection for Stages 1 and 2 and so that mining, which I believe will go ahead in the zone, is carried out in such a way that Stages 1 and 2 are not put at risk.

I am happy to go on the record as saying that we should be supporting World Heritage listing as a concept. We should strive for the worldwide promotion of the beauty and significance of our natural areas because it can do an incredible amount of good for our tourist industry and for the Northern Territory economy in the long term. I agree that the Northern Territory government should be consulted by the federal government before our areas are placed on the World Heritage List. The problem is, however, that this government will never agree to World Heritage listing, no matter what. It has always argued against giving park status to any land which contains any minerals.

Mr Coulter: Multiple land use.

Mr EDE: Members opposite talk about multiple land use. When an area is already a park and they want to mine within it, they are in favour of multiple land use. The Minister for Mines and Energy has made the Northern Territory a subject of ridicule around Australia and the world. Before he became known as Big Bang Coulter, he was called Swiss Cheese Coulter, thanks to his ideas about the development of Kakadu Stages 1 and 2. He has gone on record time and time again saying what a great thing erosion is and how he is all for it.

Mr Coulter: You would not have the Kakadu escarpment without erosion.

Mr Manzie: Or Katherine Gorge.

Mr EDE: Erosion may have created some beauty spots but that is not a good enough reason for the Minister for Mines and Energy to set out with the deliberate policy of causing more erosion.

The member for Victoria River previously held the Conservation portfolio. I recall how the former Leader of the Opposition, Senator Bob Collins, showed, to the then minister's distinct embarrassment, that he did not even know what the guidelines were for World Heritage listing. At that time, he was arguing against the listing of Stages 1 and 2. Honourable members will recall how the then minister commissioned a movie featuring Harry Butler. It showed large numbers of buffalo, allegedly in Kakadu. To the extreme embarrassment of the government, it was demonstrated that the buffalo footage had all been shot at the CSIRO research station.

Mr Coulter: Not true.

Mr Manzie: Rubbish. Wrong.

Mr EDE: Members of the government might say that it is not true. They are totally embarrassed, as they were then. CSIRO people and others knew what had occurred and Bob Collins proved it conclusively. There were red faces all around.

Mr Hatton: He made an unsubstantiated allegation.

Mr EDE: They are all screaming now because he is not here to answer them. First, he demonstrated that the minister did not know what the guidelines were and then he showed that the government had faked movies in an effort to convince people. That was an extreme embarrassment to the Northern Territory. The government was embarrassed around the world.

I am disappointed in the current Minister for Conservation. I hoped that he might endeavour to moderate the government's performance on this issue and that he would attempt to improve it somewhat. My hope was based on the fact that he was not like a former Minister for Conservation, the member for Nightcliff, who gave away the control of mining in national parks to the Department of Mines and Energy. He has not done anything like that. Unlike the present Minister for Labour, Administrative Services and Local Government, formerly the Minister for Conservation, he has not been widely known as the 'ministerial doormat'.

In spite of his failure to fulfil my expectations so far, I believe that the Commonwealth should consult with him because there is still some possibility of saving him. Given the way he has performed in the last couple of days, however, we would have to wonder whether he is worth saving. The fact is that he has had a miserable few days and we should not be too hard on him. In everything that he has tried, he has demonstrated his complete ignorance of his portfolio.

We must remember that, a week ago, the minister was in Canberra wandering from embassy to embassy trying to drum up some support for a trip for the member for Nightcliff. I do not know whether he was doing that because it was his seat in Cabinet that the member for Nightcliff was after and he wanted to get him out of town for a couple of weeks. Perhaps the member for Nightcliff was about to make another bid for the leadership, which would create another internecine struggle within the CLP. Or maybe the member for Nightcliff, with his record of giving control of mining in national parks to the Department of Mines and Energy, was to go to Brasilia as the champion of conservation in the

Northern Territory. We do not know. All we know is what we saw in the paper. On 17 November, the headline was 'Hatton for Brazil'. On the very next day, Senator Bob Collins, very properly, told the minister that there was no way in the world that Kakadu Stage 3 would be listed for discussion at the meeting in Brasilia. The honourable minister should have dropped the matter immediately. Unfortunately, he carried on with it.

The fact is that Senator Bob Collins, together with Warren Snowdon, has been doing a great job for the Territory during the time he has been in Canberra. We have a great duo there. The Territory would be in an incredible mess if we had to rely on the likes of Grant Tambling. Imagine if we had a threesome like Grant Tambling! Can you imagine 3 Grant Tamlings in Canberra, Mr Deputy Speaker? What a laugh! Huey, Dewey and Louie. I would agree with the Minister for Mines and Energy that the very prospect of 3 Senator Grant Tamlings is too horrible to contemplate.

Senator Collins has been doing a great job for us in Canberra and he did the right thing in this instance. However, the Minister for Conservation did himself no good by continuing to pursue the issue after Senator Collins had told him that there was no need to. He was playing political games and they have done him no good at all. Because of the continual blocking moves made by some states and people like the Minister for Mines and Energy, the federal government has had to work for the good of Australia by seeking World Heritage listing.

Mr Coulter: Have you been to Stage 3?

Mr EDE: I have, and a beautiful place it is too.

Mr Coulter: I will show you the right areas.

Mr EDE: As I said, you can always find a couple of hectares here and there that may not come up to scratch. However, the honourable minister should learn something about what is known as the margin effect. It is a concept used in the development and management of national parks and applies to the areas surrounding the sites of major scenic attraction which ensure that those sites are not degraded. In the case of national parks, it is not possible to take the simplistic approach of fencing off the most beautiful spots and expecting them to be okay when everything around them is destroyed.

Mr Deputy Speaker, ministers opposite should think very seriously about the very real danger to the Northern Territory which may result if we continue to send out 2 messages. I am sorry that the Minister for Tourism is not here because I hoped that he would contribute to this debate. On the one hand, we are sending out tourism promotional material. Members have no doubt seen the ad that has been run for some time: 'It is your own Territory. If it was somewhere in Europe, you would cross half the world to see it'. The promotion of Kakadu through overseas advertising is bringing enormous numbers of tourists to the Northern Territory. The Minister for Tourism may wish to rise in this debate and recite the figures about tourist visitation and the wealth and jobs which that is creating. The results are excellent and we should continue the promotion.

However, while the Minister for Tourism goes around the world in one direction saying what a great place Kakadu is, another minister goes around it in the opposite direction saying that it is hopeless, clapped-out buffalo country which reminds him of a run-down old Holden. One can imagine that people will become a bit confused. One minister says that Kakadu is the

greatest area in the world and that people should pay thousands of dollars to visit it and spend a couple of months there. The other minister is saying: 'It is rubbish. The only reason it is a national park is because cattle could not be run on it'. If somebody overseas has his long service leave cheque in his pocket, is thinking about taking his one and only trip around the world and is considering Kakadu ...

Mr Collins: He would be disappointed.

Mr EDE: I am very sorry to hear the member for Sadadeen knocking our country because I reckon it is the greatest. I am glad to see those tourists come here. If other members wish to knock Kakadu, let it be on their head.

This person may be deciding to spend a couple of thousand dollars on an overseas trip. He sees brochures or ads about Kakadu and remembers that it is the place he saw in 'Crocodile Dundee'.

Mr Coulter: It wasn't filmed in Stage 3. I'll give you the message.

Mr EDE: He is thinking about coming here and then he hears the Northern Territory Minister for Mines and Energy - hopefully not the Minister for Conservation - rubbishing Kakadu overseas. He will decide to travel to Europe instead and that is a real shame. When ministers cause that sort of thing by their comments overseas, they are really knocking the Territory. The next time a minister does that, he should be censured by this House on his return.

Mr Coulter: You are just trying to get me re-elected again. I know you.

Mr HATTON (Nightcliff): Mr Deputy Speaker, I rise to speak in this debate in support of the motion noting the statement by the honourable minister. In doing so, I must thank the member for Stuart. I had thought that this debate was developing along logical and sensible lines and that there was not much more to be said until I heard the spurious nonsense put forward by the member for Stuart. I felt compelled to respond to some of his more outrageous statements.

One of his most absurd contributions was his rather unbecoming criticism of Senator Grant Tambling. He asked: 'How would the Territory be with 3 Grant Tamblings?' I can certainly understand his concern about such a prospect because they might find a few more Charlie Perkins. I am sure Charlie Perkins thinks that Grant Tambling is a very effective Senator as Charlie Perkins sits there in semi-retirement praying that he can last 2 years to pick up his superannuation. I am sure that the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs is extremely concerned about the effectiveness of Senator Tambling as he continues to expose the extraordinary behaviour which has been occurring in Aboriginal Affairs. I am sure other departmental heads who have been engaged in rather unpleasant practices are sitting there wondering when Senator Tambling will turn his attention to them.

Senator Tambling has probably been the most effective politician that has ever been sent to Canberra. After 20 years of extraordinary activity in the Aboriginal Affairs portfolio, we have finally found someone who has been able to assemble the facts and begin to bring some order to an area which has been dogged by outrageous behaviour. I congratulate Senator Tambling for the marvellous job he has been doing in Canberra. I only wish that other Territorians who went down there, such as Senator Collins, would devote their attention to getting rid of some of the well-known rorts that are occurring in that portfolio area. He could also devote his attention to cleaning up some

of those rorts that are perpetrated in the area of Aboriginal affairs in the Northern Territory.

Having made that point, I would like to go on to a couple of other bits and pieces. The member for Stuart made the totally untrue allegation that Senator Collins, as the then Leader of the Opposition in this House, proved beyond doubt that the filming of buffalo took place at Kapalga, where the CSIRO research station is located. That allegation is incorrect. The area filmed was east of Kapalga, in what is now Kakadu Stage 2, outside the buffalo research area. The location of filming did not embarrass this government at all. However, it did show that the environment could in no way be described as pristine. It depicted the degraded, weed-infested, buffalo-infested, pig-infested pastoral land in the western area of Kakadu Stage 2.

I would like to deal now with the nonsense being peddled by the opposition that we are sending out conflicting messages about Kakadu. Let us be very clear that it was the Northern Territory Reserves Board and, in fact, a well-known miner in the Northern Territory who originally proposed and fought for the creation of a national park in the Kakadu area. He was a member of the Legislative Council at the time and fought for years, without receiving any attention from Canberra. When uranium was discovered in the area and the debate about uranium mining began to escalate, southern environmentalists got behind the 15-year-old push by people in the Territory for a park at Kakadu. Suddenly it became the most environmentally sensitive area in the world which was so greatly in need of protection that the Northern Territory Reserves Board could not be trusted to manage it, let alone uranium mining be permitted. That is the truth of the matter.

That is why, at the time of self-government, that land was taken from the Territory. I accept that that was done by the Fraser government. Both sides of the political spectrum in Canberra are implicated although, in the initial stages, the matter was not one of party politics. It was a case of Canberra bureaucrats advising their federal ministers. It is only in more recent times that the matter has become one of party politics.

We supported the creation of Kakadu National Park. Originally, it was to be about 2500 km², which would have made it a park of significant size in Australia and, indeed, the world. That area is now known as Kakadu Stage 1 and we actively supported its becoming a national park. In fact, our predecessors in the CLP originally proposed it.

When the federal government sought World Heritage listing of Kakadu Stage 1, the area shaded green in Appendix B of the document tabled today, the Northern Territory government supported it. There was not an ounce of controversy about it. We were consulted. We worked the matter through with the federal government and we supported the World Heritage listing of that area.

By the time the issue of the World Heritage listing of Kakadu Stage 2 arose, a new federal government was in power. By that time, the CONCOM agreement of 1984 had been put into place. The federal Labor government, however, decided at that point that it would not talk to the Northern Territory government. We happened to believe that parts of the area shaded yellow in appendix B, the area then proposed as Stage 2 of the park, could not justifiably be included in the park or listed for World Heritage status. What we always said was that, before making any application for World Heritage listing, the homework should be done, with a proper scientific assessment and delineation of appropriate boundaries. We believed that parts of Stage 2 were

worthy of World Heritage listing but that other parts were not, and that has always been our argument.

The ANPWS never made that scientific assessment of Stage 2 and the matter was never put to the World Heritage Committee on a scientific basis. The device used was to say to the committee that the area of some 6100 km² was a significant extension to the existing park. The area was never nominated separately for World Heritage listing and therefore did not have to undergo the assessment process. Instead, the federal government changed the boundaries of the park and attempted to achieve World Heritage status for the entire area by letter. When that happened in 1986, the Northern Territory government demanded that the job be done properly. We initiated court action in Australia and sent the Minister for Mines and Energy to lobby in Paris. Eventually, we were successful in getting a deferral of the decision.

We then spent 12 months writing to the federal government, through 1986 into 1987, asking it to carry out a joint scientific assessment of Stage 2 so that the job could be done properly. The federal government did not even respond to that; we did not even receive a letter. We then did our own scientific assessment of the area so that we would have hard information relating to those areas which we considered to be unworthy in terms of incorporation in a World Heritage area. That information, submitted in 1987, was the only evidence put before the World Heritage Committee in relation to Stage 2.

The ANPWS did nothing except make an application and send Gough Whitlam to Paris to buy favours from the various members of the World Heritage Committee in order to get the result which the federal government wanted. It was a rort. Because that was obvious, we were able to create such embarrassment that the rules were changed. The new rule states that any extension to boundaries must be treated as a new application. Because that rule does not take effect until January, we were concerned that the federal government might slip another letter to the committee and so achieve the World Heritage listing of Stage 3 by means of a boundary change without the necessary assessment.

What absolute, cynical nonsense we heard from the member for Stuart. I ask honourable members to look at the area shaded purple in appendix B of the document circulated today. The grey area in the middle of that is the conservation zone. The member for Stuart says that mining can be undertaken there with proper environmental safeguards. The entire area surrounding it, defined by old pastoral boundaries, has nothing to do with natural or geographic features. In other words, you mine the middle and surround it with a World Heritage listed area. What nonsense!

The area proposed for listing has not been assessed. If you are going to include areas on the World Heritage List, you must ensure that their inclusion is justified. The fact is that the World Heritage List has nothing to do with whether mining can or cannot occur. Under the World Heritage legislation and conventions, the federal minister can approve mining, logging or economic activity within a World Heritage area. There is nothing in the World Heritage Conventions which prevents that. In fact, it is Australian legislation, the National Parks and Wildlife Conservation Act, which prevents mining within Kakadu National Park.

The map in appendix B also shows 2 small areas shaded white. Those areas are not part of Kakadu National Park. One is the location of the Koongarra deposit and another is the location of the Ranger and Jabiluka deposits. So that it can say that it does not mine in national parks, the federal

government simply declares that those areas are not part of the park. The same applies to the conservation zone, which is not part of Stage 3. Members of the federal government want to be seen as environmental purists who do not mine in national parks and therefore they simply exclude some areas from the park. That is the sort of spurious nonsense the federal government indulges in as it plays political games in an effort to win the environmental vote in Sydney and Melbourne.

The federal government is not carrying out the necessary scientific work to assess the environments proposed for listing and is spreading the notion around the world that this government is merely trying to mine the areas. It knows as well as we do that World Heritage listing has nothing to do with mining. Its own legislation deals with that. We have been arguing that, if areas are to be listed, the proper processes should apply. That is where the problem arises because the criteria for World Heritage listing state that areas should have 'outstanding universal value, either from the point of view of history, art or science, or from the aesthetic or scientific point of view or from the point of view of science or conservation or natural beauty'. Even when you arrive at the entrance to Kakadu National Park, you will need a petrol stop, a cut lunch and a water bottle to reach any area that meets that description. You will drive east through flat, uninteresting countryside for 100 km before you find any area that has been filmed for our tourist ads.

I visited the Stage 3 area last year and I can understand why Senator Gareth Evans, when he was Minister for Resources and Energy, said after a visit: 'He had better get mining going in here before they declare it a mining heritage area'. The whole area is pockmarked with old mines. There are mining relics lying on the ground right through that area. It has been mined for decades.

The only argument the greenies have for Stage 3 is that it contains the headwaters for Kakadu. They say that, if we protect this area, we are protecting the pristine quality of the water going into the beautiful areas in Kakadu. You can achieve that just as effectively by imposing the necessary environmental controls on any development in those areas without including them in a national park. The federal government is not prepared to act in a commonsense way because that will not be helpful in the political games which it is playing down south. That is why we are fighting over the issue.

A tourist drives through Kakadu Stage 2 and, for 100 km, all he sees is scrub and open savannah. He asks: 'Is this Kakadu?' Finally, he reaches the absolutely beautiful areas of Yellow Waters, Obiri, Nourlangie, the escarpment and the Magela floodplains. He sees the wildlife on the South Alligator and it is fantastic. In the southern areas of the park, with the exception of UDP Falls, he will merely see more of what he saw entering the park along the Arnhem Highway. The creation of an extension to the park in that area is a nonsense and it is about time people recognised that.

We supported the listing of Kakadu Stage 1, which is a beautiful area. However, we do not support the political nonsense which underlies the extension of the park to an area which covers 20 000 km², which is 10 times the size of the originally proposed Kakadu National Park. That is what we are fighting about. Every time it has extended the boundaries, the federal government has refused to do the necessary research to justify it. That is why the Minister for Conservation received an excellent hearing last week in Canberra. The Canadian High Commissioner happened to be in Darwin and I explained the matter to him in exactly those terms. He accepted what I said. He could understand why it was essential that the job be done properly. By

approaching the diplomatic corps in Australia, we were able to cut through the polemics of ANPWS and the federal government and clearly explain that all we are asking of UNESCO, the World Heritage Committee and IUCN is that the job be done properly. Is that too much to ask, Mr Deputy Speaker? I congratulate the minister for the job he did last week.

The federal government finally realised that we had beaten it at its own game. What did it do? After refusing to reply to our requests for months, it at last said that it would not proceed with an application for listing of Stage 3 this year. That gives us the security of knowing that the matter will now have to be addressed properly, which is exactly what we have been asking for. We want the federal government to consult with us and do the job properly.

Despite what the opposition in this House and the federal government would like us to believe, this issue has nothing to do with mining. The member for Stuart has already shown his total ignorance by saying that he would welcome mining right in the middle of Stage 3. He would have the area encircling that giant, so-called conservation zone declared on the World Heritage List. One only needs to look at the map to see the nonsense of that suggestion on any environmental or conservation grounds. It is nothing more than cheap politics and it will not work. Anybody who sees the diagram in appendix B will recognise the nonsense. One either believes or does not believe that the area should be protected.

I say that the area should not be part of the national park but should be subject to the controls necessary to protect the headwaters of the watercourses which flow through Kakadu National Park. That is what we should be concentrating our attention on and not playing political games for the benefit of the trendy environmental greenie movement in Sydney and Melbourne. The New South Wales election proves that there are not many votes to be gained by doing that. It is time for the federal government to rethink its position and do its opinion polls again. Maybe it can become a born-again developer rather than a born-again greenie. I trust that I have demonstrated the absolutely nonsensical nature of the member for Stuart's contribution to this debate.

Mr SETTER (Jingili): Mr Speaker, I rise this afternoon to support the Minister for Conservation. I have heard criticism from the other side of the House today about the minister's proposal to send a delegation to Brasilia in the next week or two. I have heard the minister denigrated for taking that action and making the arrangements. Of course, we have heard recently that it has now been decided that the delegation should not proceed. That decision was made on the basis of a letter received from the Prime Minister. The minister read out an excerpt from the Prime Minister's letter during his speech. I would like to repeat it because it is quite important:

My government has not taken action to date on a possible Stage 3 nomination because of the need to resolve a number of issues connected with the Conservation Zone. We do not propose to raise the matter at the December 1988 meeting of the World Heritage Committee.

That sounds nice and warm and I am sure the Prime Minister can be taken at his word. 'We do not propose to raise the matter at the December 1988 meeting of the World Heritage Committee'. However, Mr Speaker, a day is a long time in politics. A week is much longer. We need to look only at the Leader of the Opposition. He could tell us how very long a day in politics is because he has travelled more than 5000 miles in the last 24 hours for no good result

at all. When he came into the House, he was still wiping the egg off his face. That is how long a day is in politics. I say to the honourable minister and the member for Nightcliff, who was going to lead that delegation: 'Do not unpack your bags, because you never know what will happen'. The federal government and the members on the opposite side of this Chamber just cannot be trusted. One never knows what stunt they will pull next.

In 1984, the Commonwealth Labor government gave a commitment at the Council of Conservation Ministers that it would not proceed with listings without the consent of the various state authorities. Did it fulfil that commitment? No, sir. Before the ink was dry, it was broken. We know that the federal government cannot be trusted. We have sent delegations to World Heritage meetings on previous occasions to oppose its proposals for the listing of Stages 1 and 2 of Kakadu and now we are looking down the barrel of Stage 3. We have the experience. We know that it cannot be trusted.

Let us cast our minds back to the time, 6 or 8 years ago, when this federal Labor government first came to power. The hot issue at the time was the Franklin River Dam. It was an issue of states rights. The focal point of the debate was whether the Tasmanian government or the federal government had the right to decide. History records that the federal Labor government used Australia's participation in agreements on World Heritage listing, plus the High Court, to bulldoze all opposition to its own view. Speaking of bulldozers, I suspect that Senator Gareth Evans was the federal minister who, at that time, ordered RAAF flights over the Franklin River area to take photographs of any bulldozers which might have been in the vicinity. His action in dragging the RAAF, an honourable organisation, into such covert activity created quite a scandal at the time.

Of course, the matter did not end with the Franklin River Dam. After the federal government won that battle, it got stuck into Stages 1 and 2 of Kakadu. It also got stuck into the rainforests of north Queensland and more covert flights were made to take photographs to satisfy the whim of federal ministers. An article in the Adelaide Advertiser of 9 January this year is headed: 'Government Admits Spying on Rainforest Loggers'. The story says: 'The federal government has admitted using helicopters to spy on timber workers in north Queensland rainforest'. It goes on to quote Senator Richardson. The federal government probably has aircraft flying around Kakadu Stage 3 right now, taking photographs. You cannot trust it.

There is no doubt that certain areas within Kakadu are worthy of World Heritage listing. I am referring to the floodplains and the beautiful escarpment area. They are magnificent. There is no question about that, none at all. I have visited the area on many occasions over the last 15 years. I have been fishing there. I have been camping and bushwalking. It is magnificent. The reality is, however, that that area is only a small part of the 66 000 km² that is proposed to be incorporated in the total Kakadu complex. As the member for Nightcliff said a moment ago, the original proposal was for a park of only a few thousand square kilometres. That is now to be 66 000 km². I was in the area last weekend. I drove through Kakadu Stage 1 and Stage 2 and the member for Nightcliff is absolutely correct. The majority of that country is open forest - rough scrub, absolutely useless country. It is similar to the country between here and Katherine, between Katherine and Tennant Creek or between ...

Mr Collins: Here and Townsville.

Mr SETTER: Virtually, except for the open plain country in Queensland. How World Heritage Listing of that country can be justified escapes me entirely.

The member for Stuart stated that we were sending out 2 conflicting messages. He said that we were promoting tourism on the one hand and, on the other, running around the world denigrating Kakadu by saying that it is not worth listing. The reality is, however, that whilst we are vigorously and correctly promoting tourism, many tourists who visit Kakadu Stages 1 and 2 go away very disappointed. That is particularly so for those who make day trips from Darwin and, particularly during the dry season, drive out through a large area which is completely burnt out. That drive is absolutely shocking.

I recently went on one of the boating tours conducted at Yellow Waters and I must say that I was appalled by what I saw there. The water level in Yellow Waters is about 2 m below what it would normally be. The little pontoon jetty where people alight from the tour vessels is sitting on the floor of the lagoon, high and dry. When the punts come in with their 2 big outboard motors and their loads of about 50 people, they are pushed through the mud so that people can step on to the pontoon. When it is time to leave, they have to be pushed through the mud again. That is how low the water is. The propellers on the outboards are churning up the mud at the bottom and the weed is being chopped up. That is a disgrace. In my opinion, ANPWS should be closing that area at this time of the year or relocating the boats elsewhere. The water is too shallow. People talk about environmental damage caused by buffalo and feral pigs but I can tell you, Mr Speaker, that a considerable amount of damage is being done to Yellow Waters Lagoon by those outboard motors. There are about half a dozen boats and, one after the other, they proceed through a fairly limited area of the lagoon, tearing up the bottom. Something should be done about that because ANPWS is not living up to its responsibilities.

Mr Speaker, let us look at what the NT News has said in relation to the World Heritage issues relating to Kakadu. I will quote from its editorial on 2 January 1988:

One of the most incredibly stupid federal decisions has seen \$40m-worth of uranium in Kakadu Stage 2 delivered to the 21 member countries that make up UNESCO's World Heritage Committee. The Canadians were happy. They are about to corner the world market in this commodity. No wonder they are one of the group of 7 richest nations in the industrialised west while we continue to drop on the ladder.

Mr Speaker, we saw evidence of that last month with those incredible balance of payments figures.

Mr Coulter went to Paris in an attempt to stop World Heritage listing. The fight was lost but not for the lack of trying. He was right to carry the Territory's case to UNESCO and must continue to fight to ensure that BHP develops Coronation Hill, that Peko Wallsend, Pancon and Denison proceed with new uranium mines and MIM goes ahead with the McArthur River deposits. Only a determined and courageous stand will deliver us from the people who think our economic future lies in basket-weaving.

Mr Speaker, those people should be sitting on the other side of the House now, but, as you can see, they have left. They have bolted because it is getting a

bit hot in the kitchen. The member for Sadadeen remains in the Chamber. I know that he shares my concern about this particular issue.

Let us have a look at a press release put out by Senator Grant Tambling. I received it on 29 March and I understand it was issued on 25 March. Senator Tambling's press release is headed 'ALP jackboots legislation through Senate' and reads as follows:

'World Heritage legislation rammed through the Senate yesterday set a dangerous precedent for Australian politics', Northern Territory Senator Grant Tambling warned today. The CLP Senator said: 'The controversial Conservation Legislation Amendment Bill 1988 was jackbooted through the Senate yesterday after the federal government, aided and abetted by the Australian Democrats, gagged debate. Yesterday was a black day for the people of Australia, who lost a basic right to hear important legislation fully debated in the federal parliament', he said. 'You can only assume the government was scared any flaws in the legislation would come to light and further destroy its credibility'.

That is the sort of federal government that we have. Those are the sort of actions that it takes. Mr Speaker, I refer you to the comments of the member for Stuart, as reported on 2 December last. As the Deputy Leader of the Opposition in the Northern Territory, he said that the Minister for Mines and Energy was in Paris 'denigrating the Top End' and 'badmouthing the Territory around the rest of the world'.

That typifies the attitude of members opposite. They would sell their grandmothers if it suited their left-wing ideology. All they have been doing for the last few years is trying to appease the greenie movement and the left-wing of their party in an endeavour to buy a few votes. That is what it is all about. The New South Wales state election proved earlier this year that the greenie vote is not very important at all. It just did not have the impetus which Labor expected it to have and that will be the case in the Northern Territory. The greenie vote will not help the opposition next time round. They will still be sitting there with their 6 or 5 or fewer members, and I think that their federal colleagues, Senator Bob Collins and Warren Snowdon, might find that their jobs are on the line too. They are not in Canberra fighting for the rights of Territorians. They are down there backing up the left wing of the Labor Party, and that is what it is all about: votes.

A member interjecting.

Mr SETTER: Mr Speaker, he is still smarting from the knife wound which he received in this very Assembly about 2 years ago. Remember when you guys shafted it right in between his ribs and forced him to resign? I am sure he remembers it well.

In closing, I wish to reiterate my support for the minister's statement. He was entirely correct in making the decision to send a delegation to Brasilia to defend the rights of Northern Territorians at the World Heritage Committee meeting. I repeat what I said earlier. I recommend to the members of the delegation that they do not unpack their suitcases because they may need them sooner rather than later.

Mr COLLINS (Sadadeen): Mr Speaker, during the last sittings, I referred to a list of 'IPA indicators' contained in the magazine of the Institute of Public Affairs. Included in the list was an item concerning the number of

international environment treaties to which Australia is a signatory. The number is 49. The item states that only one country has enacted specific legislation to fulfil obligations under the World Heritage Convention, and that country is Australia.

If I had my way, we would not even be a signatory to the World Heritage Convention because what it says is that it does not think that the people of Australia have enough common sense to look after their own country. In essence it means that we are ceding our sovereignty to the United Nations, a body with which I have the greatest difficulty on many issues, and to the countries which are the judges of whether specific areas qualify for World Heritage listing. When one looks at those countries, one begins to ask questions. I would not have a bar of World Heritage listing. Australia's involvement in it is selling out the country and indicating that the people of this country cannot be trusted to look after it themselves and that an international forum of questionable repute should make decisions which affect us.

I am reminded of the CITES agreement on crocodiles. We had to battle to get that changed so that we could become involved in the crocodile industry. A great many countries are signatories to it but I do not know of any apart from Australia which really police it. You can buy crocodile products in countries which are signatories to the agreement. As the Minister for Mines and Energy pointed out, the same applies to uranium. Canada is very keen to have Kakadu on the World Heritage List so that the area will be closed to mining, thus restricting one of Canada's main competitors in the world uranium market whilst it goes at mining hammer and tongs. Australia must surely be seen as a laughing-stock.

I certainly am not very pleased to think that, on the world stage, the states and the federal government are seen fighting one another. People must wonder about that. The only option which the states have is to get together and, if the only way to win the day is by embarrassing the federal government, so be it. They need to visit the embassies and provide the diplomatic corps with information on the process which the federal government has adopted in relation to World Heritage listing, thereby forcing the federal government to come to the party.

I castigated the minister gently in relation to his failure to go to Canberra to consult with the Commonwealth on the details of the government's important new housing package which we all hope will help Territorians. That, however, was a minor criticism; I simply believe that, by doing so, he would have covered his own backside against any negative comment. I hope that the minister will give his advisers a firm kick in relation to that. If he had spoken with the federal minister and particularly if he had obtained something in writing indicating that the federal minister had no real problems with the initiative, the kerfuffle would not have eventuated. The failure of the Territory government to consult in that matter, however, is nothing compared with the federal government's failure to honour its promise to consult with the states in relation to World Heritage listing and its action in giving away sovereign rights to land in this country to an international body.

I am not familiar with Kakadu Stage 3 and its attributes. I am, however, familiar with Stages 1 and 2 because I have visited them quite a few times over the years. There are 2 extreme views in relation to Kakadu. The first is that it is wonderful and beautiful and every square inch is absolutely perfect and the second is that it is simply not worth going to see. The truth lies somewhere in between. The vast majority of people visiting Kakadu enter

it by road and, in doing so, pass through many miles of very boring country. There are some truly beautiful spots but, in my view, they occupy a very small percentage of the total land area of the park. Many other people share that view.

On a previous occasion in this House, I related the story of how my brother came to the Top End earlier in the year with his wife and some friends on a caravan trip. They were very keen to visit Kakadu. I told him of my experience of the area, that they would drive for many miles through country of no great interest and would find some beautiful spots here and there. Probably because they were mentally prepared for the situation, they thoroughly enjoyed themselves. They were prepared for the long stretches of boring country in between the beauty spots. They told me that, on their way to the Top End, they had spoken with some caravanners who were returning south after visiting Kakadu and felt that it was a bit of a fraud. I understand the reason for that. Down south, those who are trying to promote World Heritage listing for Kakadu show only the beauty spots, the bird life, the crocodiles, the waterways etc and that gives a false impression. People's expectations are raised too high and, when they visit the area, they are disappointed.

The truth will come out because people such as those caravanners will return south and tell others about what they have seen. If my brother was right, and he was very emphatic on the subject, there was a lot of bitching about Kakadu not being what it was cracked up to be. The truth will out because people will pass on the message. I believe that, if information on Kakadu were given more honestly, showing it as it really is, people would not go away feeling unhappy. Perhaps people who are wealthy and can afford to travel in a small plane or helicopter, skipping from one beauty spot to another, would gain a much more memorable impression. If one drives, however, one learns the full truth.

I believe World Heritage listing is being pushed for by those people who are totally opposed to the mining of uranium. They will use any argument they possibly can to try to prevent it. Their efforts will be pretty fruitless because there are many other places around the world where uranium is being mined and will continue to be mined and those producers are delighted that we are not mining our resources. If we chose to mine them, we could be a very useful instrument in the uranium industry generally.

As I have said before, we could mine our uranium and enrich it to roughly 3% uranium 235 isotope which is the fissionable one. That is the amount of enrichment required for producing fuel rods for the nuclear fuel cycle but well below the level required for the production of nuclear weapons or to cause nuclear explosions. We could then sell the rods, on contract, to the specifications of countries using uranium as a source of fuel. That fuel does not produce carbon dioxide or other gases which affect the ozone layer and would not add to the Greenhouse Effect. We could then take the rods back, reprocess them and take the high-level, radioactive material and put it into synroc, an Australian invention of which we should be very proud. We would store it deep in the ground, in appropriate sites where there is a lack of water. I am more than satisfied that we could do that very safely. Through that process, we would make a very worthwhile contribution to the safety of this world of ours and, in the process, very importantly, we could create a great deal of wealth for this country. We all know that our standard of living is falling. It almost seems that the federal government is proud of that. I believe that, at the next federal election, the people of Australia will say that enough is enough and that the ALP's gang in Canberra will be tipped out.

Mr Speaker, I commend the minister for creating a stir. The battle has not been won of course. The minister might have a piece of paper with Mr Hawke's signature on it which is certainly better than a word in the press from Senator Bob Collins. However, the price of freedom is eternal vigilance. If the minister has to stir again, he should be prepared to do so. Certainly, he can be assured of my support.

Mr McCARTHY (Labour, Administrative Services and Local Government): Mr Speaker, I do not think there is a need to say a great deal more on this issue. It has all been said. I think, however, that something needs to be said in response to the outrageous remarks of the member for Stuart. Unfortunately, he is rather prone to making outrageous remarks and then believing them when he sees them in print.

Mr Firmin: Rather prone?

Mr McCARTHY: You are right. In fact, he is a little more than 'rather prone'. Of course, nobody but himself would believe the things that he says. I have not looked at Hansard but I have a very good memory of the debate on the World Heritage listing of Kakadu Stage 2. The then Leader of the Opposition stated that a helicopter had landed at Kapalga and that film had been taken in that area. I was accused of having misled the House. I was asked to withdraw, which I refused to do because no proof was given. I had not misled the House. The film was not shot at Kapalga.

As others have said today, parts of Kakadu National Park are truly worthy of being a great national park. However, in 20 000 km², I would be rather surprised if somebody could identify 1000 km² of country which is truly spectacular or markedly different from many other parts of Australia and many other parts of the world. I would be surprised if that could be done. In fact, the vast majority of Kakadu National Park is rather dreary. It is similar to other parts of the Top End, right across Australia. There is nothing spectacular about the vast majority of the country in the park. In fact, there is nothing particularly special about large sections of it.

Other areas of the Northern Territory, such as Litchfield National Park, could easily be said to be as worthy of World Heritage listing as parts of Kakadu National Park. If we were to propose World Heritage listing of Litchfield National Park, would we also propose that an enormous area around it should also be listed in order to create a buffer zone? That is obviously crazy and we would not do it.

There are a number of river systems in Kakadu National Park. There are other quite spectacular river systems around the Territory and, indeed, right around Australia, which have not been nominated for World Heritage listing. The Victoria River is one. The Fitzmaurice River is another - a very spectacular river. Some of the rivers in the Gulf are truly worthy of being looked after. It is hardly worth nominating them for World Heritage listing because there are so many of them. They are, however, very spectacular areas that we can be proud of, areas that will attract large visitation. Why lock them up in World Heritage listing? We would not do it, Mr Speaker, and neither should we.

For many people, Kakadu National Park is becoming much harder to see. Many people go to Kakadu expecting to see 20 000 km² of enormous beauty because that is what is shown in publicity. When we advertise Kakadu National Park, we advertise the spectacular areas: the falls, the rock formations, the escarpment, the river systems. We advertise those areas because they are

spectacular. However, they comprise a very small part of the park. On occasions, people find it difficult to get into some of those areas. They go away feeling very disenchanted, saying that they have seen that sort of country all the way up the highway from Katherine. They are very frustrated by the fact that a vast majority of Kakadu is not worthy of merit. That will cause us problems in the future and we should make it very clear that the spectacular parts of Kakadu National Park are very confined. Perhaps we should identify them more clearly on our maps so that it is obvious that we are not saying that the entire park is spectacularly beautiful.

Seeing places of spectacular beauty in Litchfield Park - waterways, waterfalls, rock formations, escarpment country - does not involve as much travel as in Kakadu. Gregory National Park is another example of a superb Territory park. The majority of its area is quite unique. There is no enormous buffer zone of burnt-out country around it. It is made up, almost in its entirety, of the river system, the rock formations and the escarpment country. It is a truly spectacular park and it is very large. Should it be nominated for World Heritage listing? I do not believe so.

Like the member for Sadadeen, I wonder why we need World Heritage listing. We have spectacular parks throughout Australia. Why list them for World Heritage? We are quite capable of looking after our parks. We know how to do that; we have been looking after them for years. We will not allow places to be devastated. We will not allow parks such as Gregory or Litchfield to be devastated. Quite clearly, there could be an opportunity for multiple use in national parks, provided that it is managed carefully and correctly, and there is nothing in the past to indicate that that would not occur. The parks would be managed carefully and they would be protected.

Mr Speaker, as I have said, I really cannot see the need for World Heritage listing. It is a mechanism for the federal government to override the state and Territory governments. Why would they want to do that? It is only because of a very vocal lobby of anti-development, anti-mining, anti-everything people. There is no reason for us to support that lobby. It does not support the Northern Territory. The Northern Territory is a place of great resources, not only in its natural beauty but in its resources under the ground and above the ground. We should use them to best effect. We should have the ability to use them. We should not have to rely on other bodies, whether they be the national government or would-be bodies such as the World Heritage Committee. There is no reason for us to be involved with them. We have responsibility for parks generally. The states normally have responsibility for their parks. We should have responsibility for all of our parks. We should not have a situation where the federal government can say to us at any time: 'We intend to list this or that area and we will not negotiate with you'. That is what happens now.

At a meeting of Conservation Ministers in Perth a couple of years ago, I put forward a very strong plea to the state and federal ministers that negotiation should take place before any World Heritage listing. Ministers such as Hon Peter Hodgman of Tasmania and Hon Geoff Muntz from Queensland were rather taken aback when I indicated to them that the federal government would not negotiate with them about World Heritage listing in their states and would not allow them to put an alternative view. I well recall that the Queensland minister was very irate. He said: 'That is not on. We will definitely be able to go and put our case. We will hop in the jet and go'. I said: 'I am sorry Geoff. That is not going to happen. After lunch, we will put it to the minister, Senator Richardson, and Derrick Ovington'. When we did that, they made the situation quite clear. They said: 'No. We are not going to let you

take part in this. It is our responsibility and we will do it ourselves'. That created quite a stir and I fully understand why.

If, God forbid, members opposite ever are in a position to manage the Territory, I am sure they will be very upset if a federal government of whatever political persuasion tells them: 'We are not going to talk to you about World Heritage listing for Yirrkala or Maningrida or anywhere else. We are simply going to do it'. They would obviously be very upset. I am sure that the member for Arnhem will understand what I am saying.

The efforts of people from other parts of Australia to carry out social planning experiments in the Northern Territory really cause us a lot of heartache and restrict our ability to lead our own lives. I believe that, as we have done in the past, we should give a very strong indication to the federal government - from both sides of this House - that we will not wear it. I strongly support the minister's statement. Like other members who have stated their concerns, I am not convinced that the federal government will play fair. I do not trust it and history indicates that I have very sound reasons for that.

Mr REED (Primary Industry and Fisheries): Mr Speaker, I will not take up much of the House's time on this issue but it would be remiss of me not to take part in the debate. The federal government's actions in relation to World Heritage listing have demonstrated a dreadful lack of national self-confidence. The World Heritage system offers an opportunity for a national government with insufficient fortitude to make decisions on its own behalf and on behalf of the nation, to opt out of making difficult decisions. The federal government's actions in this regard have demonstrated an abrogation of its responsibilities to the nation and its people. Reference has been made today to a number of examples, such as the use of RAAF aircraft in Tasmania to monitor the activities of a state government.

There is no need to outline the extent of the trauma that the Territory has experienced, particularly in regard to Kakadu and latterly at Uluru. It is a dreadful indictment on the national government that it is prepared to take away the rights of the states and territories to make decisions in relation to the management of national parks and other areas of national heritage. Such decisions should be made by Australians, who certainly have the ability to make them. We should not depend on the people of Libya and other obscure countries who bring to bear all sorts of influences which we in the country are fortunate enough to avoid. We are forced to endure that because of the World Heritage legislation, and it is nothing short of a national scandal.

Like many other Territorians, I have visited Kakadu over a period of years. In fact, 10 or 15 years ago, I used to visit the area on a fairly regular basis for the purposes of recreation and fishing. It is a matter of some concern to me that it is now the intention of a government based in Canberra, which has very little feeling for the interests of Territorians, to prevent Territorians from fishing in Kakadu for some obscure reasons, based internationally rather than nationally, and without a Territory perspective. Territorians have a right to visit Kakadu to enjoy the beauty of the park and, if they wish, they should have the right to fish. If, having recognised that right, there is perceived to be a need to preserve the natural features of the park, I am happy to accede to the banning of the taking of fish from the park. Nonetheless, we should recognise the rights of Territorians. Perhaps we could examine options such as a tag-and-release scheme. I believe Territorians would be happy to pursue that approach. That has already been made clear by the amateur fishing groups in the Territory.

During the hearing of the Jawoyn Land Claim, there was a classic example of how we suffer from international agreements of this nature and the management of our parks by a federal body far removed from the requirements of the people of the Territory. When giving evidence, an ANPWS officer was asked how crocodile management was undertaken in Kakadu. The response was that, in contrast with crocodile management practices in areas administered by the Conservation Commission, if a crocodile was perceived to be a danger to visitors to Kakadu National Park, it was not immediately captured and removed. Consultation took place between the Aboriginal traditional owners of the park and the managers of the park, the Australian National Parks and Wildlife Service. This consultation could continue for some time. In fact, on this particular occasion, it went on for 4 to 6 weeks.

The Land Commissioner was most intrigued by the officer's account of the consultation which occurred. Indeed, at the end of the explanation, we were all on tenterhooks waiting to find out what happened at the end of all the negotiations. Uppermost in our minds was the fact that this crocodile, which was swimming up and down the East Alligator River, was of great potential danger to any visitor to the park. The story, however, ended there. The advice was that the matter was resolved; there was no concern on the part of the Aboriginal people and the park managers were very happy because the matter was resolved. The Land Commissioner asked: 'Could you please explain what happened to the crocodile?' The response was: 'Your Honour, the crocodile swam away. During the course of the negotiations, which were so protracted, the problem solved itself'.

To me, that episode epitomises the problems we face with management from afar. The negotiations are so protracted that the very problem which we face is not resolved but is swallowed up by the bureaucracy. One can really understand why people in the Northern Territory refer to Kakadu as Kaka-don't. Management by remote authorities does not work. It does not work nationally, as I have just indicated, and it clearly cannot work internationally. We have the ability to address our problems at a territory, state and national level but we have abrogated our rights. I believe that we really have to look closely at the international agreements which we have entered into. In particular, the World Heritage agreements leave much to be desired. We really have the ability to deal with these problems ourselves. I commend the minister for the statement that he has made to the House today.

Mr MANZIE (Conservation): Mr Speaker, the comments made by honourable members in relation to the statement are certainly appreciated. I believe that government members have certainly demonstrated that they are across the issues involved in the management of our parks and, more importantly, the problems involved in potential nomination of those parks, in particular Kakadu Stage 3, for World Heritage listing.

The member for Arnhem said that I had made no contact with the federal government. I would like to point out that the Chief Minister wrote 2 letters to the Prime Minister. We waited for 3 months before we received an answer. We had to proceed with our detailed planning regarding representation in Brasilia before we received an answer from the Prime Minister which, hopefully, we can trust. Whilst we have no option but to do so, we must all be mindful of the fact that, when we received an undertaking from the previous Minister for the Environment, that undertaking was breached on the very day it was made. The federal government proceeded in spite of it and that has to be uppermost in our minds.

The member for Stuart complained that the Northern Territory would never approve the World Heritage listing of any area in the Territory. I draw to his attention this government's active role in ensuring that Stage 1 of Kakadu received World Heritage listing. I urge him to carry out a little research into what occurred there. If he had any honesty at all, he would withdraw the comments he made. It is important that we realise that Stage 1 was proposed for World Heritage listing on the initiative of the Northern Territory government. Stage 2 was done in entirely the opposite fashion. We had received a written guarantee from the minister that no proposal would be put. It was then put by means of a hasty letter and behind-the-scenes skulduggery in Paris.

The Deputy Chief Minister fought extremely hard for the rights of Territorians. Even though we were unsuccessful because of the background work carried out by the federal government, my colleague was instrumental in causing the rules to be changed. Those rules now mean that any further extension of the boundaries of Kakadu will have to be proceeded with in the same way as a new nomination. We must ensure that, before any such nomination is proposed, a proper scientific survey of the area is carried out to ensure that it meets the requirements of World Heritage. I will not repeat what has been said here today but it is obvious that vast areas of Stage 3 will not qualify for World Heritage listing. Hopefully, common sense will prevail in relation to that.

The other thing that was brought home quite forcefully during this debate was the simple fact that 2 parks in the Northern Territory are operated and controlled by the Australian National Parks and Wildlife Service. We operate over 100 parks in the Territory. The Conservation Commission has no equal in terms of management of parks throughout Australia. We do it well and we do it properly.

Why are there 2 areas that have to be run by the Australian National Parks and Wildlife Service, a service which operates no parks anywhere else in this country? It is not even considered to be capable of operating the parks in Canberra. Nevertheless, with a staff of 120 situated outside the Territory's borders, it is deemed to be the only authority capable of managing Kakadu and Uluru. That is nonsense and an insult to the highly professional staff of the Conservation Commission. The most frightful aspect of World Heritage listing is that the areas listed become part and parcel of an international treaty under which the Commonwealth, through powers which have been recognised by the High Court, has control for ever and a day. Obviously, the World Heritage listing of Kakadu is a back-door ploy to ensure that that area of the Territory never comes under Territory control. We must be aware that we live in a democracy and that this parliament has been given the responsibility of controlling our lands and our parks. Until such time as members elected to this House have that ability, none of us can rest. Mr Speaker, I commend the statement and I thank honourable members for their contributions.

Motion agreed to.

MATTER OF PUBLIC IMPORTANCE

The Government's Failure to Provide for the Health and Community Needs of the People of the Northern Territory.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Honourable members, Mr Speaker has received the following letter from the member for MacDonnell.

Dear Mr Speaker,

Pursuant to standing order 94, I propose for discussion as a definite matter of public importance this morning, the following matter: the failure of the government throughout 1988 to provide for the health and community needs of the people of the Northern Territory.

Yours sincerely,
Neil Bell.

Is the proposed discussion supported? It is supported.

Mr BELL (MacDonnell): Mr Deputy Speaker, as all honourable members will know and as the people of the Northern Territory know, the performance of the Minister for Health and Community Services, throughout this year, has been an absolute disaster. It is one of the less memorable features of the bicentenary. Time after time, the opposition has revealed the shortcomings in the minister's administration of his portfolio, not only to members of this House but to many people in the towns and communities of the Territory. I propose in this matter of public importance debate to remind honourable members and the minister of some of the more depressing landmarks in his administration of his portfolio during this year. I intend to make a few comments about problems within his portfolio and to make some reference to the possible explanations for them.

Honourable members will be aware that the minister's performance has been the subject of a number of matters of public importance. Who will forget the debacle of his attempted response in relation to the ill-fated report 'Who Speaks for Katherine?' We also have the ongoing saga of the radiology services at the Royal Darwin Hospital. The minister was stampeded into making some provision for those services and, in doing so, he failed to appropriately deal with the tender situation. Likewise, during the August sittings, the opposition drew the minister's attention and this House's attention to problems with health care for Aboriginal people. Equally, who will forget the bumbling responses we heard from the honourable minister when he tried to explain why psychiatric patients and maternity patients were not able to be adequately accommodated within the Royal Darwin Hospital?

Moving away from the health area, I remind the honourable minister of the matter of public importance debate during the last sittings on health, safety, economy and heritage issues in Alice Springs. I have mentioned already today, in debate on the minister's statement, the problems which the minister had ignored in that regard. I further remind honourable members of the matter of public importance debate that was brought on by the opposition during the May sittings in relation to circumstances at Yulara, and the outrageous dilatory fashion in which this government failed to honour its election promises for so many months, when there was an obvious and pressing need for ambulance services in that community.

The overall picture gleaned from the matter of public importance debates and the issues which have been raised by myself and other opposition members this year is one of a total breakdown of quality health care in the Northern Territory, for which the honourable minister is responsible. The issues which have been of concern include the use of hospital facilities throughout the Northern Territory, the problems of people living in remote areas and the problems of people who have special health care needs which have not been met. I refer particularly to the problems of people needing psychiatric treatment and people requiring drug and alcohol services. I refer also to this

minister's failure to provide for the pressing health needs of the Aboriginal community around the Territory.

Turning to the process of administration put in place by this government, there is no doubt that the amalgamation of the departments for which the minister was responsible has proved to be an absolute disaster. The Department of Health and Community Services is so enormous that it outstrips the size of other departments. There is a problem because of this minister's administration and politicisation of his department. Morale is at an all-time low. The department has lost the expertise of key people in its head office during the last 12 months. I refer to the departure of the Assistant Secretary of the Health Services Division, the Director of Community Affairs and Grants in the Policy Branch, the Director of the Communicable Diseases Branch, the Directors of the Darwin and Katherine Regions and so on. These people were well qualified, competent and dedicated. They have all gone to prestigious positions interstate. This is the sort of brain drain which the Northern Territory cannot afford and I wonder why the minister has not mentioned it in one of the statements which he makes in this Assembly on an almost daily basis.

I mentioned some of the key decision-makers who have been head-hunted but what of the many lower- and middle-level staff who keep the wheels turning? I will look at one area which, judging from his public comments, is of particular interest to the minister - namely, the child protection program. In October, during the budget debate, the minister regaled this Assembly with his grand plans for a child protection program. He proudly announced that there would be 22 new positions created across the Northern Territory. Superficially, this sounded very positive. The reality, unfortunately, is that a number of vacancies already exist in regional offices and that they cannot be filled. Given the pressing nature of this problem, I would have thought that some statement from the minister was required.

Let me assist the minister by giving him some figures. At the base-grade level, which is where child protection investigations tend to be carried out, there are 3 vacancies among 12 positions at the Casuarina office and 3 vacancies among 6 positions at the Darwin office. Alice Springs has been described as grossly understaffed and in a chronic state of crisis. The minister's department is notorious for its high rate of staff turnover. The reasons people give for leaving are particularly disturbing. Exit interviews have been rumoured to demonstrate concerns about poor staff development opportunities and poor channels of communication. It is clear that this minister has presided over an increasingly crisis-ridden department. I suggest that, instead of getting up in this House to trumpet spurious achievements, that he addresses these issues within his department: career path planning, stress management, in-service training and team building.

The department appears to be suffering from a lack of any genuine strategic planning, priority setting or program integration. We could understand this if the department were in its founding stages. It has had 18 months to sort out that sort of chaos. It would seem that, in an attempt to deal with that chaos, one region is planning to restructure again. We have all witnessed the fall-out from the departmental restructure. Do we have to stand by 18 months later and watch the regional structures coping with crisis all over again? We recognise that there are some excellent people trying to restructure and reorganise systems so that they work. We simply ask why it is taking so long.

Not only does the department seem to be going nowhere; it does not even seem to understand where it has come from. What sort of indicators are being used to measure the effectiveness of programs other than SAAP and the drug and alcohol services? What is the master plan? The minister himself must be despondent about the department. What looked like an exciting and sensible amalgamation has become a nightmare. The restructuring of Correctional Services as an independent structure indicates its plan for a future breakaway. What else is lurking there, waiting to head out on its own? With the loss of staff, the potential for policy development must have been dramatically reduced. This, in turn, must seriously impact on the way in which services are delivered to the community that pays for them.

Mr Deputy Speaker, let me turn for a moment to the Royal Darwin Hospital. Having taken over this portfolio at the beginning of this year, it came as something of a shock to see exactly the sort of problems that have been created by this minister and his refusal to accept responsibility for them. I have referred already to the radiological services and I do not propose to dwell on those at the moment. I will not comment on a coronial inquest which is now being held except to say that it will raise further problems for the minister, specifically with respect to radiological services.

The minister faces further problems at the Royal Darwin Hospital. I remind him of the issue that has already been raised with respect to the orthopaedic specialists and the services which they provide. Let me say that the minister's response to the difficulties in that area and his cavalier attitude towards specialist staff do him no credit and, I suggest, place the health of Territorians in jeopardy.

I have already made reference to the problem of the location of psychiatric patients in Ward 5 at Royal Darwin Hospital. Who can forget the problems of maternity patients not being able to nurse their children with ease of mind because of the quite inappropriate collocation of wards in circumstances that should never be tolerated in a hospital in 1988?

Further problems have been caused at the Royal Darwin Hospital by the decision to relocate the detoxification unit to a site in the middle of the staff quarters. Whilst I am addressing the issue of the accommodation of staff at that hospital, I want to place on record again in this Assembly my concern, and the minister's obvious lack of concern, about the quality of that accommodation. If the minister is prepared to make the staff of the hospital live immediately adjacent to units of the hospital obviously he will create problems of staff turnover. I believe that the matter is very serious and that the minister's approach is surprising to say the least.

The opposition has been advised that, with the change in the position of the Chief Executive Officer, the accommodation of the Chief Executive Officer has been moved to the campus at the Royal Darwin Hospital. My understanding is that this is a very unusual innovation. I understand that, prior to becoming the Chief Executive Officer, the current incumbent lived about 5 minutes away from the hospital. I would like the honourable minister to explain that to me at some stage. I appreciate that, in the context of the large number of issues that I have raised in this particular debate, it might not be possible for the honourable minister to provide me with immediate information and I am sure that there must be some reasonable explanation for the total situation in relation to staff accommodation at the hospital. However, there appears to be some disregard for the situation of the more junior staff, particularly in relation to the relocation of the detoxification unit.

Equally, the fire compartmentalisation at the Royal Darwin Hospital has created considerable problems. This has been exacerbated by the decision to temporarily use wards of the public hospital to accommodate a private hospital. Such decisions have jeopardised the quality of care which patients at the hospital have been able to enjoy.

I also raised the matter of the Sexual Assault Referral Centre during the budget debate. The comments I made then still stand. The centre has not been staffed for months. Further problems exist in the casualty section. I understand that the need for people to queue in casualty has been a problem at the Royal Darwin Hospital, and again I refer the honourable minister to the coronial inquest currently being conducted in Alice Springs. I suggest that one of the necessary outcomes of that inquest is likely to be some investigation of that problem.

The further question of freedom of information also needs to be addressed by the minister. In fact, I would expect him to have already given some thought to it as it has been raised by the opposition on a number of occasions. Indeed, I asked a question on notice of the Minister for Health and Community Services with respect to his use of Commonwealth freedom of information legislation. I know that the government has made use of this legislation on 29 occasions. I wonder what thought the minister has given to the application of the principles of freedom of information within his own department and what thought he has given to the question of patient access to personal files held within his department.

In conclusion, let me say that I suggest that this minister has presided over a most extraordinary decrease in the quality of services provided by the department for which he is responsible. What is of so much concern and what justifies this matter of public importance is that it is the biggest department in the Northern Territory. It is the department that has responsibility for the lives of thousands of Territorians. I ask you, Mr Deputy Speaker, what responsibility could be greater than the responsibility for services relating to life and death?

Mr DALE (Health and Community Services): Mr Deputy Speaker, I have just listened for 20 minutes to the biggest load of unsubstantiated garbage I have ever heard in my life, delivered by the laziest and most incompetent spokesman on any subject in any parliament anywhere in the Westminster system.

I delivered a major statement on the Royal Darwin Hospital some time ago. I will remind you, Mr Deputy Speaker, of the response of the shadow spokesman on health matters in the Northern Territory. He said: 'I have no intention of dealing with this statement at length because it contains so little substance'. He has always been absolutely incompetent in commenting on matters which I have raised in the process of informing this House. I have made several statements including the one I made earlier today. The member opposite had 30 minutes in which to respond to that statement on a major health issue for the people of the Northern Territory, but he spoke for only 13 minutes. Clearly, the laziness and incompetence of the shadow spokesman on health matters are such that he lacks the ability even to assess his own skills, let alone anybody else's.

I have here 32 pages of points which I would like to make in reply to the member for MacDonnell. It is obvious that I will not be able to deliver the 32 pages in the time allotted to me, and I do not wish to delay the Assembly by seeking an extension of time. Mr Deputy Speaker, I therefore seek leave to have incorporated in Hansard any part of my speech which I am unable to complete by the expiration of the time allotted.

Leave granted.

Mr DALE: Mr Deputy Speaker, I will go as quickly as I can and direct myself to the matter of public importance as expressed by the member opposite: 'the failure of the government throughout 1988 to provide for the health and community needs of the people of the Northern Territory'. I will reply to that charge rather than to the drivel he presented in his speech. In response to the member's charge, I say piffle. The facts are as I am about to describe them.

I will commence with an overview. The 1988-89 budget for the Department of Health and Community Services is up by 5% in real terms to \$205.4m, with grants to community organisations to exceed \$24m. Departmental staffing is to be increased by 73 up to 3774 to accommodate the new initiatives and the new capital works program for the 1988-89 financial year will involve the expenditure of a further \$7.7m.

In the general area of hospital services, the opening of the new Darwin Private Hospital in the grounds of the Royal Darwin Hospital in October 1988 offers Territorians a choice between public and private hospital care and is reducing the cost of the public hospital system. An announcement will be made later this year concerning the developers of a private hospital proposed for Alice Springs. Following successful negotiations with the Commonwealth, funding has been provided for 3 modular courses for nurses, provided at the Darwin Institute of Technology. The courses cover psychiatric and mental health, primary health care and critical care.

At the Royal Darwin Hospital, equipment contracts worth almost \$1.6m have been let for radiology services. The main ward in block 5 will be upgraded during the next 2 years, at an estimated cost of \$3m. Remedial works to the chilled water air-conditioning service will be conducted over the next few years at an estimated cost of \$4m. The detoxification unit will be upgraded and psychiatric services will be collocated on the Royal Darwin Hospital campus. An additional Aboriginal welfare assistant will be appointed to meet growing needs. A hyperbaric chamber will be trialed and planning is under way for the development of an oncology and cancer management clinic. The accident and emergency sections will be upgraded and a new director will be appointed. Negotiations soon to be completed will lead to a plastic surgeon and neurosurgeon being available locally in early 1989. The clean room complex in the pharmacy was opened in March 1988 and a pharmacy and inventory control computer system was commissioned in June 1988. The seating clinic opened in October 1988. All this, and the shadow spokesman says that I have done nothing!

At the Katherine Hospital, an amount of \$3.8m has been set aside for the construction of 2 operating theatres, a delivery suite, a central sterilising department and a 20-bed obstetrics and gynaecology ward. Stage 4 of an ongoing program converting staff quarters from bedsitters to 1-bedroom flats is to proceed this year at a cost of \$180 000 and 5 additional nurses will be added to staff establishment at an estimated cost of \$200 000.

At the Alice Springs Hospital, a full-time orthopaedic service is being provided at an estimated cost of \$100 000 and negotiations are under way for the upgrading of hospital radiological and diagnostic capability by using a privately-owned CT facility. A computerised pathology system will be installed at a cost of \$60 000 to improve efficiency and cost-effectiveness and a substantially increased allocation of \$600 000 has been made for essential hospital equipment.

At the Gove District Hospital, developments include the commissioning of limited attendance boilers in July at an estimated cost of \$200 000 and the provision of medical services at the local or regional level rather than evacuation to larger hospitals. Services at the Tennant Creek Hospital have been continued and improved with an increased allocation of \$116 000 for essential equipment.

Health services are being provided in many areas, and I will cover them one at a time, beginning with mental health services which have received a 60% funding increase to \$5.4m in 1988-89. Regional mental health services are being developed in Alice Springs, Katherine and Nhulunbuy involving 11 staff and the expenditure of \$446 000 in the full year. A sexual offenders treatment unit is being established in Darwin at an estimated annual cost of \$125 000 and a grant has been made to the NT Mental Health Association to operate 'The Manse' at the Tamarind Centre as a low-cost transitional accommodation facility. Stage 2 of modifications to the Tamarind Centre, providing community psychiatric services, are proceeding at an estimated cost of \$280 000.

Drug and alcohol services have received a budget allocation of \$1.8m in 1988-89, an increase of 10%. An alcohol and drug dependency service unit is being established in Alice Springs. A 2-stage survey has been conducted into drug use patterns in NT Aboriginal communities. The first stage involved data collection on drug and alcohol consumption whilst the second involved the return of survey results to the communities and discussion on the effects of drugs and alcohol. The drugs of concern have been tobacco, chewing tobacco, alcohol, kava and analgesics. This survey produced 2 sets of 4 booklets for 2 regions of the Territory - the Top End and Katherine, and central Australia.

The budget allocation in the area of communicable diseases has been increased by 12% in 1988-89, to \$2.1m, of which in excess of \$1m has been allocated for AIDS education and prevention programs. The department has put into place a coordinated strategy of education programs and counselling, testing and treatment services as well as establishing a program which utilises the media in the all-important area of education for prevention. We were the first in Australia to test all prisoners and to offer testing to pregnant women and departmental staff working in the area and recommend testing to people with other sexually transmissible diseases. The amalgamation of the Communicable Diseases Branch with the Communicable Diseases Centre will provide a single centre of program development in infectious disease control in the Northern Territory. Increased staffing will cost \$30 000 in a full year for a full-time nurse specialist for tuberculosis.

The urban community health system has received an increase of 5.5% in this year's budget allocation. The allocation allows for the creation of 6 additional positions, costing \$200 000 in a full year, in the areas of palliative care, occupational health and physiotherapy, as well as 2 additional staff in Palmerston. In addition, the renal dialysis unit in Alice Springs is now fully operational.

The budget allocation for rural health services is \$21m, an increase of 12% on the 1987-88 figure. New clinics are to be constructed at Lake Nash, Mount Liebig and Harts Range and a new rural health centre at Borroloola, costing \$800 000, will be commissioned later this year. Health services at Yulara will be continued and improved through a management agreement with the department, the Yulara Corporation and a private doctor at an estimated cost of \$200 000. The Palumpa Community Health Centre is also being upgraded at an estimated cost of \$85 000. An additional nurse will be employed at Yirrkala

by means of a grant-in-aid of \$36 000 and an additional 6 Aboriginal health workers will be employed in the Katherine region to provide services to communities where insufficient Aboriginal health worker support exists. Occupational and speech therapists will be employed in the Katherine region, at a cost of \$100 000. The official opening of the Gapuwiyak Health Centre also occurred in May 1988.

On 24 November 1987, I tabled in the House a ministerial statement, of which the member opposite took absolutely no notice, on services to Aborigines in the Northern Territory. That statement indicated the government's priority of improving Aboriginal health and reiterated its policy on self-determination and self-management. The following highlights illustrate progress in the various areas of Aboriginal health in 1988.

In April 1988, a coordinator of the Aboriginal Health Worker Program was employed. This is a new position which has been created to pursue the objective of achieving a coordinated approach to Aboriginal health worker training throughout the Territory and to explore the potential to have the health training articulate with the general education system. Since the appointment of the coordinator, there has been considerable development.

Aboriginal health workers have expressed their desire to have their initial training recognised at certificate level in the TAFE system. Meetings are being held with Batchelor College to discuss the attainment of a certificate level course for Aboriginal health workers as well as an associate diploma course for qualified Aboriginal health workers who wish to undertake further education. A revised model for training of Aboriginal health workers has been proposed by a senior Aboriginal health worker and approved by the Aboriginal Health Worker Conference and myself. The new model for undergraduate Aboriginal health worker education has an Aboriginal concept framework which enhances the primary health care approach. A new career structure for Aboriginal health workers has been endorsed, allowing health workers to have career paths in the areas of administration, education and practice. It significantly enhances the status of Aboriginal health workers and appropriately recompenses them for the vital role they play in Aboriginal health.

In August 1988, a successful Territory-wide Aboriginal Health Worker Conference, which attracted interstate participants, was held. The conference recommended that another conference be held next year and I approved that recommendation at the conference. Conferences of this nature are of paramount importance in my view. They give Aboriginal health workers and other community members the opportunity to discuss health-related problems and associated developments. Aboriginal health workers from the Territory were invited to participate in an international AIDS conference. AIDS education programs operate in Aboriginal communities throughout the Northern Territory and have been acclaimed throughout the world.

An Aboriginal health promotion program has been developed. It is a bicultural program combining modern strategies and technology with traditional concepts and symbols developed around the theme of care and sharing, which is central to the Aboriginal concept of life and health. Another health promotion initiative has been the production of relevant resources such as posters, stories, songs, television commercials and T-shirts to convey messages designed to strengthen Aboriginal life and culture.

The Northern Territory government has had an input in the National Aboriginal Health Strategy Working Party through its representative,

Mr Brian Dixon, Director of the Aboriginal Health Branch of the department. The department is currently developing a revised policy which will address: the most effective method of delivery of health services to remote and or Aboriginal communities; strategies to implement the policy; evaluation mechanisms; relationship between Territory-controlled or funded remote and or Aboriginal services and those funded by the Commonwealth; methods by which health services will cooperate with other government services such as local government, education, power, water, sewerage, community services etc; and methods to maximise the flow of Commonwealth funds to the Northern Territory.

The Northern Territory Aboriginal Hearing Program Coordinating Committee was established involving numerous government and non-government organisations. Aboriginal health workers have been employed to work on ear program activities, including community education. Funding has been sought to expand programs from the Department of Aboriginal Affairs. Recruitment action is currently under way for a replacement program coordinator for the project.

I move now to the area of health promotion. Numerous successful campaigns were conducted throughout the year including: the measles campaign; the 'More or Less' nutrition campaign; the mosquito campaign; the quit-smoking campaign; and the box jellyfish campaign. The Healthworks Shop at Casuarina continues as the major provider of reliable health information and services to all Territorians. Specific attention has been focused on the Aboriginal Health Promotion Program which trains Aboriginal health workers in health promotion skills and strategies. An 'Outback Outreach' catalogue has been released to provide an effective means of accessing reliable information.

In the area of environmental health, negotiations continue with local government for the devolution of health surveyor functions to councils. The department has continued to be successful in monitoring and controlling the spread of mosquito-borne diseases in the Northern Territory.

Mr Bell: What nonsense!

Mr DALE: Shut up and listen. You might learn something.

I now turn to developments in the community services area of my portfolio, beginning with community welfare. Funding for the child protection strategy has been increased to \$800 000, including 26 new staff positions and providing for perpetrator programs, a specialist child protection unit and community education and awareness workers. In 1987-88, 722 abuse cases reported, of which 332 were substantiated. During the same period, 27 adoptions were completed and 192 children were in care. Expenditure in the area of financial assistance is as follows: emergency financial assistance - \$300 000; pensioner concessions, the best in Australia - \$245m; preventive family care - \$100 000; and child maintenance - \$500 000. Welfare officers are situated in all urban areas. Other areas are serviced by remote area team workers. All officers provide a full range of services including counselling services on request.

In the area of children's services, negotiations and planning have been finalised for a 20-place child-care centre in Karama, to be opened in March 1989 at a cost of \$400 000. The Tennant Creek child-care centre is being upgraded to a multi-purpose centre combining family day care, after school care and centre-based care. Completion is due in March 1989 at a cost of \$190 000. Negotiation and planning commenced for the provision of a new child-care centre in the Darwin rural area, with funding of \$450 000 available in this financial year. Also in this financial year, 2 new initiatives have

been approved to assist centres to upgrade their facilities to meet the child-care regulation standards introduced in February 1986.

The 20% salary subsidy for child-care staff has been increased in line with changes to the award. In addition, 2 child-care centres have benefited from increased allocations due to increased capacity. 2 new centres, Daisy Angus in Katherine and East Side in Alice Springs, also received the subsidy for the first time this year.

The Territory government provided a grant to assist the conduct of the annual Children's Services Conference in Alice Springs in 1988 and has budgeted funds for the next conference in 1989. Children's Week activity benefited from the additional funding this financial year - \$6000 was available. The Children's Services Bureau continued to regularly monitor child-care centres and provided support through training and advice on a 3-monthly basis to each centre. Staff of the bureau also assist in the conduct of the training course at DIT and Alice Springs Community College.

A new sexual assault referral service was established in Alice Springs and the Darwin service continued to receive funding. Other Territory hospitals have developed protocols for the receipt and treatment of sexual assault victims.

I now turn to disability services, where funding has been provided for 2 new cottages housing 6 disabled children at Chapman Road and up to 6 adults at Girraween Road. Total funding of community groups with disability services was \$2.3m. The Disabled Persons Bureau continues to operate in Alice Springs and Darwin. The Territory Independence and Mobility Equipment Scheme provides financial assistance for home modifications and equipment and has a budget of \$300 000 this year. Early 1989 will also see the commencement of the NT Advisory Committee on Disability Services. Commonwealth, state and territory committees on the accommodation needs of people with disabilities are currently operating and are expected to recommend new stock of housing encouraging independence for people with disabilities. Repatriation of people with disabilities resident in South Australia has now begun. The Adult Guardianship Act was passed in the August sittings.

Sport and recreation was another important area of activity for the Department of Health and Community Services. The Honda Central Australian Masters Games were a huge success. A grant was provided for the Tennis Council headquarters at Gilruth courts and a grant was made to the Tennant Creek Town Council for upgrading facilities at the Purkiss Reserve. Grants were also made for the lighting of the Darwin velodrome and the installation of hockey turf in Alice Springs. The department has also funded programs to provide swimming for the disabled. A sports administrator is to be appointed to work with sporting organisations. At the Marrara Sporting Complex, work is continuing to provide international standard sports facilities, including the provision of a joint soccer and athletics clubhouse and upgrading of the carpark. Investigations are being conducted into upgrading tennis facilities in Alice Springs. A new initiative involves the expansion of the sports science area and a new officer will commence duty in the new year to assist in coaching and fitness testing.

In the area of youth services, a life skills program is being introduced for youth offenders to assist in their transition back into the community. The NT is participating in the development of the national inventory of youth services. Proposals for the training and development of youth workers are currently under consideration. Funding is continuing for major youth

organisations in the Northern Territory and, to ensure that the operation of the youth leisure centres is evaluated, an officer is assessing them to determine whether they are meeting the objectives established.

I now turn to the arts. The department has co-funded a new Aboriginal Arts Officer position in Alice Springs. It has funded the appointment of a Regional Arts Development Officer based with the NT Arts Council, specifically for remote areas. It has funded the temporary appointment of a crafts development officer for 1 year with the Crafts Council, particularly for remote areas. A total of \$60 000 has been allocated to arts projects grants for Aboriginal communities and the department partially funded the successful Aboriginal rock music festival held in Darwin in September. The festival was intended to assist in the development of the emerging Aboriginal community music industry which aims to provide for talented Aboriginal songwriters and musicians on the basis that the content of music will assist in combating social problems in Aboriginal communities and provide recreation, interest and employment. All major arts organisations have had an increase in funding from the department.

Consumer affairs also comes within the functions of the Department of Health and Community Services. The working party which reviewed consumer affairs policy and legislation has tabled its report. The Darwin Office of Consumer Affairs commenced an agency role on behalf of the Trade Practices Commission - a first in Australia. In pursuit of the fair and equitable marketplace, the focus of consumer education has been broadened to embrace traders. Consumer affairs brochures are now available in major ethnic languages.

Mr BELL: A point of order, Mr Deputy Speaker! This matter of public importance debate was in relation to the minister providing for the health needs of Territorians and their community services.

Mr DALE: Mr Deputy Speaker, in speaking to the point of order, once again I have to indicate the laziness and incompetence of the member opposite. I will read his own words: 'provide for the health and community needs'.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: There is no point of order.

Mr DALE: Mr Deputy Speaker, I will conclude my remarks by saying that there is no doubt whatsoever in the mind of anybody that the shadow minister for health and community services is absolutely incompetent. The best thing the Leader of the Opposition can do is return the shadow portfolio to the member for Arnhem. He was an effective, hard-working, diligent, caring spokesman in the health portfolio. The member for MacDonnell can be described in 2 words: lazy and incompetent.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I seek leave for the remainder of my speech to be incorporated in Hansard.

Leave granted.

Ethnic Affairs

- identified and developed a Northern Territory position in regard to:
 - multicultural agenda
 - immigration report - committee to advise on Australian migration (Fitzgerald Report)
- developed and ready for implementation a jointly funded Northern Territory Commonwealth research program - language services needs in the Northern Territory - export and tourism industry. To identify the actual and potential language difficulties. Once completed a pilot project will be conducted in Alice Springs and Darwin.

Grants to Community Organisations.

Overview of programs and funding

- total expenditure in the 1988-89 year in grants to community organisations of over \$24m.
 - o \$18m in general grants to community organisations
 - o \$0.9m in the area of the arts
 - o \$5.5m in the area of sport and recreation

Types of organisations that are funded include:

- St Johns \$2.9m
- Red Cross Blood Transfusion Service \$0.6m
- other Red Cross services throughout the Territory \$0.5m
- Catholic Missions \$0.6m
- Salvation Army \$.06m
- Somerville Community Services \$0.8m
- \$4.3m will be provided in areas specifically aimed at providing programs for Aboriginal people, including health and management by Aborigines.
- \$2 910 800 will be provided for locally managed community and health services in remote communities.
- There are 19 organisations receiving grants from the Department of Health and Community Services. Most of these organisations are managing and running their health services.
- There are numerous grants for health-care agents. The Belyuen community has been funded as a new grant recipient from 1988-89. The Laynapuy Homeland Centre was funded as a new initiative to

provide a health service to the outstations in the homelands area. Palumpa community has been approved to build a health clinic and provide a vehicle to transport patients.

- In this current financial year, no organisation will receive reduced funding due to financial constraints, and organisations providing the same or an increased level of services, have all received an increase over their 1987-88 funding.
- A more streamlined and flexible funding process for remote communities is being developed. Involves the development of a new funding program aimed at being flexible enough to provide funds quickly to enable communities to provide culturally appropriate local community services.
- Major concern in past years has been the development and effective provision of community support services on remote communities. Addressed through a network of consultancies funded through joint Northern Territory Commonwealth grant programs.
- Centralisation of the overall policy development, financial administration and coordination of community services grants programs has enabled officers in the field to get on with the job of development, assessment and evaluation of funded services.
- Amalgamation in 1987 and ongoing streamlining of procedures has meant that community service organisations that once had to visit 3 different departments are now serviced through the one regional office.

Home and Community Care

- A joint Northern Territory Commonwealth funded program.
- Provides funds to community groups involved in providing home care and community care services to the frail, aged and younger disabled as an alternative to institutional care.
- Proposed funding in 1988-89 of \$1.7m up on 1987-88 of \$1.2m.
- New services funded under the program in 1987-88 include:
 - o Alice Springs Red Cross Home Care Service
 - o Alice Springs Senior Citizens Workshop
 - o HACC services for the Beswick, Borroloola, Kalano and Yirrkala communities
 - o Emergency call system for Darwin
 - o Independent Living Unit
 - o Spinal nurse

- Dementia worker
- Respiratory worker
- Family Day Care Respite Service

Supported Accommodation Assistance Program

- Joint Northern Territory Commonwealth funding.
- Provides funds to community groups involved in providing accommodation and related support services to people in crisis.
- Includes emergency accommodation for women and children, youth and homeless families or single men.
- Proposed 1988-89 funding \$2.3m up on 1987-88 of \$1.7m.
- Organisations funded include:
 - Darwin Aboriginal Women's Centre
 - Dawn House, Darwin
 - Sunrise Centre, Darwin
 - Red Shield Hostel, Alice Springs
 - St Vincent de Paul, Alice Springs and Darwin
 - Women's refuge, Alice Springs

Future Directions

- Further develop the guidelines and administration arrangements for the 'remote communities funding package'.
- Make the community more aware of the services available to them.
- Make the organisations more aware of the assistance available to them through the department.
- Become more active in getting community service organisations to meet community needs by being proactive and tailoring funding packages to meet these specific needs.

Correctional Services

Reduction in Imprisonment:

The government has embarked on a series of major policy initiatives in correctional services designed to divert as many offenders as possible away from costly and ineffective prison programs.

This includes such initiatives as fine default and fine diversion options, home detention and a pilot bail assessment and supervision scheme. There is a 'buzz' around correctional

services in Australia about the forward thinking and innovative policies being practised in the Territory - they are thinking about the things we are doing!

The effect of these initiatives is to have reduced imprisonment by about 25% in 1988. There are now over 500 people doing community service work. These are mainly traffic offenders and other people who have been fined by the courts but opted to do community service work rather than default on the fine and go to jail.

Elimination of juvenile imprisonment:

Credible and effective juvenile offender programs like the wilderness camp and improving security at Malak House have virtually eliminated juveniles being sent to adult jails. Until a few weeks ago, there had been no juveniles in prison for more than 6 months.

A Juvenile Offender Placement Program (JOPP) was introduced recently so that kids whose parents cannot or will not look after their children can be placed on bail in the community instead of being remanded in custody in a detention centre.

Extension of services in Aboriginal communities:

There are now 3 Aboriginal community corrections officers employed in Groote Eylandt and Papunya. Further appointments of these local community-based 'probation and parole' assistants are being arranged for Ali Curung and Port Keats. Accommodation for a new probation and parole office is nearing completion at Port Keats. An officer will take up residence there in the very near future.

Alice Springs - new prison:

This year, the government gave design list status to a project to replace Alice Springs Prison, with an indicative cost of \$15m. An interdepartmental committee has been formed to identify site options.

Number plates:

The government won the contract this year to manufacture number plates for the Australian Capital Territory. The contract for a 5-year period is worth about \$1m.

Restructure - Correctional Services:

In recognising the specialised nature of correctional services operations, the government appointed an executive director to head up the correctional services function. Over the past 2 months, a series of working groups have been convened where our corrections practitioners, that is the people who work in correctional services, have been looking at either finetuning or generally improving services and programs.

Service Awards - Prison Officers:

In November, at a function to mark the 50th anniversary of Alice Springs Prison, I had the pleasure of presenting the first 8 certificates of commendation to officers currently working in the jail who have accrued 10 or more years of service.

These awards recognise the difficult and often dangerous jobs carried out every day by our prison staff.

Mr TIPILOURA (Arafura): Mr Speaker, my colleague has outlined a range of problems faced by the Minister for Health and Community Services. The problems are central to the malfunctioning of his oversized and ineffective mega-department. 18 months is a long time to allow neglect to continue. Under the Community Welfare Act, such a period of neglect would constitute a form of abuse, the outcome of which would be intervention by the state. Perhaps it is time the Department of Health and Community Services was rescued and placed in care. It now requires a range of support systems to assist it to continue to function and provide the essential services that it has been set up to provide. The people of the Northern Territory cannot wait for too much longer. Too much is at stake. My colleague has briefly outlined the history of difficulties at the Royal Darwin Hospital, in addition to the problems experienced in the welfare area. I will go into some of these in more detail. In addition, I would like to focus on another area - Aboriginal health.

Firstly, I turn to the question of access to patients' files at the Royal Darwin Hospital. Members would all be aware of a recent TV report about a former patient at the Royal Darwin Hospital who experienced great difficulty in obtaining his personal file. The file contained all sorts of information about his health, diagnosis and care. In an age of democracy, one would think that a person would have the right to see information that relates to himself. If it is anyone's business, it is his. In the Northern Territory, however, patients have no rights. There is no freedom of information legislation and the policy is that patients cannot see their files.

Mr Speaker, the member for MacDonnell has addressed the problem of the radiology services at the Royal Darwin Hospital on a number of occasions. The seriousness of the problem was demonstrated by the fact that it was raised as a matter of public importance. The minister allowed the radiology department to gradually run down over a number of years. He let it run down so badly that it became dangerous. The x-ray machines were producing such poor quality images that patients had to be exposed to additional radiation as a second or third picture was obtained. As a result of the magnificent action undertaken by the opposition, the minister was put under pressure and has taken some action to replace the equipment. However, he still has not managed to get it right. Instead of allocating \$3m to replace the entire malfunctioning unit, a sum which has been identified by experts and now-departed specialist radiologists, the minister economised. He set aside only \$1.7m in the budget. As if this was not bad enough, he then decided to embarrass himself further. He failed to put the project out for tender. The monopoly contract is now in the hands of Toshiba.

Recently, a report was compiled outlining some of the issues that relate to the maintenance of equipment at the hospital. The minister knew that the report would embarrass him. It pointed to further examples of neglect and mismanagement. Instead of taking the matter on, the opposition watched the minister attempt to save himself. What an effort it was! He made a public statement, an admission that there was evidence of enormous problems. The summary of the report says it all: 'The maintenance department is not being

managed at any level and the productivity is very low'. That is an interesting statement, which relates to the high rate of sick leave and workers' compensation. Not only is the maintenance department run down but, by the sound of it, most of the staff are too. We all know that a major breakdown of the chillers would be disastrous. Hopefully, the staff would be well enough to be on duty to cope with the crisis.

Another problem relates to the psychiatric ward. The lack of forward planning at the Royal Darwin Hospital has now created a huge number of problems. Many have resulted from a bad decision about the relocation of services. With the program of fire safety upgrading, a floor was lost to patient use. The problem was added to when another floor was set aside for the private hospital, necessitating a reorganisation of wards, the result of which was the collocation of the maternity ward and the psychiatric ward. Those arrangements were of obvious concern to both staff and patients, particularly when a psychiatric patient was found wandering around in the maternity ward. Because of the acute nature of some patients' psychiatric problems, it was finally recognised that the location of units in Ward 5A was inappropriate.

The minister then decided to relocate the ward to the site of the detoxification unit in the grounds of the hospital. This required the relocation of the detoxification unit. What better place to relocate it than close to the staff residential facilities? The staff did not like the idea and clearly said so. The minister disregarded the concerns of the staff. His attitude to hospital staff is dangerous, particularly when we consider that specialists and general practitioners, in addition to nursing staff, are very difficult to attract to the Northern Territory. The minister has continued in his own stubborn way. He is determined to get his own way, regardless of the consequences. Maybe he knows why it has been necessary to mount a recent recruitment drive for hospital staff. The Northern Territory is an interesting place for medical personnel who are interested in tropical medicine and Aboriginal health. Many come. Why do they keep leaving?

I now wish to address a matter which is of considerable concern to me - that is, the Aboriginal health care program provided for the indigenous people of the Northern Territory, my people, the Aborigines. The member for Arnhem raised this issue as a matter of public importance in August. He outlined the need for essential services in communities. The association between poor living conditions and ill-health is well known. We have seen examples which clearly demonstrate how this government's neglect of essential services has contributed to major health risks. In August, we heard about the outbreak of TB in the Roper River region. In November, there was an outbreak of meningitis in central Australian communities. The minister demonstrated his ignorance when he said that the administrators of health programs in central Australia are not concerned about the need to vaccinate children. That is an indication of the minister's ignorance. The people making the decisions and their children do not live in Aboriginal communities.

If the minister was not pushed, I am sure that he would not take any initiative on his own. Reaction to pressure is his forte, and it has contributed to the destruction of the key community and health services. Until he seriously addresses the management system in his department, the future health of the Northern Territory is at stake. The population is decreasing because people are worried about the way in which their health is being placed at risk.

Mr HATTON (Nightcliff): Mr Speaker, I refer honourable members to the subject of this matter of public importance. The matter which the member for MacDonnell wishes to discuss is: 'the failure of the government throughout 1988 to provide for the health and community needs of the people of the Northern Territory'. Having raised this issue, there is obviously an onus on the honourable member to bring forward some evidence.

If one made such an allegation in a court of law or, to use an example with which I am more familiar, in an arbitration hearing, one would need to present some evidence to support it. Failure to do so would produce a very simple and very quick response: a determination that there was no case to answer. It seems that the issue is so important that the member for MacDonnell and the member for Arafura, both of whom spoke on it, have now left the Chamber. That is how important they think it is. The fact is that all they have done is to make polemical outbursts of unsubstantiated allegations, mixed with an unhealthy dose of rumour-mongering. In 2 speeches by members of the opposition, no factual evidence has been produced. In response, the Minister for Health and Community Services did not indulge in polemic and personal abuse. Rather, he took the unusual step of spending 20 minutes reading a list of initiatives which are occurring in the health and community services area in the Northern Territory. In 20 minutes of reading flat-out, he simply could not get through the list.

For the benefit of honourable members, it is worth while looking at the origins of that list because that will show the extent of the opposition's problems. I imagine that the minister would have received notice of this matter of public importance at about 8 am this morning. He then contacted his department and said: 'We have a matter of public importance debate today. Can you give me a few one-liners about the department's activities which I can use in the debate'. An hour later, the departmental officers, these people who are supposed to be disinterested, shattered and in a state of abysmally low morale, turned up with 32 pages of one-liners. The only reason there were not more is because they did not have enough time to write them down. Does that sound like a shattered, broken department? No! It sounds like what it is: a department of dedicated and hard-working public servants who are sick and tired of the unsubstantiated and malicious abuse they have been subjected to by the incompetent shadow spokesman for health and community services.

We are used to hearing the member for MacDonnell carrying on in this way. Before he became the shadow minister, his predecessor often stood up and rightly praised the government. When he had problems, he raised them and had them sorted out in a rational and proper way. In those days, the member for MacDonnell happened to be the shadow minister for lands and housing. Sittings after sittings, he raised matters of public importance on planning and building matters in which he made one allegation after another. He never raises anything substantial in this House. He makes a lot of noise which somehow seems to make him think that he is achieving something. The basis of his case today was the number of MPis which have been raised in relation to health and community services. They have all been raised by him and none of them has been substantiated. Members of the press are becoming bored and frustrated with the opposition's nonsensical time-wasting MPis, and this is yet another one. The member for MacDonnell ought to know that frequency does not equal justification, just as the member for Nhulunbuy should recognise that noise does not increase the force of his contribution to debate in this Chamber.

I will not read out more of the many achievements of the minister's department. The list is substantial and it only scratches the surface. In

just 2 years, this department has brought together the functions of health, community development, youth, sport and recreation, ethnic affairs and correctional services. It has welded those functions to create a coordinated and effective approach to a wide range of problems and needs, for the first time in the Northern Territory. If one looks at what has occurred, we can see that the department's achievements have been very significant. It came in on budget in the 1987-88 financial year. All the new initiatives targeted for introduction in that year were introduced. The department achieved a \$5m reduction in overall spending required as a consequence of the Commonwealth cuts. I might say that, not only did it not cut any services to the community, it was able to introduce new initiatives, and that speaks volumes, firstly, for the reorganisation and, secondly, for the work of the minister and, thirdly and most importantly, for the dedication and application of every staff member. There are some 4000 staff in the Department of Health and Community Services.

Why is it important to recognise those achievements? It is certainly important to the people on the ground. They get a sense of achievement out of those tasks. It is also because an efficient department does not use service delivery money on unnecessary administration and certainly that has been where significant savings have been achieved in the department. An efficient department plans and puts in place well-thought-out policies and programs and, without doubt, that is coming through quite clearly. We can see it in the many ministerial statements that have been delivered in this House. Yesterday, the member for MacDonnell admitted that the health and community services plans, outlined in the election campaign, have been honoured and are continuing to be honoured with the development of services throughout the Northern Territory. No department, particularly one so large and so complex, will be perfect. Anybody who suggested otherwise would be kidding himself and everybody he spoke to.

It is quite obvious from this debate that the problem we have is that the members opposite hunt around until they find little things that are going wrong, which often relate to marginal issues. They accumulate information about those little issues, bundle them together and try to extrapolate that information as if it relates to the whole department. What does that do for the morale of a department? That is what attacks morale. Members opposite do not look at the good things that are happening, and I congratulate the minister for not playing politics but simply spending 20 minutes reading out a list of his department's achievements. In the end, that is the measure. It is what you are doing that is significant, not what you are not doing. The achievements are there, and they will stand this government in good stead as they are standing the Northern Territory community in excellent stead. It was such an effective approach to this particular debate that I made a little note about the fact that, when the minister had 6 minutes of his time remaining, the member for MacDonnell interjected, saying: 'I give in'. And so he should have. He was so embarrassed at one stage that he was hiding under the desk and he subsequently left the Chamber.

Mr Bell: I was just getting a little sick and tired of the minister reading, reading, reading, and not particularly well at that.

Mr HATTON: Mr Speaker, I take up that interjection because what he was sick and tired of was the minister reading, reading and reading, achievement, achievement, achievement. That is what embarrassed him so much and will continue to embarrass him.

We heard the member for Arafura raise the matter of Aboriginal affairs. Again, there was nothing there to substantiate any allegation he made. I find that quite disappointing and I would suggest that the member revert to his previous practice of preparing his own speeches and not taking those of the press secretary or some other staff member of the Leader of the Opposition because he will come across far more genuinely and will enhance his reputation considerably rather than simply following the polemic nonsense that his Labor colleagues go on with in this Chamber.

A ministerial statement was made in this House in November last year. It was not even debated by the members opposite. The honourable minister tabled data on the health circumstances of Aboriginal people. The opposition's MPI in August this year merely picked up the issues raised by the honourable minister and tried to turn them into criticisms. Certainly there are serious problems in the Aboriginal health area. The minister himself volunteered that view and has taken a significant amount of action within the department to address them. He should be congratulated for doing that.

I could spend more of this House's time on this issue but I do not intend to do so. The minister buried the opposition in facts today. The opposition stands condemned for yet again attacking the professionalism and the quality of service delivery that is coming from a very effective Department of Health and Community Services. It also stands condemned for continually trying to undermine the Northern Territory community's confidence in the health and community services delivered to it and the minister responsible.

HEALTH PRACTITIONERS AND ALLIED PROFESSIONALS
REGISTRATION AMENDMENT BILL
(Serial 148)

Bill presented and read a first time.

Mr DALE (Health and Community Services): Mr Speaker, I move that the bill be now read a second time.

This bill combines 2 of the 10 categories of health practitioners registered under this act. The bill combines 2 categories, chiropractors and osteopaths, so that there will be a single registration board for both professions. At present, there is 1 registered osteopath who is a resident of the Northern Territory. All other registered osteopaths reside interstate. Consequently, the Osteopaths Registration Board, consisting of a chairman, 1 osteopath and a member representing the public interest, had difficulty in achieving a quorum. This bill combines the 2 boards so that there are 2 osteopaths and 2 chiropractors, plus a representative of the public interest and the chairman. A quorum will consist of the chairman and 2 appointed members. When osteopathic matters are being discussed, 1 osteopath must be present. When chiropractic matters are being discussed, a chiropractor must be there.

The qualifications for registration of both chiropractors and osteopaths have been amended at the request of the current boards. The new qualifications are in line with interstate requirements. This is a significant change from the previous requirements, but it will remove anomalies between the registration of these professions interstate and registration in the Northern Territory. I commend the bill to honourable members.

Debate adjourned.

PETROLEUM PRODUCTS SUBSIDY AMENDMENT BILL
(Serial 156)

Bill presented and read a first time.

Mr FINCH (Transport and Works): Mr Speaker, I move that the bill be now read a second time.

The purpose of this bill, which amends the NT Petroleum Products Subsidy Act, is to place the NT on the same footing as the states for the purpose of administering the Northern Territory component of the Commonwealth Petroleum Products Subsidy Scheme. This bill is complementary to a Commonwealth amendment to the States Grants (Petroleum Products) Act which is scheduled to take effect when this bill commences. It will also honour a long-standing agreement between the Commonwealth and the Northern Territory that this be done.

The Petroleum Products Subsidy Scheme is administered on behalf of the Commonwealth under state and territory legislation. Responsibility for the scheme rests with the Minister for Science, Customs and Small Business, Hon Barry Jones. The aim of the scheme is to subsidise the transport costs of specified petroleum products distributed wholesale to country areas. Consumers pay a certain amount of the transport costs with the Commonwealth picking up the balance. The scheme itself sets out the procedures and administrative requirements covering the registration requirements for distributors and the responsibilities of authorised officers in processing and validating claims. The bill provides for the establishment and operation of a trust account which will be administered by the Department of Transport and Works. The Commonwealth will provide an advance for this purpose. Claims will be processed locally and delays which have occurred in the past should no longer be a problem for distributors seeking reimbursement.

I point out to honourable members that the level of subsidy and the method of its distribution is determined by the Commonwealth. As an example, honourable members may recollect that, in May 1985, the world's so-called greatest Treasurer increased the user-pays component from 1.2¢ per litre to 5.2¢ per litre. This significantly reduced the number of people eligible for subsidy benefit by reducing the geographical area to be covered. This meant a considerable reduction in the level of subsidy available to Northern Territory consumers. At present, the total petroleum products subsidy of the Northern Territory amounts to approximately \$2.2m over a 12-month period.

The bill paves the way for the Northern Territory to be brought into line with arrangements applying to the states. It includes increased penalty provisions to help discourage abuse of the scheme. These have been adjusted to bring them into line with the Commonwealth penalty provisions. In summary, this bill, in association with the Commonwealth act, simplifies the administration of the Petroleum Products Subsidy. It serves to clarify respective Commonwealth and NT roles. It is non-contentious and has been developed by the Department of Transport and Works in close consultation with the Australian Customs Service. I commend the bill.

Debate adjourned.

CRIMES (FORFEITURE OF PROCEEDS) BILL
(Serial 149)

Continued from 13 October 1988.

Mr BELL (MacDonnell): Mr Speaker, I rise to indicate the opposition's support for this bill. The opposition has researched the issues surrounding the legislation, which is basically modelled on the New South Wales legislation, and has sought various opinions. We are satisfied that it is appropriate that it be enacted in the Northern Territory.

As the Attorney-General indicated in his second-reading speech, the purpose of the bill is to expand the capacity of the courts to prevent the perpetrators of crime being able to take advantage of its proceeds. The honourable minister pointed out that this legislation has flowed from a number of Royal Commissions into the problems of organised crime around this country, particularly the Williams, the Costigan and the Stewart Royal Commissions. I had the advantage of a colloquium with Mr Frank Costigan QC ...

Mr Padgham-Purich: A talk.

Mr BELL: Actually, it is a Latin word for conversation.

Mr Costigan pointed out to me the value of the legislation. I understand that the additional provisions in this particular bill relate to interstate orders and information-gathering powers. I understand that it took some time for the states to determine who would obtain what proceeds from which felon and on what basis. I understand the compromise is that, if convicted person A was convicted of crimes in state X but tried in state Y, it is in fact state Y which is able to obtain the proceeds. It is the state in which a person is tried, imprisoned etc that is able to bring this legislation into operation. In fact, it is more likely that the Northern Territory would benefit, if that is the word to use in the case of legislation such as this.

Mr Manzie: Queensland will probably do the best out of it.

Mr BELL: The Attorney-General's comment is an indication of the difficulties which the states had in coming to an agreement on this matter.

With those few comments, I have no hesitation in indicating the opposition's support for the legislation. We had some concerns about unwitting recipients of the proceeds of crime but the opposition is satisfied that the requirements in the bill will not create difficulties in that regard.

Mr PALMER (Karama): I will be very brief, Mr Speaker. Needless to say, I support this legislation. It gives various legislatures or enforcement agencies another string in their bows against organised crime. I am particularly supportive of the provisions which give power to courts to order the presentation of documents allowing them to track ownership of property and so forth. We all know that there are various ways of salting away property or disguising the true ownership of or the true pecuniary interests in property. Those provisions are a worthwhile part of the legislation.

I would consider it unfortunate if the moneys forfeited under these provisions were merely confiscated by Treasury officials and put to no direct use in the fight against organised crime. There are many things that police forces around the country could use, particularly equipment such as surveillance and security devices. I would like to see governments direct

moneys obtained as a result of the operation of this legislation into the fight against organised crime, especially the fight against drug pushers. I am not so strongly against SP bookies. Their crime is only that they do not pay tax. In terms of organised crime's involvement in drug-dealing, there is a crying need in Australia for money to be spent on the enforcement agencies. I trust that the Attorney-General can withstand the pressure from the Treasurer to have the money put directly into Consolidated Revenue and will perhaps establish some sort of fund which we can properly use in tackling the problem of organised crime. I support the legislation.

Mr MANZIE (Attorney-General): Mr Deputy Speaker, I thank honourable members for their support of the bill. As the member for MacDonnell said, the bill has come about as a result of negotiation between states through the auspices of the Standing Committee of Attorneys-General. The bill focuses on the large profits which are made by professional criminals and profits which are hidden away by various means. The drug trade generates monstrous profits and it is obvious that all legislatures have to do more to enable the police to take action to catch up with people who are profiting from crime.

The legislation relates to all types of crime, including SP bookmaking. Unlike the member for Karama, I believe that the non-payment of tax is a significant offence against the community. We are talking about the profits of crime from vice and all illegal activity. We need legislation which enables property which is the product of crime to be confiscated.

Mr LEO: A point of order, Mr Deputy Speaker! I do not know whether the Leader of Government Business is interested in what the minister has to say, but I certainly am. Could you perhaps ask him to control himself, at least until the minister finishes speaking?

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: There is no point of order but there is too much audible conversation in the House. I ask honourable members to refrain from such conversation.

Mr MANZIE: Mr Deputy Speaker, I will conclude by saying that the Northern Territory government, as it has always done, will continue to monitor legislation that is available to our crime-fighting authorities and to ensure that they have the best possible opportunity to hunt down and bring to justice the perpetrators of crime. The courts must have the ability to ensure that criminals are not able to serve their sentences and then live on the Gold Coast in luxury as a result of their criminal activity. This legislation will help to enable the profits of crime to be recouped and I commend the bill to honourable members.

Motion agreed to; bill read a second time.

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

Motion agreed to; bill read a third time.

HOUSING AMENDMENT BILL
(Serial 153)

Continued from 23 November 1988.

Mr LEO (Nhulunbuy): Mr Deputy Speaker, the bill before the House will amend section 26 of the Housing Act in quite a simple way by including, in the

preamble to section 26, a sentence which contains the words: 'including a condition that money need not be repaid or refunded to the commission ...'. That, of course, refers to the minister's proposal to write off some 10% of the debt owing on loans outstanding. It will also include the following words: 'advance money to, or pay money on behalf of, a person to whom such a scheme relates ...'. That refers, of course, to the Interest Subsidy Scheme. That is the substance of the bill before the House.

The opposition has consistently indicated its support for the intention of this legislation. Indeed, it applauds the efforts of the minister to alleviate the difficulties faced by many purchasers under the present scheme and is happy to support this bill. Obviously, as yesterday's debate and some public utterances have indicated, we have had reservations about the way in which the minister has pursued his end but there has never been any question on this side of the House as to whether or not the scheme should be proceeded with.

Mr Deputy Speaker, in his statement on Tuesday, which gave notice of the scheme, the minister pointed out that the Territory can only survive and develop if more people live in their own homes rather than in rented accommodation. Unfortunately, the present home loan scheme has not been adequate in addressing the requirements of purchasers. Because of their financial circumstances, far too many people were being forced to abandon their loans or, in other cases, to fall behind in their repayments. The bill will enable the introduction of a scheme which, we hope, will enable more people to continue to purchase their homes. Indeed, if the scheme achieves as much as we all hope it will, more people will buy their homes in the Northern Territory than in the past.

Mr Deputy Speaker, the opposition has never opposed this scheme. We have certainly opposed the method which the minister has adopted in developing it but we have never opposed the scheme itself. The opposition wholeheartedly supports the scheme and the bill before the House.

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH (Koolpinyah): Mr Deputy Speaker, my remarks in support of this bill will be brief. I would like to indulge in a little lateral thinking, which is a form of thinking which intelligent executive people use when they look at all sides of a question.

Mr Coulter: People who sit in the middle of the road. They look both ways before they are run over.

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH: I haven't been run over yet, mate.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I would like to draw honourable members' attention to the fact that most of the people in the rural area whom I represent build their own homes. Such people also live in parts of the member for Palmerston's electorate. The minister's scheme, which aims to help low-income earners to build their own homes, is to be commended. People in every family, men and women, want to own their own homes - and good luck to them. People who work hard to own their homes really appreciate those homes. However, there are some home-owners who have not been considered by the minister. I refer to the home-owners and the home-builders in the rural area. Most of these people are low- to middle-income earners and often they build their own accommodation. It might not always be according to Hoyle and it might not always meet with the approval of the member for Karama, but nobody worries much about him out our way.

These low- to middle-income earners build their own homes in the rural area. They often use their own designs. They do not receive any help from the bureaucracy and are continually hounded by building inspectors who, I suppose, are only doing their jobs and cannot be blamed for that. Their theme is usually 'upgrade, upgrade, upgrade' - although to my knowledge not too many blueys have been distributed recently. These do-it-yourself home-builders have saved this government millions and millions of dollars. If they did not live in the rural area in their self-built homes, they would be a drain on the government's resources. They would have to be housed by the government in Housing Commission houses and flats. I do not believe that the Minister for Housing has given much consideration to this situation. Rather than having the building inspectors in the rural area continually, he should consider how much my constituents and the constituents of the member for Palmerston have saved him in building expenses. I think the Territory would be much better off and much more red tape would be cut if everybody had a free hand to indulge in creative home building as my constituents do in the rural area.

Mr COLLINS (Sadadeen): Mr Deputy Speaker, as you know from earlier debates, I am very much in favour of this legislation. The people of the Territory have been hurting and, hopefully, this will improve things for many people. I have 2 stories to tell, relating to the reactions that I have gathered from people in community. One concerns a young lad who was buying a flat and found that his repayments were becoming too high. He put tenants into the flat and went back home. He believes this legislation will help him achieve what he wants to do and that is live in the flat and be independent. He is very keen.

The second story demonstrates the sometimes unintended consequences of legislation. A fellow whom I know quite well told me that he had met a friend who was quite elated about the minister's proposition. He said that he would obtain about \$7000 from the scheme. Here comes the rub. He then said to this fellow: 'I can now afford to leave'.

Mr Coulter: You are back to canning it again?

Mr COLLINS: If the honourable minister would listen, he might learn something about an unintended consequence of the legislation. I am not rejoicing in this consequence at all but it demonstrates something which I have suspected to be the case for a long time. There are some people in this Territory who have decided that they want to leave but they would stand to lose too much by doing so. They have been hanging on by the skin of their teeth hoping that things will get better. This is one case. I hope there are not a great many such cases because I do support the scheme. I think the vast majority of people will be encouraged by it to work towards full ownership of their own homes. These people will provide a stable population within the Territory.

Mr Coulter: Someone will move into his house.

Mr COLLINS: That is indeed correct. I am keen on the scheme. I think it is necessary to stabilise our population. I hope the second story is atypical. The vast majority of people will be very pleased with the scheme and will be happy to remain in the Territory, which will progress more strongly as a result.

Mr EDE (Stuart): Mr Speaker, I have also heard of people in the same situation as that described by the member for Sadadeen. I believe the short-term result of the government's scheme will be that more houses will

come on the market and that prices for real estate will in fact drop. Whether they continue to fall will depend basically on where the line is. Quite a lot of finetuning will be involved and I hope that the honourable minister has done his sums and has it right. If the fall in re-sale price is such that it takes people once again below the value outstanding on their mortgage so that their debt is higher than the amount they can recover, there is a danger that they will throw their keys in and walk away. On the other hand, if the fall is not so great, people will stay in the Territory and people in rental accommodation will find that it is worth their while to purchase their own homes, creating an upward price movement.

Basically, it is a matter of how the 2 conflicting forces operate. The greater of the 2 will take over. If there is a movement of people from rental accommodation into owning their own homes, that will cancel out the short-term fall and prices and confidence will start to rise. Hopefully, that will attract more people into purchasing and the home ownership market will be quite healthy. Whether that will flow on into the construction market will depend on the rise in enthusiasm and confidence in the Northern Territory and the economic indicators. If the government finally gets the mix right, people will start to move back to the Territory to take up vacant accommodation and there will be a consequent need for more accommodation.

We have spoken about people who own their own homes and the member for Koolpinyah was permitted some latitude to discuss the people in her electorate. There is another group which seems to have been left out in this discussion. These people are probably the most disadvantaged of all at the moment. I refer to people in rental accommodation in Alice Springs - although I have heard similar stories in Darwin. People are still paying very high rents comparatively. Given the reduction in the market prices of the units which they are living in, the actual gross return from rents is now higher than in the time of the slump. One would not expect that to be the situation. One would expect rents to fall because we have a public housing system. One would have thought people would have been moving out of private rental accommodation into Housing Commission houses and that that would take the heat out of the rental market, with rents beginning to move downwards. The fact that that has not occurred makes one wonder whether there is something in the system which is actually blocking the normal market forces. The only thing that I can think of is that Housing Commission flats and houses are possibly being kept off the market unofficially.

Mr Dale: If someone was on fire and we threw a bucket of water over him, you would accuse us of trying to drown him.

Mr EDE: Mr Speaker, I was going to say this about someone else but, really, it is a fact that, if the Minister for Health and Community Services entered a Lady Godiva competition, the horse would steal the show. My apologies to the horse.

If the Housing Commission is stretching out the period from when a vacancy occurs to when the dwelling is relet, that would have the effect of artificially maintaining the level of rents in the private sector. I would be very interested in knowing how many Housing Commission houses and flats are vacant at the moment, whether the average period before they are relet has increased over the last couple of years and how it compares with the average in the private system.

I said yesterday and I have said a number of times on the media during the last 24 hours that I support the changes to the government's housing scheme.

As I said the other day, they are well overdue. The government was facing a wholesale walkout of people who were throwing their keys in. The honourable minister has not told us how many people have done that and what the size of the problem was. We had an indication in his statement that 75% of the people who had loans were in a situation where they were either defaulting on their repayments or actually owed more than their properties were worth. I hope that the scheme will work and that the government will get its act together so that confidence can return to the economy generally and the whole housing sector can start moving upwards so that we will be able to look forward to some better times. I support the bill.

Mr PALMER (Karama): Mr Speaker, I certainly support this legislation. For a long time, I have recognised the problems we have with the housing of Territorians. I would like to pick up a couple of points that have been made already.

The member for Nhulunbuy somehow seems to blame this government for the situation of the housing market at the moment. As I said the other day, the prices being realised for houses are totally irrelevant to the problems faced by those living in and purchasing their own homes. The inadequacy of the current scheme stems from the misguided premise on which it was based. It was based on the premise that real incomes would continue to grow whilst, at the same time, real interest rates would continue to decline. What happened was diametrically opposite to that. I am referring to what are called the low-start schemes, in which the home purchaser can start out with an interest rate of something like 4% and capitalise that interest until the interest rate reached full tote odds when, hopefully, the purchaser would be able to pay off that extra capitalised interest. The monetary policies of the federal government - and I am not saying that they were not necessary - probably had the undesired consequence of contracting real incomes and forcing up real inflation rates. This left many people in a position, having capitalised their early interest, of being unable to meet their repayments because their real incomes did not keep up. That is the nub of the problem with the current system and, hopefully, this legislation will address it. What really needs to happen, of course, is for real incomes to grow and real interest rates to contract.

Mr Smith: And population too.

Mr PALMER: Population and demand for housing, of course, but that is merely in terms of capital gains.

Mr Speaker, I cannot help myself. I must pick up the member for Koolpinyah. Again she came out with a diatribe of what can most kindly be described as arrant nonsense. To somehow suggest that the rural residents who have borrowed money under the Northern Territory Home Purchase Assistance Scheme are somehow not included or are disadvantaged by this legislation and this proposed scheme is arrant nonsense. We have not confined it to Darwin, to Alice Springs or to the towns of the Northern Territory. The new scheme is available to all home purchasers covered by the current scheme. The new scheme, equally, is applicable to all primary residences in the Northern Territory which are located on appropriate land. It is unadulterated nonsense to argue that this government has somehow ignored the wants and the plight of rural residents and I will leave my response to the member for Koolpinyah at that.

The Deputy Leader of the Opposition expressed some quaint views on supply driven or supply side economics. He becomes rather confused about

supply and demand and what actually drives prices. I do not believe that his main oversight is intentional. Rather, I believe, it derives from straight ignorance. He started to talk about the people that we have ignored in the private rental market. What he failed to say was that persons in the private rental market who can demonstrate fiscal disability have access to other schemes operated by this government, to which the Commonwealth contributes tied funding, such as the rent relief or rental subsidy scheme. Persons in that category who are otherwise eligible for Housing Commission accommodation but are not yet far enough up the list to obtain it, can apply for rent relief.

I do not have the guidelines with me tonight, but I believe that the amounts available under the rent relief scheme go up to about \$60 a week and that the Housing Commission rental for a 3-bedroom house is \$110. If we allow for the rent relief subsidy, it is clear that persons eligible for it can rent on the private market. To illustrate that, I will give the following examples of rental properties available on the Darwin market, taken at random from tonight's newspaper. Here are some unfurnished houses: 3-bedroom in Anula - weekly rent \$150; 3-bedroom unfurnished elevated in Malak - \$165; 3-bedroom unfurnished elevated in Malak - \$185; 3-bedroom unfurnished with established garden in Leanyer - \$190; and 3-bedroom unfurnished elevated in Woodleigh Gardens - \$190. There are others here. Let me look at Karama: 6-bedroom, air-conditioned, split level, 2 bathrooms, balcony, triple carport, quiet court, great local member - \$300. I might add, Mr Speaker, that that house is fully furnished! We have others: a house in Malak for \$180 per week, one in Wagaman for \$200 and another in Leanyer for \$200. It is clear that there is rental accommodation available on the private market and that persons eligible for rent relief could obtain accommodation at about the same weekly rent as the Housing Commission charges.

Let me say this, Mr Speaker, and I am sure it will be echoed time and again as it has been echoed before: this is the best and most innovative housing scheme in operation in Australia today. It will show the way to other housing authorities. One of the problems interstate is that, for many years, both New South Wales and Victoria have refused to match the Commonwealth funds they are supposed to match in housing. For many years, they have refused to put in the comparative level of funding that the Northern Territory manages to put in. Like the Northern Territory, Tasmania has put considerable effort into its housing program. Among the states, Queensland is one of the better performers in the housing rental area. It was the 4 Labor governments in Australia that had, and still have, an abysmal record on housing. Both the Western Australian and South Australian governments used to divert into other areas up to 40% of the 4% loan funding they received from the Commonwealth, notwithstanding that the remainder of the states were required to put 100% of that 4% loan funding into housing.

Let me say that I am very proud of the record of the Northern Territory government in relation to housing. It has shown itself to be both caring and innovative. I am sure this housing policy will go a long way towards relieving the burden on Territory families and allowing other Territory families to achieve their goal in life and to achieve the Australian dream of owning their own homes and castles. With those few words, I commend the minister's initiative to the House.

Mr Reed: Let's hear from the ...

Mr SMITH (Opposition Leader): Mr Speaker, obviously the oncer from Katherine is going to participate in this debate.

I would like to start by picking up one of the last comments of the member for Karama. I agree that the Northern Territory government has a proud record in the housing area and, since self-government, there is no doubt that one of the government's greater achievements has been the amount of money that has been spent on housing which, of course, has resulted in an increase in home ownership. I must admit that I was somewhat surprised to hear a figure of 42% quoted in respect of home ownership in the Northern Territory at present and I would invite the honourable minister to respond in his summing up because it seems to be to be a very high figure, particularly in view of the fact that we started from a very low base.

It is clear that the new scheme will encourage the growth of home ownership in the Northern Territory even further. As the member for Nhulunbuy has said, we have never had any problems with the scheme. In fact, we enthusiastically support the proposition that has been put forward. However, as I have said, we have had some serious problems with the way the honourable minister has gone about implementing the scheme, and I will come to that in a minute. Let me concentrate on the positive aspects first.

There is no doubt that the scheme will have a positive effect for existing home purchasers and those people contemplating buying a home in the Northern Territory in future. The 1600 existing purchasers will benefit from a reduction in their principal of 10% and a reduction in interest rates to 4%. Again, I ask the honourable minister - if he will listen - to confirm in his reply that the interest rate will in fact be 4% on loans for existing home purchases because there appears to be some uncertainty in the interpretation of his statement in relation to an effective interest rate of 4%. Does that mean that it is 4% or is it inflation plus 4%? If it is 4%, I have a question. On the face of it, 4% is very generous indeed. In fact, it would be more generous than the repayment schedules being offered to people taking up loans under the new scheme. I ask the honourable minister opposite to explain, if he is able, why that decision has been taken. I am not critical of it but I am curious about the rationale behind it.

Mr Coulter: Tell us what you did on your holidays.

Mr SMITH: Yes, I am about to do that.

Mr Speaker, one of the restrictions with the new policy is that the range of income earners who can benefit from it has been reduced at the upper level where the eligibility figure of about 115% of average weekly earnings has come down from the 125% of average earnings which previously applied. In a sense, that is unfortunate. In another sense, however, it is a return to the traditional role of government in the provision of home loan schemes which is to target them at the sections of the community which are earning lower incomes. Members on this side of the Assembly have no problem with that.

My major disappointment with the scheme as it now stands is that, as the Deputy Leader of the Opposition pointed out on Tuesday, it will not lead to a significant boost to the construction industry in the near future. There is so much slack in the market at present that it will take quite a time for it to be taken up before the construction industry will get a boost. To put that another way, it is significantly cheaper at present to buy an established home than it is to build a new home. Of course, that is a product of the times and part of the reason why this new scheme has been introduced. It is a product of the times in the sense that house values are falling and that population is static, excluding the electorate of the member for Katherine. Population is static throughout the rest of the Territory and that has led to a lower demand

for properties and the results of that make the purchase of established houses cheaper than the building of new houses.

I have thought about how we might encourage people to build rather than to buy. Apart from offering a cash incentive, I really do not have an answer but I think that the matter might be worth thinking about during the next few months. How do we reasonably encourage people to buy a block of land and build a house on it, and is there a role for the government in assisting that to happen? In the short term, that is the only way of boosting the construction industry. Certainly, the schemes which are being introduced will not create that boost and that is unfortunate. I do not pretend to have the answer and perhaps there is no answer, but it is certainly something that should be looked at.

There is no doubt that the new scheme is very attractive to people in the community and they will certainly take advantage of it. If one reads the statistics supplied by the Northern Territory Housing Monitor, which comes out every 3 months, there is always a rush of new applicants immediately after the introduction of every new housing scheme. I have no doubt that we will see such a rush on this occasion. Equally, as the months go by, the number of applications drops. That is one of the reasons why the present scheme is being amended. From memory, I think that fewer than 50 people applied in the March quarter to benefit from the scheme. That shows that the scheme had outlived its usefulness, for the reasons outlined by the member for Karama. The changes to the scheme are obviously timely and appropriate and the opposition certainly supports them. I am sure that, in the months to come, we will all be monitoring the effectiveness of the new scheme.

Mr Speaker, as I said, 2 other important issues have arisen this week. One is the scheme itself and the other is the way it has been implemented. The best place to start, although it might seem strange initially, is by quoting from the government's submission to the World Heritage Committee, tabled by the minister today. That submission concerns the possible nomination of the area known generally as Kakadu National Park Stage 3 for inclusion in the World Heritage List. Under the heading of 'Consultation', that submission says:

To date, there has been no consultation with the Northern Territory government or with the Conservation Commission of the Northern Territory concerning any proposal to nominate Stage 3. This is despite the intergovernmental arrangements already in place in Australia which mandate prior consultation with the states and the Northern Territory before any nomination occurs.

Mr Coulter: That hits it on the head.

Mr SMITH: You are right, and that is the essence of the problem in relation to the housing scheme. I will now rephrase that quotation so that it applies to the housing situation seen from the federal government's point of view. It would read as follows:

To date, there has been no consultation with the federal government concerning any proposal to alter home loan schemes in the Northern Territory. This is despite the intergovernmental arrangements already in place in Australia which mandate prior consultation with the states and the Northern Territory before any such changes occur.

The situation is exactly parallel. The honourable minister has been complaining, in my view quite rightly, about the lack of consultation in respect of the proposed World Heritage listing of Kakadu Stage 3. The Northern Territory government has a real and live interest in Kakadu Stage 3 and, under the intergovernmental arrangements that are in place, there is a requirement that discussions occur. Similarly, there is a requirement under the Commonwealth State Housing Agreement that discussions take place with the federal government before any changes are made. That was one of the things that came out quite clearly in my meeting in Canberra last night. It is the normal, expected practice - and it is part of the fundamentals of the Commonwealth State Housing Agreement - that the states correspond in writing with the federal minister and advise him of what they plan to do so that he is informed. If he has any problems with a proposed course of action, he has the opportunity to point those problems out. In this particular case, the minister wants the federal government to follow the same principle in relation to the Kakadu Stage 3 listing which he refuses to follow in respect of the Commonwealth State Housing Agreement. That is the problem which the minister has.

Mr Speaker, let me take you back to Tuesday, when the minister made his statement announcing the new housing scheme. It was sprung on us without notice, which is the minister's entitlement, but is certainly very different from the approach taken by the Minister for Transport and Works on an equally important matter, the State Square project. However, our view was - and still is - that it is a generous scheme which will appeal to people in the community and will alleviate the very real problems being experienced by 1600 people.

As a matter of courtesy, we contacted the office of the federal Minister for Housing, Hon Peter Staples. We told him that the Northern Territory minister had tabled a statement and asked him whether he had received a copy. He said that he had not. Again, as a matter of courtesy, we faxed down a copy of the minister's statement. The Commonwealth State Housing Agreement is based, as much as on anything else, on goodwill and respect for the position of the states and the Commonwealth. To put it mildly, the Minister for Lands and Housing had displayed a lack of courtesy and had made a glaring omission.

We did not raise that particular matter in the debate because that is what we have come to expect from the minister. Just last week, he displayed a similar glaring lack of courtesy when he was in Canberra. He did not bother to contact Senator Richardson about the Stage 3 listing but instead spent his time whipping around the embassies. Nor did he contact Peter Staples and pay him the respect of at least saying: 'We have a great new scheme. We think it is terrific and we would like you to have a look at it. We would like your support'. That would have made it much easier for everybody but it was too simple for the honourable minister opposite. His failure to do that has made life very difficult for him.

Mr Speaker, that is bad enough. On Tuesday evening, the federal minister's office rang back and said: 'Our first reading of the minister's statement indicates that we will have some serious problems with the scheme'. The view of the minister's staff, which was also the view of the department, was that the scheme was in conflict with section 27(a)(1) of the Commonwealth State Housing Agreement which says that any alterations in home loan interest rates have to be approved by both the federal and state ministers. That is certainly the usual practice. They were also very concerned about the national implications of the policy. I am not sure whether the minister realises that the new policy signals a shift from a public rental housing

stock policy to a public sales policy. In terms of the future of the Commonwealth State Housing Agreement, that has tremendous implications, as well as for the reactions of the states. The member for MacDonnell may talk about the reaction of one state later. That reaction is an even more significant reason why it is important to get the federal minister onside.

That phone call from the minister's office also conveyed a concern that the new Northern Territory scheme was a departure from the normal revolving-door principle of interest loans. That principle simply means that you lend money out and you get money back. In that way, you can keep on funding loans for people. The new scheme is a significant departure from that established principle in that we are lending money out but we are not getting it all back.

Those are serious problems. Although not insurmountable, they are serious. They could and should have been sorted out with the federal minister before the minister opposite put this plan into place. On Tuesday night, those problems were of enormous concern to the federal minister, to myself and to my federal colleagues. We faced a choice. We could have come into the Assembly on Wednesday and marshalled an attack on the minister's mishandling of the scheme. We could have devoted the bulk of Wednesday to scoring negative political points and seeking to embarrass the government. The problem with that is that we would have been accused of knocking. That is why we did not pursue that particular approach. Instead, we acted positively. We said: 'The problem has been caused by the minister's failure to consult. There is a problem in terms of getting support from Canberra, particularly in the context of what could be a very strong reaction from the states'.

I chose to do something positive. After organising a meeting with the federal minister, Senator Collins and Warren Snowdon, I got on a plane to Canberra. I received a full briefing from the federal department and, in return, gave a full account of the housing situation in the Northern Territory and the government's proposed new package and the impact that it would have on housing. I want to say that I was positive about the package because, as I have said, it is a good package. It is not perfect but it is good. I described the many problems with the existing scheme in detail, problems which the minister himself could have outlined when he was in Canberra last week. In return, the departmental people ran through the problems they saw with the scheme. They are not insurmountable problems, as I said. However, the departmental officers would have appreciated the courtesy of being involved in discussion about them so that they could be ironed out if possible - and I am sure that it is possible. I have outlined most of the major problems and I do not intend to do so again.

The end result of last night's meeting was that the attitude of the federal minister changed dramatically. If honourable members want evidence of that, they can simply read the 2 press releases which he issued - one of which was read into the Hansard yesterday by the Deputy Leader of the Opposition, and the other which was issued last night after the meeting in Canberra. Yesterday, the federal minister was highly critical of the actions which this government had taken, and rightly so. It is not the way a federal government expects to be treated in relation to a formal agreement with a territory. Unfortunately, however, it had happened. I am pleased to say that, after the discussion last night, there was a dramatic change in attitude. The federal minister was convinced that there were real problems facing Northern Territory home-buyers and that something had to be done about the situation quickly and efficiently. He gave a commitment to do that. He was not expecting Mohammed to come to the mountain. He gave a commitment that 2 senior officers of his

department would come up here to talk to senior officers in the honourable minister's department and sort out whatever problems there were. There are some reservations on the federal government side that need to be taken into account.

The federal minister could not have been more positive in recognising the need to change the existing policy, in appreciating the positive aspects of the Northern Territory government's package and then committing himself to working with the Northern Territory government to resolve what may be areas of difference. There was no problem. What particularly annoys me is that it could have all been done last week instead of my having to spend 12 hours on a plane on Tuesday visiting Canberra to obtain a commitment from the federal government that it will work towards the effective introduction of this scheme when it could quite legitimately have made life difficult for the Northern Territory.

The response of the Minister for Lands and Housing is that we do not need the federal government and that we can go it on our own. Theoretically, the government can do that. The federal government would not take it to court or do anything dramatic or stupid like that. There would, however, be a long-term price to pay for that sort of attitude. We all know what that would be. The next time the Northern Territory government went to Canberra wanting something, it would receive a less than warm welcome. In fact, it would receive a frosty welcome. That is a long-term price. Sometimes, you might have to pay that long-term price for a point of principle, but there was no point of principle in this. It was simply an omission, to put it kindly, by the honourable member opposite in not consulting his federal counterpart when I have no doubt that he was 200 or 300 yards away, at the most, during last week. He could not be bothered to walk that extra distance and talk to his honourable counterpart in the federal parliament.

That essentially is the basis of my concern and the reason why I took that trip. There was a chance that the federal government might have made life difficult for the Northern Territory government on this issue and that would have meant that existing home purchasers and potential home purchasers would have been disadvantaged through no reason of their own. That is an unacceptable price for me to pay even if it is not unacceptable for the honourable minister opposite. That is why I went to Canberra and fixed that problem last night. We now have the full cooperation of the federal government to make this scheme work. The minister could have achieved that. This could have been his week of triumph. He could have carved himself a place in the history of the Northern Territory as the man who brought down an extremely good housing policy but, by failing to follow the basic courtesies and failing to consult as the intergovernmental arrangements required, he has turned the whole thing into a mess. He could have received the kudos but, unfortunately, he will not do so.

The episode reflects that attitude of this government to the federal government. It blames the federal government when it does not consult with the Northern Territory, as the submission in relation to the proposed listing of Kakadu Stage 3 demonstrates - and I agree that the federal government should consult on that matter - and blames the federal government when everything goes wrong. However, when this government has obligations to meet in respect of agreements with the federal government, it does not bother to fulfil them. It treats them as if they are not important. Members opposite like to think that they are the macho men of the north who do not have to worry about those things. Unfortunately, the people in the community who are depending on the way they run this government are forced to pay a high price for that attitude.

Mr Speaker, not only did the minister attack the federal government last week, he also attacked one of our own Senators in the Commonwealth parliament by having one of his staff members, no doubt on instructions, call him the Senator for the backblocks. What sort of impression is created when a member of the staff of a government minister displays that sort of attitude towards the people of the Northern Territory? As a matter of fact, if a member of my staff had said something like that and made the remark available for quotation, he would not be working for me for very much longer. That was an utterly disgraceful incident.

The problem with this government is that it thinks it is an island. It is not an island; it is part of Australia. As part of Australia, it has obligations. It has obligations as part of the federal system and, on this particular issue, it has failed to fulfil those obligations. That is why we had the major hiccup in the system on Tuesday night.

Mr Speaker, let me end on a positive note. The scheme is a good one. Now that we have both governments working towards implementing it by the due date, let us get on with it. Let us get out there and sell it. Let us get on with the job of encouraging people to live permanently in the Territory because there is no better place to be.

Mr TUXWORTH (Barkly): Mr Speaker, in rising to speak to the bill, I would like to say to the honourable minister that this problem has been building up to a crescendo for some time. I do not necessarily believe that the government's new scheme will be the answer to the prayers of people in this community, but it is certainly worth a shot. The minister might remember that, at the last sittings, I asked him some questions in relation to housing in the Territory. I will run through those questions again because he may have the answers at his fingertips. He has had 6 or 7 weeks in which to organise them. If he has not, he may care to obtain the information and provide it at a later stage in the sittings.

I asked whether the minister could provide information, as of January this year, in relation to the number of mortgages foreclosed. How many of the properties have been auctioned, how many are still in the possession of the Housing Commission and how many of the properties are still being rented by the Housing Commission? Can he tell me whether the Housing Commission imposes an interest penalty on people who fail or are unable to meet their obligations under the home purchase agreements?

The problem which I wanted to identify has been addressed by the new scheme although the problem is so serious that the introduction of the new scheme does not necessarily mean that it will be solved or will go away. As I said to the minister a moment ago, I hope that the new scheme gives people the breathing space which they need to survive. If it does, then we are all on a winner, particularly the people in the community who are struggling most with their housing repayments and those people who have not been able to gather the resources to purchase their first home. This scheme gives them a significant opportunity to do so.

I would like to ask the minister to address a question for me when he responds. It has been put to me that, because of an error in calculation by the computers in the Housing Commission, some people were foreclosed on because they were sent interest bills and accounts that were incorrect and which they were unable to pay. As a result of that error, some people had to leave their homes, which were sold. Some of them have moved interstate. I do not want to take the matter any further at this stage but I would like the

minister to indicate whether in fact that occurred and, if so, whether anything was done to reverse the situation for those people who were disadvantaged by the error. If there has been an error, I would like to know the details of it. If there has not been an error, I would like that to be stated quite clearly so that I can respond to the people who have raised it with me.

The other point on which I would appreciate some advice from the minister relates to consultation with the banks. Quite by chance, I was speaking with some members of the banking industry last night. Somebody raised the question of how the government subsidy on the interest component would be paid to the financial institutions. The question was: 'Will the government send the bank or the financial institution a cheque, or will it send it to the home owner who will then be required to forward it to the bank? What will the arrangement be?' That may seem a small detail in the great scheme of things but it certainly is a matter that needs to be clarified in terms of the mechanics of putting the scheme in front of the community. I am quite happy to support the scheme publicly but, when people ask reasonable questions like that, it would be handy to be able to give an answer.

Mr Speaker, I wish the minister well with the scheme.

Mrs Padgham-Purich: That is very big of you.

Mr TUXWORTH: I do. Mr Speaker, I think that there are so many people in the community who are bleeding that, if it does not work, it will be the beginning of more trouble. I hope that it does work.

It is regrettable that the minister did not consult with Canberra, simply from the point of view of good manners. The scheme he has put together is a little different and it is very generous. It is quite likely that it will become a benchmark in Australia. I bet London to a brick that the Premier of Western Australia, who is about to go to the polls, would like to say to the Commonwealth: 'That is a really interesting scheme. We would not mind having the dough to do the same sort of thing in Western Australia'. That, however, would probably stimulate interest in the market and cause problems for the federal government, which is trying to hose down the home-building sector at the moment and would probably not appreciate having precedents like this waved under its nose. In that context, contact with the federal minister would have been most advantageous. Mr Speaker, I commend the bill.

Mr BELL (MacDonnell): Mr Speaker, as indicated by the Leader of the Opposition, I want to make a couple of comments in respect on this bill. I will not be adding to the comments that I have already made in 2 debates this week, both on the minister's statement introducing the new scheme and on the outrageous motion which the government introduced, in a display of extraordinary behaviour, as part of its presentation of this package. Those matters have been covered by the Leader of the Opposition and other opposition speakers. I simply place on record that the Minister for Lands and Housing has not enhanced the position of the Northern Territory or respect for the Northern Territory elsewhere in Australia nor enhanced the confidence of the business community in the administrative processes of this government.

I suggest to the honourable minister that the proposal to reduce by 10% the principal of borrowers on the public home loan scheme will prove contentious. The Minister for Lands and Housing might be interested to know that that particular proposal was soundly rejected by the people of South Australia when his Liberal counterparts put it forward during the

1985 election in that state. It has to be pointed out that, of course, the history and composition of the housing market in South Australia differs from that in the Northern Territory, and Darwin in particular. The northern Australian housing market is different from that of the states. In the Northern Territory, there is a substantially greater percentage of housing stock that either is or has been public housing and I suggest that the proposal to discount public housing stock in this way will be more contentious than the honourable minister led us to believe when he introduced his statement. I rather wonder what the effect will be on people who might otherwise have used or sought private housing finance. It will be a singular disincentive for people to do that and that is a matter of concern. I need to place on record my concern that, with the 10% reduction in principal owing on public loans, there will be a degree of dissatisfaction in the community among people who had a choice between taking out a public loan and taking out a private loan. The people who took out private loans from a non-government agency will feel that they were real mugs and, as I say, that will discourage people from doing so in the future.

In conclusion, whilst I have those criticisms, I believe that the government's actions were necessary. As the member for Barkly indicated, the government was forced to act because the numbers of mortgage auctions and the number of people defaulting on mortgages has reached epidemic proportions. With those comments, I indicate our support for the bill.

Mr MANZIE (Lands and Housing): Mr Speaker, it is certainly refreshing to hear some positive comments from the member for MacDonnell tonight, as it was in the case of the member for Nhulunbuy. The whole gist of the debate was a great contrast to Tuesday's effort. However, I appreciate the trauma that members opposite have been through and I appreciate they have had the opportunity to consider the matter and to talk about it among themselves. I appreciate the positive attitude that they have shown. I believe that all honourable members appreciate it when people realise that they have been a bit wrong and change their stance. We are all human and we all make mistakes and I am sure that we will all be in the same boat some day. I thank the members opposite for their comments and their positive outlook.

The behaviour of the Leader of the Opposition in relation to this matter has been unfortunate. At the start of his comments today, however, he was quite positive and he asked some interesting questions. He was surprised at the high rate of home ownership in the Territory. It is either 42% or 44% if I remember rightly. Whatever the exact figure, the increased rate of home ownership has been brought about by the efforts of CLP governments since self-government.

Questions have been asked in relation to the NTHPAS, particularly in relation to the reduction of the principal on loans by 10% and the reduction of the interest rate to 4%. In effect, as I said in the statement, people will still be required to pay 20% of their salaries in loan repayments, and the adjustments will be made then by 0.5% per year. The idea was to remove the build-up of unpaid interest which had accumulated on the principal which, in turn, was attracting interest which was accumulating. It is hoped that the removal of that accumulated amount will bring about a set of circumstances which will allow repayments to remain at current levels without the accumulation of further unpaid amounts increasing the principal and creating problems. The whole idea is that people's repayments stay the same whilst the accumulation of unpaid interest is removed, removing problems if there is a sale, a transfer of mortgage or whatever. The changes will allow people to gradually discharge their debt rather than having it increase with the passage of time.

The Leader of the Opposition said that the new scheme would not assist in the area of housing construction and asked how construction could be stimulated. He said that he did not have the answer. I suppose no one has a definite answer and I am not saying that the government's package will solve all problems. I doubt that we could ever reach that situation. I believe, however, that the package will do a great deal to stimulate both home ownership and construction because it is geared to the \$55 000 mark, which is the end of the market where there was considerable activity 3 or 4 years ago. Small spec builders were building 3-bedroom houses on blocks in Palmerston for \$38 000 and \$39 000. The price of land in Palmerston is still very reasonable and that sort of housing could be built by enterprising builders and would be well within the reach of people who can borrow money under this scheme. Once we fill up the slack in the market and demand begins to grow, enterprising builders will have the ability to start picking up on where the money is.

To get down to the bottom line, I do not really want to go into a great deal of detail about what the Leader of the Opposition said. The matter has been discussed in great detail in this House during the last couple of days. Had the Leader of the Opposition stayed in the Northern Territory and in this parliament, where democratically-elected members represent Territorians, and asked his questions here or brought his problems and queries to my attention, or even instigated a matter of public importance debate, I could have set him straight. In fact, all he had to do was pick up a telephone and say to me: 'I believe there are some problems with the package. Can you enlighten me?' Instead of doing that, he decided to travel to Canberra, causing definite embarrassment to his colleagues in the opposition, to his federal colleagues and the federal minister. He has obviously now discovered that that approach was wrong.

The member for Stuart made some comments in relation to rental accommodation. I do not believe that this scheme represents a shift away from the provision of rental accommodation. I said this morning, and I will repeat it now, that under the Commonwealth State Housing Agreement the Territory must spend a minimum of 50% of untied funds on rental housing. We spend 62% of our untied funds on rental housing. Our expenditure on rental housing is far greater than is required. Furthermore, the operation of the new scheme will actually reduce government outlays on new loans, leaving additional funds available for the provision of rental housing. For example, if the operation of the home loan package is successful to the extent of 600 successful applications per year, that will cost the government \$1.7m under the new scheme. Under the previous scheme, the same number of successful applications would have involved a government outlay of \$16.8m. That represents a savings of \$15.1m which can be spent on housing. The outlay in terms of government money is less for a greater benefit. The member's claims are not based on any facts.

The member for Stuart's performance reminded me of a schoolboy caught coming to school a couple of hours late, being asked to give an excuse, and telling a long and involved story in an effort to convince the teacher that he really has a legitimate reason for being late. A similar thing happened in the case of the Leader of the Opposition who, having disgraced the Northern Territory, himself and his colleagues, stood up and tried to justify what he had done.

The Leader of the Opposition tried to draw a comparison between the CHSA and the arrangements regarding the World Heritage listing, which is like trying to match chalk and cheese. I have explained in the House on a number of occasions this week that the parameters of the CSHA allow the Territory

government and any state government to move in the direction in which we have moved, and there is no doubt about that. Part of the understanding in relation to World Heritage listing was that the Commonwealth would consult with us in a particular set of circumstances. That is the difference. The CSHA sets parameters within which state governments can work, and we have worked within those parameters. The other set of circumstances requires specific action. They cannot be compared.

I thank honourable members for the support that they have given to the scheme and the bill. I would ask the the Leader of the Opposition, when he has a spare moment, to read the Hansard record of the debates which have taken place during the last couple of days. That will give him the answers to all his queries and problems. It certainly would have been far more beneficial to everyone, including members opposite, the Labor Party in general and politics in the Northern Territory, if he had performed his role properly and effectively by carrying out his duties in this parliament rather than behaving as he did. I commend the bill to honourable members.

Motion agreed to; bill read a second time.

Mr MANZIE (Lands and Housing)(by leave): Mr Speaker, I move that the bill be now read a third time.

Motion agreed to; bill read a third time.

ADJOURNMENT

Mr COULTER: Mr Deputy Speaker, I move that the Assembly do now adjourn.

Mr BELL (MacDonnell): Mr Deputy Speaker, I want to make some brief comments about the relationship between this Assembly and local government. It has become increasingly clear to me that many of the concerns raised by members in this Assembly are in fact local government matters. Mr Deputy Speaker you will recall that, during these sittings, the member for Casuarina asked a question about a particular situation relating to cats in his electorate. The member for Nightcliff asked a question about pedestrian crossings and a bus stop in the Coconut Grove area which he prefaced with a very lengthy preamble in which he just about took us for a walk in words around the streets of his electorate.

As was stated in debate on the Local Government Amendment Bill during the last sittings, there is a temptation, when electorates are so small, for members of this Assembly to become involved in very local issues. I was reminded of this last week when the member for Braitling was involved in a little contretemps with the Alice Springs Town Council over the removal of graffiti from some fences in Alice Springs. The graffiti contained an anti-Pine Gap message and the council made approaches to the management of the Joint Defence Space Research Facility to remove it. There was considerable toing-and-froing. I think it was the Mayor who vouchsafed the information that the houses involved actually belonged to the Joint Defence Space Research Facility. My point does not relate to the rights and wrongs of that particular disagreement but to the involvement of members of this Assembly in local government matters. At the time, I took the trouble to write to the member for Braitling. I intend to read that letter into Hansard because I think it will be of interest to honourable members:

Dear Roger,

I listened with interest to your comments on the graffiti on the fences visible from Telegraph Terrace and your perception of the responsibility of the Alice Springs Town Council. I obviously deplore the defacing of private and public property in this way and believe that it is essential that it be removed, preferably by the perpetrator. I think that we are of one view in that regard.

However, what I found of interest in terms of the government of the Northern Territory was your desire to become involved in the problems of local government. I think this is highly commendable. Further, since you expressed the opinion on national television that your electorate work as member for Braitling could be done after hours, I think it should be possible for you to actually join the local council and express your views about graffiti and any other local issues in a formal fashion.

I realise that the CLP government has made a policy decision, debated hotly at the last sittings of the Legislative Assembly as you will recall, that MLAs should not serve at both local and Territory levels. But, from comments like yours, it becomes obvious that such a policy decision is inappropriate. In fact, not only is it inappropriate, it also exacerbates the problem of overgovernment in the Territory. The Territory has gained a reputation for being overgoverned and I believe there is something we can do about it. In fact, I believe there are 3 things we can do.

Firstly, we should make joint representations to the federal government to amend the Self-Government Act to remove the bar for people serving in both the Legislative Assembly and the local council. Secondly, you should make representations to your party colleagues to review their policy in this regard. Thirdly, we should give a public undertaking to stand for the Alice Springs Town Council at a by-election or a general election.

I will look forward to hearing your response at your earliest convenience. I believe that the good government of the Territory is at issue and that jointly we have a contribution to make.

Mrs Padgham-Purich: With your tongue in your cheek.

Mr BELL: I did not have my tongue in my cheek.

Mr Setter: Who signed it?

Mr BELL: I signed it myself. I firmly believe that members can serve effectively at both levels of government.

The New South Wales state parliament contains 1 representative for every 35 000 people and some of those representatives are members of local governments. In the Northern Territory, we have 1 representative for every 6000 people and it is not possible to serve in both tiers of government. I think that is wrong. It is a waste of public resources and I intend commencing a campaign to reverse it. I think that the government has taken a most unwise decision and I earnestly suggest that it be reversed. In this day and age, we cannot afford to have that sort of overgovernment. I intend to press ahead with this issue and to ensure that whatever needs to be done is done.

I would have thought that members of a conservative government would support the view that I am expressing. I would have thought that a party which prided itself so strongly on being a free-enterprise, small-government party would have heartily and rapidly endorsed this process and I find it very difficult to imagine why ...

Mr Palmer: Which process?

Mr BELL: I appreciate that the member for Karama was not listening. I will reiterate briefly for his benefit that I believe that, as well as being member for Karama, he should be able to be an alderman of the Darwin City Council.

Mr Deputy Speaker, it has been of considerable interest to me over the years in this Assembly to see the relationship between the local government entities and the Territory government. In many respects, their relationship is very similar to that between the Northern Territory and Commonwealth governments.

Mrs Padgham-Purich: Mine isn't. I have worked hand in glove with the Litchfield Shire.

Mr BELL: I am quite sure that the member for Koolpinyah works hand in glove with the Litchfield Shire. In fact, I think that she probably would find it very easy to be of direct service to the shire as one of its councillors. I appreciate that, in some cases, particularly in the case of some of the more onerous ministerial positions, that may not be feasible. By and large, however, I think it is feasible.

I think that MLAs have a contribution to make at the local government level where there tends to be a problem with over-administration. I think there is probably too much paper being pushed around the Northern Territory, far more than is necessary, between the 2 tiers of government. Let us face it, a bureaucracy is no fun. My philosophy is that administration is a necessary evil. It should be carried out as efficiently and quickly as possible so that people can get on with their lives. Administration is not an end in itself. It is a discipline requiring a considerable amount of thought and it is a discipline of which its practitioners should be proud. However, it needs to be carried out efficiently. With those comments, I advise honourable members that I intend to pursue this campaign relentlessly.

Mr FLOREANI (Flynn): Mr Deputy Speaker, there are 2 matters that I would like to address tonight. Both of them relate to comments made by the Minister for Health and Community Services today. The matter pertaining to the salami, which is dear to my heart, I shall leave till last.

When I asked a question in the House this morning, I felt that the answer from the Minister for Health and Community Services displayed a degree of contempt, not only towards the people who asked me to raise the matter but also towards myself. He implied that the matter could have been taken up by an A4 clerk or the person responsible for the salaries section in the Alice Springs Hospital. I can inform the minister that I have received 18 letters from the various nurses who are concerned about their pay. They have made repeated attempts to have their problems attended to by the senior people in the Alice Springs Hospital but with no result. I would also like the minister to note that I will continue to ask questions relating to my constituents, irrespective of what he thinks about the matter. I do not like being fobbed off to the bureaucracy. It is unreasonable to ask people to work for you and

not pay them on time or adequately. They do not have to put up with the things that they are currently putting up with. I believe that the minister must attend to the matter. I have not been attempting to waste his time but rather to be helpful and assist him. It has gone past a joke and the minister must address the matter.

I now turn to the matter of the salami. Indeed, it is worth relating how the subject arose. Members will recall that I stated that the minister was exaggerating the truth somewhat in answer to a question asked by myself. I do not change that stance at all. The documents that he tabled today are rather interesting. In my press release, I asked that he provide proof of the transmission times of the various television stations that supposedly transmitted the Masters Games. I think he mistakenly tabled a list of all the outlets to which the footage was sent. In such cases, as much footage as possible is distributed as widely as possible. There is, however, no guarantee that the material will actually be shown. Indeed, I am surprised that the material was sent to only 8 sources covering 83 countries. I would have thought that the distribution would have been more extensive.

However, being an honourable gentleman and believing that the minister has tabled the wrong documents, I certainly will take up the challenge next Wednesday. I will be most pleased to attend the meeting at 9.30 in the morning and, if I am wrong, I will certainly be most happy to eat the salami.

Mr McCARTHY (Victoria River): Mr Speaker, the comments of the member for MacDonnell in relation to the involvement of members of this Assembly in local government in the Territory require some response. It is quite definitely the view of the Territory government that it is not a reasonable situation to have members serving at both levels of government simultaneously. We do not allow a person simultaneously to be a member of this House and a member of a federal House and I can see no reason why we should allow it to occur at the local level.

In fact, local government ministers from other states have told me that they have a real problem with members of local governments and, in some cases, mayors of local councils, being members in the state parliament. Indeed, it has been made very clear to me that such members usually do not put a great deal of effort into their state government responsibilities. It is used as a means of collecting a salary. Their major effort is put into local government and, in some cases, they sit in the state parliament only often enough to avoid being booted out. I think that is an unreasonable situation and one that we would not want to see occurring in the Northern Territory. We have enough to do and local government people have enough to do without people sitting at both levels of government. I certainly would not want to see that occurring in the Northern Territory. It is fine for the member for MacDonnell to pursue that matter. It is a person's right to pursue what he believes to be the right thing for himself and his constituents. However, if he thinks he can effect a change in that direction in the foreseeable future, I think he probably has another think coming.

Mr Speaker, I wanted to speak tonight about the recent Territory Tidy Town awards. I speak about these every year because, every year, my electorate does extremely well. I was very pleased that the presentation of the awards was held in Alice Springs for the first time and I was pleased to be invited to attend. It must be very frustrating for people from the Centre to have to travel to Darwin every time there is a Territory Tidy Town awards presentation and I believe it is appropriate that the presentation ceremony be held in various locations around the Territory.

Once again, the electorate of Victoria River has done extremely well. I was happy to present the local government awards. In category A, the winner was Timber Creek Police Station. That was the service community group project. The station is in the north-western corner of my electorate and is a very attractive establishment. I commend the police force generally for its efforts in maintaining police stations. It does a remarkable job and sets an example in towns throughout the Territory.

The winner in category B was the Kalkaringi Cricket Club, which was on the Territory news a few minutes ago. In category B, the best police station was also at Kalkaringi which is, of course, Wave Hill. The police station is a very well-maintained establishment.

The best community health centre was in Timber Creek. I had the happy task of collecting the prize and delivering it to the Timber Creek Health Centre a week or so ago. Health centres also do a very good job in maintaining their facilities and keeping the grounds very tidy. In fact, a special effort award was made to Timber Creek township itself. The township has been improved quite dramatically in the last few years. Much work has been done along the highway with the provision of parking bays and grassed areas. A great deal of effort is put into keeping the town extremely tidy and I think it very much deserved that award.

The winner in category B was Batchelor. It is always pleasing to see Batchelor win an award. In 1986, it was the Territory's Tidiest Town and it has been a category winner on a number of occasions previously. Before the numbers were changed in the awards, it was in category A.

The second prize also went to a place in my electorate, to Nauiyu Nambiyu, which is the Daly River Mission area. That is an extremely attractive community. I would be prepared to say that it is, indisputably, the best kept community in the Territory. Pine Creek was also highly commended in category B. The town has grown considerably in the last couple of years as a result of mining in the area. A lot of effort has gone into keeping the town tidy. It is a very attractive town and a very historical town.

I have been asked to give credit where it is due and I have no problems with that. The overall winner, as we all know, was Ti Tree. That very small town was the winner in category A. We have to expect that, occasionally, the major prizes will go to the Centre and I take nothing away from the efforts of Ti Tree. It has done a great job over the years.

In category E, for station homesteads, a special effort award went to Montejinni Station, which is about 7 km west of Top Springs along the Buchanan Highway. The Jansens have done a tremendous amount of work in improving the homestead area during the last couple of years. A special effort award also went to Palumpa station, which is an Aboriginal-owned station 30 km or so from Port Keats. I have had a considerable association with that place and I was very pleased to see the work that the people have done and the effort that they have put into improving that station.

The community involvement award winner was Batchelor. The town was established some years ago as a mining town. A tremendous amount of community effort is put into keeping it tidy.

The winner for the best government department or statutory authority was the Douglas Daly Research Farm. Members who have visited it would appreciate the amount of work which goes into keeping it up to scratch.

In category B, the winner was Borrooloola, but a special effort award again went to the Power and Water Authority at Batchelor, where TJ has put a great deal of effort into keeping that place very attractive. For those honourable members who do not know, T.J. Richardson was the man who came up with the idea of using PVC caps on the powerlines to stop the bats shorting out our power supply. He has won an award for that from the Power and Water Authority.

Daguragu Community Government Council won the award for the best local government project. Of course, Daguragu is the twin community with Kalkaringi at Wave Hill. Again, a great deal of effort has been put into improving the place during the last year or so.

The winner in category B for the best business project was Frank's Bar and Grill at Kalkaringi which was also featured on tonight's Territory news. Anyone knows Frank Dalton and his operation at the Wave Hill Cricket Club will have to recognise the effort that has gone into that place, right down to the seagulls on the hill. The special effort award went to Rum Jungle Recreation Club. Again, a great deal of effort has gone into making that a very attractive establishment.

Mr Speaker, before I sit down, there is one other matter that I would like to raise. For those young people who are planning to leave school at the end of this year and are not too sure what they will do subsequently, I would like to say a few words about industrial training committees and the great effort presently being made by industry to provide training for young people entering the work force. Industry training committees are now established in a whole range of areas including building, local government, state and federal government and tourism. Those committees are doing a tremendous amount of work in informing young people about what is available to them in the way of training and work. I would suggest to any young people who are planning to leave school this year that, if they are unsure about what they want to do but think that they might like to enter into any area covered by an industry training committee, that they contact members of the industry directly, through its committee, or that they get in touch with the Employment and Training Division of my department which will put them in contact with the right people. If the industrial training committees are unable to help them, that division of my department may be able to assist in other areas, such as through the school leaver programs which the department offers.

Record numbers of students are sitting for Year 12 exams in the Territory this year and, given that that means that quite a large number are likely to be leaving school and looking for work in the Territory, we have some very good school leaver programs available. Some of these lead directly into apprenticeships or cadetships whilst others provide pre-apprenticeship training for entry into the public service or the private sector. Many facilities are available to help young people to obtain work. If they have any worries at all about their situation, they can contact the Department of Labour and Administrative Services and receive advice on the opportunities available to them. Hopefully, we will be able to take on all the young people leaving school this year and get them all into the work force.

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH (Koolpinyah): Mr Speaker, today I wish to speak about things that have occurred in my electorate and in the rural area. There is a particular case that I would like to draw to the attention of the Minister for Health and Community Services and, perhaps, the member for Palmerston. We have heard a great deal recently about certain people in the Palmerston area wanting 24-hour medical coverage in the town. We have heard the minister's

promise that this will be provided and we have heard the member for Palmerston make the same promise. However, I wonder if the sort of medical service now being provided there is the sort of service which the people of Palmerston or even the people of the rural area want. I believe that, in the particular case that I will relate, a callous disregard was shown for the condition of a lady who, to all intents and purposes, was in the throes of a heart attack. Her condition appeared to be critical.

I speak of a lady of mature years in the rural area who, on a Saturday afternoon, was found in a very critical condition by a couple who shared common relatives with her. They suspected that she was experiencing a heart attack and immediately put her in the car to take her to hospital. As they were passing Palmerston, they decided to call into the doctor's surgery to obtain some assistance. The lady stayed in the car because she was unable to walk and her friends went into the doctor's surgery. Because of their haste in leaving for the hospital, they had not had time to change and were still wearing their soiled gardening clothes and were not carrying wallets or purses. They went into the doctor's surgery, stated their case, and described the critical condition of their friend in the car. You would not believe it, Mr Speaker, but the doctor said: 'No money. No examination'. This lady was in a critical condition and, to say that the couple were astounded, astonished and disgusted by the attitude of the doctor is to put it very mildly. They finally got their friend to the hospital, however, and there continues to be some confusion as to whether she had experienced a severe virus attack, a heart attack or something else. Whatever it was, it looked like a very critical heart attack at the time. The callousness of this doctor has certainly been noted by the people concerned and the facts will be relayed to the Australian Medical Association.

I know that doctors have to live, as do other professional people, but it would have been quite apparent to any doctor or receptionist that these people were in a position to pay. Even if they were not in a position to pay, the lady would have been covered by Medicare anyway. The details as conveyed to me can only be cause for the severest castigation of this particular medical practitioner.

I asked a question of the Minister for Primary Industry and Fisheries yesterday morning. If I had received a call this morning, which I did not, I had intended to ask a further question on the same matter which relates to the Brucellosis and Tuberculosis Eradication Campaign. To date, the honourable minister has not replied to my question. I would have thought that, with all the facilities and staff at his disposal, it would have been child's play to obtain an answer in half an hour. I certainly could have done so were I in his position. No doubt the minister's staff do not work in quite the same way as myself. Nevertheless, as I said yesterday, this is one occasion when I truthfully do not know the answer to the question.

I would be very interested to hear the honourable minister's answer to my question as to whether what I have been told is correct - namely, that cattle from dirty properties were housed at the showgrounds at the time of the Royal Darwin Show when clean cattle from clean properties were housed there also. I would be very interested to hear the minister's advice as to whether the status of the showgrounds, in terms of the Brucellosis and Tuberculosis Eradication Campaign, was changed by that reported occurrence and whether the status of the properties to which the clean cattle were returned was also changed.

I do not have any cattle but I keep goats and I have maintained strict quarantine standards in relation to goats coming on my property. That is because bleedings have shown my goats to be free of caprine arthritic encephalitis on 3 occasions. I will not let goats leave my property and mix with other goats at shows until the shows are officially declared to be only for goats free of caprine arthritic encephalitis. If, in a hypothetical case, I entered my goats for a show believing all other goats there were free of caprine arthritic encephalitis, and later found that a goat there had CAE, I would be very annoyed, to put it mildly. I would express my feelings to the highest possible authority because I believe that an occurrence such as that would change the status of my herd in respect of caprine arthritic encephalitis. I await the minister's answer to my question. It certainly will be interesting. When he gives me the answer, perhaps I can elaborate on another incident.

Since the last sittings - indeed, relatively recently - several representations have been made to me by licensees and members of the general public in the rural area relating to amendments to the Liquor Act. The amendments to which I refer were introduced by the government and I supported them at the time. I know that the hoteliers also supported them because the legislation was passed to try to prevent underage drinking. I think anybody with any sense would have supported the amendments. Unfortunately, I did not foresee the difficulties that would arise. I believe the honourable minister's staff should have foreseen them or perhaps the people who drafted the legislation should have foreseen them. Anomalies are being revealed thick and fast, to the detriment of the community, anomalies that I know the honourable minister did not intend when he introduced the legislation.

As we all know, the amendments to the Liquor Act stated that children and youths under 18 were not permitted on licensed premises except in restaurants, or roadhouses in the company of their parents consuming a meal in the restaurant area or in the residential part. We all know what that means, but there was a case at 1 hotel in my electorate where a tradesman came to the hotel to carry out some work accompanied by a 17-year-old apprentice. According to the amendment passed during the last sittings, that apprentice was not legally able to work in the hotel unless he worked in the restaurant with his boss while his boss was having a meal. The apprentice could not have a meal there unless he ate with his boss in the restaurant because, in that case, the boss would stand in loco parentis. Strictly speaking, the apprentice could not even change a light bulb in the public bar.

I am pleased to see that the Minister for Primary Industry and Fisheries has come back into the Chamber. Perhaps he will answer my question shortly.

An anomalous situation arose in which children under the age of 18 could not even avail themselves of toilet facilities because they would have had to cross the beer garden, a licensed area, in order to reach the facilities. That was a ridiculous situation. Another problem relates to 2 hotels in the rural area which have very active, under 16 darts groups which play on the premises. The amendment does not allow that to occur. It also means that young people cannot undertake work experience in a hotel because, usually, the licensed area includes the whole block or building. People under the age of 18 could not undertake work experience in a hotel kitchen, laundry or office, let alone a bar. Another difficulty relates to the fact that substantial amounts of money are raised for charity in the hotels in the rural area and families with children go along to support the charities. The amended legislation would mean a reduced income for those charities.

One of the most ridiculous situations of all arose in the case of the supermarket which is in the same building as my office. The whole supermarket is a licensed premise. That means that no child under the age of 18 can legally enter it. I contacted the minister's office about this and he rang me, which was very nice of him. I wrote him a letter explaining the situation. He said that exemptions could be sought. I believe that is tackling the problem the wrong way around. If every licensed premise seeks an exemption, I can foresee an increase in the staff of the Liquor Commission because somebody would have to handle all the paperwork and inspect all the premises. I believe that there is a much easier way and I hope that the minister is considering it. The government could amend the act to take into account all the anomalies which I have mentioned and to allow common sense to prevail.

Mr POOLE (Tourism): Mr Speaker, I would like to quickly address the issues raised by the member for Koolpinyah. The member and I discussed, in a telephone conversation, a number of the issues which she has raised this evening. I believe that her concerns have been addressed and I will go through them one by one.

The first matter raised by the member related to the ability of apprentices to carry out work in licensed premises. I am advised that it has always been the case the apprentices can be invited by the licensee to enter licensed premises to carry out work. A regulation under the act has allowed that from day 1.

In relation to beer gardens, I think the licensees did not appreciate that they were among the areas which we specifically thought should be exempted, although that also depended on the individual property. I asked the Liquor Commission to examine that matter. I think everybody in this place believed that the amendments to the Liquor Act were aimed at underage drinkers in the age-group between 14 and 18. Certainly, the Liquor Commission addressed the exemptions in that context. Beer gardens - or saloon bars, if I can describe them in that way - will be exempt where there is evidence that they cater to a family situation rather than what I would call a straight drinking situation.

There might be some difficulties in relation to the groups of children under 16 years of age who want to play darts in licensed premises, depending on exactly where they want to play. They certainly will not be permitted to play in public bar areas. The level of supervision is important. I am sure that, if the honourable member is supporting such children, they must be well-supervised. We certainly do not want teams of children wandering around the hotels and playing darts or any other games in public bars.

There is no problem in relation to young people on work experience programs. A licensee can invite underage people to premises in order to carry out work.

With regard to exemptions generally, the situation has been made quite clear. I understand that the licensee of every licensed property in the Northern Territory has been advised by letter of the need to apply for exemptions if he so desires. It is interesting that, to date, we have only received 18 applications. No doubt that number will increase as more people realise their responsibilities under the act.

There was a grey area in the act in relation to supermarkets. Legal advice indicated that this could be quite easily clarified by regulation. A regulation was made on Monday morning to rectify the situation in relation to all supermarkets in the Northern Territory.

Mrs Padgham-Purich: The one at Howard Springs asked for an exemption.

Mr POOLE: It will not need one. All supermarkets are covered by a general exemption for that specific category of licence.

Mr COLLINS (Sadadeen): Mr Deputy Speaker, we have had some debate on the State Square project. I suggested to the government that it could have found other projects which would have created more wealth and which would have kept our building industry going in this time of downturn. Whenever ideas about worthwhile projects present themselves, I intend to mention them. One such idea has come to light today. In the not-too-distant future, we will need a new university. Some honourable members may think that universities do not create a great deal of wealth. They certainly cost a fair bit of money to run. However, they produce the people with the skills and expertise to be leaders. We need such people in the Territory. Certainly, the construction of a new university would have engaged the construction industry on a useful project which would have been most beneficial to the Territory. Such a project would be much more useful than a new building to accommodate 25 parliamentarians who come in for a few days each year. With due respect to the Clerk and his staff, who may not have the most luxurious accommodation, I am sure that they could continue to manage.

Mr Deputy Speaker, this coming weekend, and Monday 28 November in particular, is an important time in the life of Alice Springs. The hundredth anniversary of the declaration of the town of Stuart, which later became Alice Springs, falls on Monday. There will be celebrations throughout the weekend and on Monday. One of the celebrations which I am particularly keen about is an auction of the 'titles' of the original blocks in the town. That will take place in the Mall at about 8.30 am on Monday. I am interested in that from an historical point of view. The people who bid will not actually get the blocks of land but they will get some fine artistic certificates depicting the titles. The money raised will go to a very worthy initiative in the fight against drug addiction, the Life Education Centre. That is a very generous act on the part of the people of Alice Springs.

I comment Mr Keith Mooney-Smith from the Department of Lands and Housing for all the work he has done in researching the history of the titles, Mr Ian Campbell, who is responsible for the artwork on the certificates, the subgroup of the bicentenary committee which in this case is acting as a centenary committee, and Mrs Franca Frederiksen, who is coordinating the whole operation. I am sure that it will be a great weekend in Alice Springs. The centenary celebrations coincide with the Life Education television appeals and I am sure that the people of Alice Springs will make a very generous contribution to Life Education. I congratulate the town of Stuart, now Alice Springs, on reaching its 100th anniversary in Australia's bicentenary year.

Mr Deputy Speaker, the other matter that I would like to comment on is the report that the Prime Minister, Rt Hon Robert Hawke, has renewed the Pine Gap agreement with the United States for a further 10 years. Some people in Alice Springs are not very happy about that and have made a fair bit of noise about it. They want to get rid of Mr Hawke because he has betrayed them. However, I do not believe that the vast majority of people in Alice Springs share that feeling.

Mr McCarthy: They would want to get rid of Bob Hawke.

Mr COLLINS: Let me clarify that. They possibly would want to get rid of him. However, I certainly welcome his decision on this matter of great

importance to the nation. I have no doubt that he would have studied the situation very carefully and weighed the pros and cons. It is not a purely black and white issue and I am very pleased that he has removed the uncertainty. The people did not know from year to year whether the agreement would be renewed or not and it has now been renewed for 10 years. We know where we stand. Perhaps some of the vocal opponents will accept the decision as a fait accompli. I am sure that Mr Hawke will not change his mind. We may see fewer of the destructive campaigns that some have waged. Some campaigns have been quite peaceful and I defend people's right to express their point of view in a peaceful way. However, others have been less than peaceful, and less than desirable events have accompanied some demonstrations against Pine Gap. Maybe I am hoping beyond hope but I hope that the demonstrations will be fewer in number, at least for a period.

Mr REED (Primary Industry and Fisheries): Mr Deputy Speaker, I wish to comment on some questions raised by the member for Koolpinyah earlier tonight and yesterday. It is a pity that she is not in the Chamber at present. Her questions related to the yarding of cattle at agricultural shows and, in particular, at the Royal Darwin Show. The honourable member rightly raised the concerns owners might have in regard to the yarding of animals of different disease status in situations which might allow the transfer of disease from diseased animals to non-diseased animals and which subsequently would affect the status of stations that had previously been declared clean.

I advise the honourable member that, in such circumstances at shows and similar operations, there is always a stock inspector in charge of the yards. The department provides that service to the show societies. She is correct in assuming that there may be animals from properties with differing disease status. In order to take account of those circumstances and to protect the status of animals that are not carrying disease, animals of different status are separated by empty yards. There is no less than 1 empty yard between the animals concerned. I am assured that that process was put in place at the Royal Darwin Show this year. Stock inspectors are in charge of the yards to ensure that those people who go to the trouble of supporting the shows by bringing their animals in for display are provided with that service. There is a safeguard to ensure that there is no transmission of diseases to endanger the disease status of the respective properties.

Mr EDE (Stuart): Mr Speaker, I rise tonight to talk about a very disturbing possibility which has emerged in Alice Springs. It is no more than a possibility at this stage. At the time of the town council elections, a particular individual thought to gain some notoriety and possibly some electoral advantage by describing himself as a self-confessed racist and member of the League of Rights. His name was emblazoned all over the newspaper and he rapidly emerged from obscurity to become a well-known person. I refer to one Daniel Royal. I was extremely proud of the people of Alice Springs when, in a poll of some 24 candidates, Mr Royal came a very stunning last. I think he got 27 votes. He ended up representing 1 in 1000 people. However, we must always be on the lookout for the emergence of people or groups who espouse those sorts of values. We must monitor their activities to see what they are up to. Some of them are simply cranks and nuts but that is not always the case.

I refer members to the front page of The Advertiser of 7 November which carried a report which it had taken from the influential Sunday Times of London. It reported stories that were circulating that a group known in Chile as Colonia Dignidad was planning to move out of Chile and buy land in the Alice Springs region of the Northern Territory. This move was said to

coincide with a shift in Chile's political climate after the defeat of General Pinochet at the polls in September.

The group originally came from Germany. If my memory is correct, it was founded in the late 1950s and moved out in the early 1960s following problems with the German authorities. In fact, I am advised that the Germans are seeking to extradite one Paul Schaeffer, the leader of the group, and 3 of the colony's other leaders. The group poses as a religious sect saying that, through hard work and strict morals, it is a model of self-sufficiency. People who have escaped from the colony tell a completely different story and their stories are borne out by people from the West German foreign ministry who have carried out investigations into the group. The article in The Advertiser says that a German diplomat in Bonn commented: 'There is only one word to describe them: thugs'.

The story was followed up first by a leader of the Chilean community in Alice Springs, Miguel Contreras, who has been a leader for many years in attempting to raise the level of awareness among Australians about the problems faced by the people of Chile. He knew a substantial amount about the organisation, the investigations into it and the very close relationships that have been built up between it and General Pinochet following the coup which brought him to power after the murder of Allende in 1973. Mr Contreras told of how Pinochet's thugs used the organisation's camp as a place to keep people. He told of the brutal bashings and, indeed, murders which are claimed to have occurred there.

Following these revelations, another person came forward, a central Australian school teacher who still was not game to give her name. She described how, as a child, she lived as part of the so-called sect with her parents, sister and 2 brothers how what may have been good aims initially were corrupted by perversions and a lust for personal power until, eventually, the organisation's headquarters became an armed concentration camp with underground torture chambers. She described the horrendous situations that occurred there. I have copies of the newspaper articles here if honourable members wish to go into the matter in more detail. It is not a very pretty story.

I believe it has been confirmed that 2 of the leaders of the organisation were in Australia and it was believed that 1 of them turned up in Alice Springs where, according to all reports, the organisation is trying to negotiate the purchase of a cattle property to enable its headquarters to be relocated there. The Department of Foreign Affairs has been notified of this and is on the lookout although my information is that it is not sure whether some members of the organisation have moved into this country under assumed names or otherwise have slipped through the cordon. The department believes that it is possible that some of these people may be in Australia and it is now closely monitoring visitations from Chile in case the group tries to enter en masse. That, of course, is most unlikely.

I believe that honourable members will make no criticism of my use of parliamentary privilege in this matter. Indeed, the purpose of parliamentary privilege relates to the community interest. I intend to seek leave to table a list of names which has been provided to me by the Chilean community, as a result of its own investigations. This list contains the names of the leaders of Colonia Dignidad and descriptions of the positions which they hold in that organisation.

The leader of Colonia Dignidad is, without doubt, its founder, Paul Schaeffer. The president of the colony, referred to as Schaeffer's prime minister, is involved in the administration of torture and has developed a very strong relationship with the Chilean armed forces. His name is Kurt Schnellenkemp. The camp ideologue, a person has developed a very good relationship with the Chilean Ministry of Justice and the Interior, is Albert Schreiber. The colony's lawyer is Dr Harmut Kopp. I have been told that the 4 people whose names I have just mentioned are the individuals wanted by the German authorities but I have not been able to ascertain that beyond doubt, except in the case of Paul Schaeffer. I have been given the information but I have not been able to check it out with other sources.

The educator and principal of the colony's school, who also maintains all the confidential records, is Dr G. Seewald. The person responsible for camp activities is Alfred Matthusen. The community's financier, carpenter and maintenance supervisor is Rudolf Collen. The other member of the triumvirate which controls the colony and includes Schaeffer and Collen is Karl Van Der Berg. Senora Erika Blank is in charge of maintaining information services to Schaeffer on individuals in the camp. Dorothea Hopp is one of the intelligence squad. The person responsible for women and distributing work and administering punishment to female members is Senora Hildegard Mohring. The head of administration in charge of sentencing and psychological torture is Dr Gisela Seewald.

I am told that the camp is 12 000 ha in size and is guarded by electronic monitoring services. There are 2 fences and the space between them is guarded by patrol dogs. Mr Speaker, I seek leave to table the document.

Leave granted.

Mr EDE: Mr Speaker, this organisation has gained itself a reputation for the ferocity with which it seeks and captures people who have escaped from its colony. Such people are sought throughout the world. In fact, the woman from central Australia is still frightened to give her name or a picture. She said that she broke out in a cold sweat when she saw Paul Schaeffer's picture on the front page of the newspaper. She had this feeling that they were reaching out to get her even though it is many years since she escaped.

Another gentleman, who initially helped to set up the group, is a Mr Willi George of Paradise in Adelaide. He fell out with the organisation in 1961 after he had uncovered evidence of sexual abuse, brutal beating and blackmail. He says that he still lives in fear after 27 years. He maintains a very substantial security system for his home and his family because he believes he is one of the few people to have escaped and survived.

After hearing that I was investigating the matter, another person rang me but did not give a name. This person told me that the organisation rarely murders people in foreign countries but goes to extraordinary lengths to return people to its headquarters in Chile. It has been known to kidnap relatives of a person whom it wants and to take them back to Chile so that the wanted person will return. It also uses other people to put pressure on the person whom it wants. Once in Chile, it is easier to kidnap someone and remove him to the torture chambers at the headquarters, after which he will not be seen again.

Colonia Dignidad is a particularly ruthless and obnoxious organisation, the likes of which we do not want here in the Northern Territory. I would hope that if any members receive information that people such as those I have

mentioned are looking around their electorates or if they hear stories of the organisation, they will either give the information to me or directly inform the Department of Foreign Affairs or the Federal Police so that the stories can be checked and we can ensure that this canker is not visited on the Northern Territory.

Motion agreed to; the Assembly adjourned.

Mr Speaker Vale took the Chair at 10 am.

PETITIONS
Cuts in Funding for Libraries

Mr HATTON (Nightcliff): Mr Speaker, I present a petition from 341 citizens requesting the Assembly to take cognisance of the detriment to the quality of services able to be provided by the Darwin public libraries due to funding cuts imposed by the Department of Education. The petition bears the Clerk's certificate that it conforms with the requirements of standing orders. I move that the petition be read.

Motion agreed to; petition read:

To the honourable the Speaker and members of the Legislative Assembly of the Northern Territory, the humble petition of certain citizens of the Northern Territory, electors of the greater Darwin area, respectfully showeth that the recent cuts in funding to the book vote for public libraries by the Northern Territory Department of Education has drastically affected the ability of Darwin public libraries to adequately service the needs and demands of the general public, especially with regard to: (a) magazines in English and other languages, (b) paperbacks, (c) cassettes, (d) Commodore 64 and children's games and (e) newspapers. We ask that the level of the book vote be re-examined and reinstated to the level necessary to fulfil the needs of the public for the library services. Your petitioners therefore humbly pray that the Legislative Assembly of the Northern Territory take cognisance of the detriment to the quality of library services able to be provided due to funding cuts imposed by the Department of Education on the Darwin public libraries, and your petitioners, as in duty bound, will ever pray.

Cuts in Funding for Libraries

Mr PERRON (Fannie Bay): Mr Speaker, I present a petition from 469 citizens requesting the Assembly to take cognisance of the detriment to the quality of services able to be provided by the Darwin public libraries due to funding cuts imposed by the Department of Education. The petition bears the Clerk's certificate that it conforms with the requirements of standing orders.

Mr Speaker, I do not propose that the petition be read as it is in similar terms to petitions presented earlier during these sittings.

Cuts in Funding for Libraries

Mr SMITH (Millner): Mr Speaker, I present a petition from 379 citizens requesting the Assembly to take cognisance of the detriment to the quality of services able to be provided by the Darwin public libraries due to funding cuts imposed by the Department of Education. The petition bears the Clerk's certificate that it conforms with the requirements of standing orders. Similarly, I do not propose that the petition be read as it is in similar terms to a petition presented earlier during these sittings.

Appointment of Women's Advisor

Mr SMITH (Millner): Mr Speaker, I present a petition from 835 citizens of the Northern Territory requesting the Assembly to give due consideration to

continuing the appointment of a women's advisor. The petition bears the Clerk's certificate that it conforms with the requirements of standing orders. Mr Speaker, I move that the petition be read.

Motion agreed to; petition read:

To the honourable the Speaker of the Legislative Assembly, the humble petition of the undersigned citizens of the Northern Territory respectfully urges the Speaker and the members of the Northern Territory Legislative Assembly to address the failure of the Northern Territory government to continue the appointment of a women's advisor. Women's interests cannot be politically represented by bureaucrats nor can the Women's Advisory Council be expected to play a political role. The women's advisor position is crucial in ensuring that women have real access to government. The undersigned citizens believe that the interests of 50% of the Territory's population have been ignored by this decision. Your petitioners therefore humbly pray that the honourable Speaker and the members of the Legislative Assembly of the Northern Territory give due consideration to the above, and your petitioners, as in duty bound, will ever pray.

STATEMENT
Video Library Footage

Mr SPEAKER: Honourable members, this morning, Film North is taking video library footage for the Channel 10 Network.

TABLED PAPER
'AIDS: A Time to Care, A Time to Act'

Mr DALE (Health and Community Services): Mr Speaker, I lay on the Table a discussion paper entitled 'AIDS: A Time to Care, A Time to Act'.

AIDS is potentially one of the most serious threats to the secure healthy future of Territorians and all Australians. There is no prospect of a vaccine or cure in the next 5 years and little likelihood of either by the year 2000. However, the epidemic and its consequences are not yet inevitable. We can beat the threat of AIDS if we apply the knowledge which we have, if we are willing to consider the issues with open minds and take the tough decisions which may be needed and if we are all prepared to work together to keep our community safe. The policy discussion paper which I am tabling today was tabled by the federal minister a week ago and is being tabled for discussion in every state and territory of Australia.

The publication 'AIDS: A Time to Care, A Time to Act' is subtitled 'Towards a strategy for Australians' and is designed to stimulate informed debate on the issue so that we can decide together how Australians can meet the challenge of AIDS in the most effective way during the next decade. The paper does not make recommendations. It identifies areas for action and examines the impact, cost and practicality of each of a range of possible policy options. The first of the 3 sections provides factual information about the virus and about the disease in order to provide the basis for informed comment. The second section identifies 3 objectives: to minimise transmission of the virus; to support, care for and to treat infected people; and to educate and prevent the infection of people who care for the infected individuals.

The third objective recognises that, even if we could stop the spread of the virus today, there are people who are already infected who will inevitably develop AIDS in the forthcoming years. The role of those who will care for them - health care workers, families, friends and volunteers - will become increasingly important. Many of the issues on which policies are needed are complex. The second part of this paper, therefore, also identifies some key principles to guide discussion. Agreement on these principles would be a significant step towards a cooperative national response. The last part of the paper deals with Australia's involvement in the international response to AIDS with the research needed to support a national strategy and with monitoring and evaluation.

It is the second part of this paper which presents the sensitive and often emotive issues which our community needs to debate and clarify: the role of testing, contact tracing, legal impediments to programs such as needle exchange, and confidentiality, to name but a few. The Territory has already faced many of these issues, considered the options and made decisions. We have not feared to face the controversy, to take the measures which protect all Territorians - both the majority who are not infected and also those members of our community who have become infected and their families.

We have put into place a coordinated strategy of education programs and counselling, testing and treatment services. We have established a partnership with our media to work together in the all-important area of education and prevention. We were the first in Australia to test all prisoners and to offer testing to pregnant women. We recommend testing to people with other sexually transmittable diseases. We encourage those who practice risk behaviour to come forward for the test which we have made freely available at community health centres and hospitals as well as general practitioners' surgeries.

The Northern Territory AIDS Council has been established and, in addition to providing information to the general community, has understandably given priority to programs for homosexuals and bisexual men. Next year, we will implement a program specifically to target our young people and, of course, their parents. We will be consulting throughout the Territory with parents of teenagers to ensure that our program meets Territory needs and concerns.

As one of several measures to protect our children and grandchildren from the tragedy of AIDS, I will be today introducing to this Assembly legislation which removes the fear of prosecution from responsible, caring professionals who provide clean needles and syringes to intravenous drug-users as part of an education prevention program. This is one way in which we can protect our young people, if they experiment with drugs, from sharing a needle which is infected.

In the wider arena, our program for Aboriginal people has attracted national interest and resulted in an invitation from the World Health Organisation to act in a consultant capacity in the Pacific region. Our officers represent the Territory nationally by their participation on the Intergovernmental Committee on AIDS and the National AIDS Forum. It is now time for all groups of Territorians to contribute to national policy on AIDS. This is our opportunity to comment on and influence the management of AIDS to protect our future and the future of our children. AIDS is not a problem which will go away. It will impact on us all, either directly or indirectly. We need to make decisions now which will see us through the long haul which lies ahead. We need to act now.

Our responses will contribute to the development of a national policy statement on AIDS to be completed in time for consideration in the 1989-90 budget context. Not everyone will agree on all the details. Indeed, diversity will continue to result in a range of programs which investigate and expand our knowledge of options which may prevent AIDS. What the national strategy seeks is a commitment to the principles which are essential to contain the epidemic, principles which will mean the difference between lives and deaths for Territorians and for Australians. We need to read this paper, consider the issues and discuss the points of view. We need to get it right, together. We have shown that Territorians care. Now is the time for us all to act.

Mr Speaker, I move that the Assembly take note of the paper.

Mr BELL (MacDonnell): Mr Deputy Speaker, unfortunately, I have not had the opportunity to make a close examination of the document prior to the minister's tabling of it today. It is obviously a crucially important document as far as public health policy is concerned and I believe that it is important that I indicate that this side of the House essentially offers its bipartisan support for the government's policy in this matter and concurs with the urgent need for action.

Some members of the community are often very disturbed about the fact that the only deliberations of this parliament which are reported in the media are those in which the government and the opposition are going at each other hammer and tongs. We all know that, when that occurs, the result is the best theatre and the best newspaper and television stories. Those are the stories which sell newspapers and advertising on television. Basically, the majority of people in the community like to see politicians disagreeing with each other. They rarely enjoy or are prepared to buy newspapers containing stories about political adversaries agreeing with one other. At this stage, I fully expect members of the press to vacate the gallery because the government and the opposition are of a single mind on the urgent need to combat the spread of the Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome, AIDS.

I will be speaking at length in the debate this afternoon on the needle exchange program that the Minister for Health and Community Services foreshadowed in his statement. I think it is worth while mentioning a further point which I believe is important. It is clear that there is community abhorrence of those groups in the community which are at the greatest risk of contracting the Human Immunodeficiency Virus, which is generally known by its acronym HIV. It is quite obvious that there is a strong community abhorrence of homosexuality and the use of illegal drugs. There is particular community abhorrence for the practice of taking illegal drugs intravenously. However, as policy-makers in the area of public health, we have to come to terms with the fact that the high-risk groups which are the subject of community abhorrence are not living on an island; they are part of our community.

Mr Collins: Maybe they should be.

Mr BELL: I will pick up that interjection from the member for Sadadeen because I am deeply concerned at the prospect that this Assembly may not be about to cover itself in glory in today's debate on this issue. Indeed, the point which I have been coming to is that some cynical politicians, not only in the federal parliament ...

Mrs Padgham-Purich: Realistic ones.

Mr BELL: We saw an outrageous example of that from the former shadow minister for health, Wilson Tuckey, in the House of Representatives.

Mr Collins interjecting.

Mr BELL: It appears that the members on the crossbenches are about to involve themselves in the sort of political cynicism that will only give this Assembly a bad name.

Mrs Padgham-Purich: Political realism.

Mr BELL: I will pick that interjection from the member for Koolpinyah. That says it all: 'political realism'. That is exactly right. That is all it is, Mr Deputy Speaker, and we are going to hear a load of it today. It is a matter of serious concern to me that members of the crossbenches will be involved in political cynicism of the highest order. They will trade on that community abhorrence ...

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! I ask that members cease the cross-Chamber chatter that is occurring. The member for MacDonnell has every right to be heard in silence.

Mr BELL: Mr Deputy Speaker, members on the crossbenches will attempt to take cynical political advantage of the community abhorrence of homosexuality and intravenous drug usage. I believe that this Assembly will be the poorer for that, as will the debate on this sensitive topic. I will not dwell on that subject in terms of the risks it poses for the wider community. I will leave that for this afternoon.

However, I will place my own views on record. I believe that the community abhorrence of homosexuality and illegal drug use is well founded. My personal view of homosexuality is one of tolerance but not encouragement. I believe that we have to treat people as people and, in this area of public health policy, it is about time that we did exactly that. The cynical political grandstanding that we have seen both from the federal opposition and the crossbenches in this parliament does public life no good whatsoever, either in the Territory or in this nation.

In conclusion, I would like to pass on my appreciation to the honourable minister for tabling what is obviously an important document in terms of public health policy. I assure him of the continuing cooperation of the opposition in that regard.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I seek leave to continue my comments at a later hour.

Leave granted; debate adjourned.

TABLED PAPER
Report of the Northern Territory Law Reform
Committee on De Facto Relationships

Mr MANZIE (Attorney-General): Mr Speaker, I lay on the Table the Law Reform Committee's Report on De Facto Relationships. As honourable members are aware, the Northern Territory Law Reform Committee is a part-time honorary committee that inquires into matters referred to it by the Attorney-General. As Attorney-General, I refer to the committee areas of law that I think may be in need of reform. Generally, these tend to be matters of a technical, legal nature. However, I think I can safely say that the Report on De Facto

Relationships is the most important social project the committee has undertaken. I do not propose to speak about the content of the report in detail but I would like to make a few specific points.

Firstly, the percentage of de facto relationships in the Territory is about 14.5% of all couples and this is more than twice the national average. Secondly, support for reform of the law has come from community and church groups. Thirdly, the report discloses many problems which the law creates for de facto couples. Finally, reform of the law has been undertaken in many jurisdictions including New South Wales, Victoria and New Zealand. Indeed, one reform in Tasmania dates from 1837.

My purpose in tabling this report is to encourage public discussion of the reforms that have been recommended. When the public's response to the report has been received, the government will be in a better position to give consideration to the report's recommendations. I should add that copies of the report have already been distributed to interested bodies and are available from the committee itself. Mr Deputy Speaker, I move that the Assembly take note of the report.

Debate adjourned.

STATEMENT

Upgrading of Darwin and Alice Springs Airports

Mr FINCH (Transport and Works): Mr Deputy Speaker, I rise today to address the issue of the proposed redevelopment of the Territory's 2 major airports in Darwin and Alice Springs. Most honourable members should be able to stretch their memories back to a time when the ABC radio carried a series by the name of 'Blue Hills'. Apart from being a minor Australian cultural institution, 'Blue Hills' was also one of the longest-running series on radio. Gwen Meredith, who penned it, would probably have found plenty of material to include in another long-running series had she had access to the details of the proposed redevelopment of Darwin and Alice Springs Airports. I imagine that probably she would have come up with a title like 'Few Frills' to describe the Territory's 2 airports and the long-running battle to upgrade them, had she had a chance to write such a series. That is what both passengers and airline workers get when they enter either of the 2 terminals - few frills. Equally lamentable is the pedestrian approach to the promised upgrading of the 2 airports.

Mr Deputy Speaker, before members opposite recoil and start howling about Canberra-bashing, I ask them to step back from their political allegiances and consider a few salient facts. Let us not forget that this CLP government worked long and hard with both of the Territory's federal Labor representatives in attempts to resolve the airports issue. When it was announced that the FAC's proposal to upgrade Darwin and Alice Springs Airports had been accepted over the Territory government's offer, we not only willingly accepted that but applauded the decision to get on with the job. Indeed, we offered every assistance in getting the work done. But history has tended to make people of the Territory a little nervous on matters pertaining to airports. I wish to stress that I am not for one moment suggesting the federal government will not be proceeding with our airports. I believe both airports will be upgraded. However, the importance of the timing of that upgrading should not be forgotten.

I am afraid that I now question whether the proposed upgradings are likely to eventuate within the 3-year time frame allowed when the original

announcement on the upgradings was made. Currently things are just not happening as we were led to believe they would. We were promised immediate action. What we have instead is confusion. Had the airports been handed over to the Territory government, according to our planned schedule, we would have been more than 3 months down the track towards the completion of planning, design and the appointment of a project manager for Darwin Airport, with a likely start on works on site at the beginning of next year.

Honourable members will no doubt vividly recall a scene in late 1984 when our Prime Minister, complete with hard hat, clambered aboard a piece of earth-moving equipment to turn the first sod on the new \$95m Darwin Airport terminal which was to be fully funded by the federal government. I remember his election promises of that year. 'Only a Labor government', he said, 'can be trusted to build a new airport terminal. Only a Labor government can be trusted to build the railway'. By April 1985, the then Minister for Transport, Peter Morris, had called a halt to the airport redevelopment, citing budgetary considerations as the reason for the federal government's decision to renege on its election promise.

With almost 4 years of inactivity, Territorians are understandably running out of patience. Given our past experience, we are entitled to feel apprehensive about the current lack of progress on the transfer to the Federal Airports Corporation of the Territory's 2 major terminals. Time is running out, both in terms of airport capacity and, more importantly for members of the opposition, in political terms. It will take more than a repeat of the Prime Minister's joy-ride on a bulldozer, particularly in the shadow of another federal election, to appease Territorians. The transfer of airports from a Commonwealth department to the FAC is merely the first step towards redevelopment. Yet, despite the promises, that relatively minor goal has still to be achieved.

The FAC has made it clear that it will not even attempt to put together either the financing or design and construction packages without title to the land for the Alice Springs and Darwin terminals. Territory people were promised, in a press release from Senator Bob Collins and federal member Warren Snowdon on 19 August, that the 'detailed arrangements for the handover of responsibility to the FAC are expected over the next month'. In other words, that should have occurred by mid-September. Mr Deputy Speaker, allow me to emphasise that. Territory people were made this promise more than 3 months ago. All we have received in those 3 months is a promise in a press release.

Even now, neither the FAC nor the federal government can provide a definite answer on a likely date for the transfer of either airport. To date, the FAC has responded to questions from my office on this matter by saying that the 19 August press statement was overly ambitious in its claim that hand-over arrangements could be completed within a month. In subsequent discussions with the FAC, it has conceded that the hand-over process is taking much longer than anticipated. Contact with the office of the federal Minister for Transport and Communications Support, Mr Gary Punch, has produced only vague assurances that things were expected to happen shortly. That is just not good enough.

The Territory government has been remarkably tolerant about the lack of action on this issue to date. However, after putting up with this situation for 3½ months, not to mention the 3½ years of continual negotiations prior to that, I have now had a gutful. There are only 2 ways of providing us with any comfort in this matter: some straight talking and some fast action.

Last week, the Leader of the Opposition flew south on the pretext that he was on a mercy dash aimed at saving the government's housing package. While the opposition's answer to Red Adair was busy putting out an imaginary fire in Canberra, why did he not take a little time to do something worth while for the Territory? Why did he not arrange a meeting with his federal colleagues to get some straight answers in relation to our airports? Why did he not use the influence he obviously feels he has in Canberra to try and get some action on the Territory's airports - or has it suddenly ceased to be an issue in his mind? Perhaps the Leader of the Opposition, who last week stood up in this House loudly proclaiming that he has his finger on the collective public pulse, feels that the airports are no longer an issue. If that is what he thinks, he is sadly mistaken. The quickest possible upgrade of the airports is critical to the Territory and the general public will soon let him know that.

It is no secret that the redevelopment of our 2 major airports will act as a significant catalyst in helping to lift business confidence. Recently, the real estate industry in Darwin made it quite plain that it believes a new terminal would have a dramatic and positive impact on property development decisions. Both terminals are critical to our tourism strategy and, of course, the airport redevelopments would provide a major boost for the Territory's construction industry. The airports are not simply a passing issue. They are a critical factor impacting on both the short-term and long-term economic progress of the Territory. Consequently, I would have expected the Territory opposition to use whatever influence it has with Canberra to help bring about a speedy commencement of both upgradings. Rather sadly, members of the Territory Labor opposition, unlike the 2 Territory Labor members of the federal parliament, have done nothing to help resolve the airports issue.

Mr Deputy Speaker, you have only to stand at either Alice Springs or Darwin Airport for a few minutes to hear what people think about the terminal buildings. What should be 2 of the jewels in our tourism crown are tarnished fakes, unworthy of a fast-growing tourist destination like the Territory. The lack of real action on transfer arrangements from the Departments of Finance, Defence and Transport and Communications in Canberra, as well as the FAC in Sydney, has produced a growing scepticism in the community about the upgrading.

This government would be derelict in its responsibilities to the Territory if it did not do all in its power to ensure the quickest possible resolution of the airports issue. The opposition should be in no doubt that it - not the Territory government - will suffer if the promised upgrade of the 2 airports becomes a repeat of the 1985 fiasco. Disturbingly, some echoes from the past have already been heard.

The situation at the Alice Springs Airport is hardly something from which Territory people can draw any comfort. Mr Deputy Speaker, as you would know only too well, there was supposed to have been a temporary upgrade of the terminal facilities in Alice Springs. In the 12-month period to 31 March this year, Alice Springs handled 477 177 passengers, a 13.8% increase on the figure for the previous 12 months. That is about 119 000 more passengers than the Darwin terminal in that same 12-month period, starkly illustrating the critical need in Alice Springs, as acknowledged by the member for Stuart. The figures graphically highlight the need for immediate action at the Alice Springs terminal. A temporary extension was promised some 15 months ago. Work on this much-needed temporary upgrade, supposedly worth \$1.3m, was supposed to have started in March or April this year and would have been completed last month. This promise is obviously now in tatters.

Mr Smith: Whose fault is that?

Mr FINCH: A month after the scheduled completion of the upgrade, we are still waiting for work to commence on the terminal extensions.

I will take up the interjection from the Leader of the Opposition as to whose fault it is. Mr Deputy Speaker, 15 months ago, the federal government made a commitment to the Territory government to double the floor space in the Alice Springs terminal, an interim solution which would have eased the pressure and avoided the necessity for a dog box to be placed in front of the existing terminal. The fault lies squarely on the shoulders of the federal government - and nobody else.

A month after the scheduled completion of the upgrade, we are still waiting for work to commence on the terminal extension in Alice Springs. At various times over the past 12 months, it has been proposed that the value of the upgrade should be increased by \$300 000 or that it should be increased to \$2.3m. It has even been suggested that it should be increased to \$6m. As an added hint of indecision in this cocktail of confusion, there is now the question of whether the FAC or the airlines will pay for whatever renovations are carried out. The original \$1.3m upgrade becomes more inadequate with each passing month as a result of the obvious continued growth in passenger numbers. Of course, the really worrying aspect of this is that the longer it takes to reach a decision and the more expensive the proposed scope of the upgrade becomes, the less likely it is that the works will be considered short-term. That really is a concern. It hardly seems likely that either the FAC or the domestic airlines will want to shell out several million dollars for something that would become redundant in a relatively short time.

The only work that has taken place to date as part of the temporary upgrade has been the installation of an additional septic tank. An additional septic tank! This has proved to be totally inadequate, as was mentioned on the weekend. A bank-up of sewage which is occurring in the system now poses a potential health hazard. All of this comes after the federal government's assurance on 19 August that the \$1.3m upgrade 'would proceed as planned'.

It was further stated that long-term planning of the \$20m redevelopment of Alice Springs Airport would proceed 'as a matter of urgency'. What is happening with those plans is unknown. There has been no indication that work has even commenced on the master plan for the redevelopment of the Alice Springs terminal. Had the airport redevelopment works been awarded to the Territory government, we would almost have completed the master plan by now. Certainly, we would be well down the track. My department now understands that work is unlikely to begin on a permanent redevelopment of the Alice Springs terminal for another 2 to 5 years, and that is scandalous.

Even if work commences in 2 years, which is the earliest possible time according to that understanding, there is no way the new terminal can be completed within the promised - and I repeat promised - 3-year time plan. If this is the case, it is little wonder that no one has rushed into the temporary upgrading. It looks as if what was planned originally as a temporary upgrade may in fact be with us for somewhat longer. Given the obvious difficulties in deciding how and when to spend \$1.3m on a temporary upgrade, one wonders what kind of jitters can be expected when the time comes for the spending of the promised \$20m on the Alice Springs terminal. Even more worrying is what will happen when it comes to answering the \$65m question in relation to Darwin Airport.

As with Alice Springs, the hand-over of Darwin Airport to the FAC is still to occur. As it is on land belonging to the Department of Defence, Darwin Airport poses an additional difficulty in relation to the hand-over, and legislation allowing the FAC to take over airports needs to be amended to permit the corporation to assume control of the leasehold of Defence land. As Darwin Airport is on defence land, this anomaly needs to be rectified before an FAC takeover. The legislation necessary to rectify this situation is expected to have passed through both the House of Representatives and the Senate by the time the federal parliament rises for the Christmas New Year break.

This means that the transfer of Darwin Airport to the FAC is unlikely to take place until some time next year. Even with the legislative changes in place, there still needs to be an accord reached between the FAC and the Departments of Defence and Finance in relation to the title and cost of the hand-over. From what we have been able to learn, it appears that there has been difficulty in achieving common ground on the valuations for both airports. As I mentioned earlier today, that evaluation of the capital value of existing infrastructure at airports is the key to the problem that the FAC will face, not only interstate, but here in the Territory. Of course, this procrastination is only helping to prolong the progress towards the hand-overs and, given the FAC's decision not to begin stitching together the financial or design and construction packages for the redevelopment until after the transfer of title, we will be lucky to have a new international terminal inside the promised 3 years.

On the basis of information available, I believe a hand-over of Darwin Airport to the FAC will probably not occur until next March which is about 7 long months after the initial announcement of the hand-overs was made - a waste of 7 months. One of the problems, of course, is that the FAC has responsibility for about 20 airports around Australia and is now ready to take over more. The reality is that, to the FAC, Darwin and Alice Springs Airports are small beer when compared to the massive problems being experienced elsewhere, such as with Sydney Airport. It is for that reason that I have reiterated to the FAC the Territory government's willingness to project manage the redevelopment of both Alice Springs and Darwin Airports on behalf of the FAC. That shows how far this CLP government will go in cooperating with the Commonwealth in this matter. Given the amount of work we have already completed, particularly in relation to the Darwin Airport, I am confident that, if we could begin design and contract negotiations now, we would be in a position to begin construction within days of the FAC receiving title to Darwin Airport. In addition, the whole project could be done on a deferred financing basis, with payment 2 or 3 years down the track - that is, when construction is completed.

It is imperative that the earliest possible start is made on the redevelopment of both terminals. As I have mentioned already, they are critical to economic development in a number of areas but, with the projected growth in Territory tourism, we simply cannot afford to be burdened with inadequate airport infrastructure. In fact, last week the federal tourism minister, Senator Graham Richardson, emphasised the desperate need for Australia to upgrade its airport infrastructure to meet growing tourist demands. Senator Richardson warned of the increasing delays being caused at airports as a result of growing pressure from tourism. Among the major airport problem areas, he cited 'lack of terminal space, peak passenger movements regularly exceeding terminal capacity, inadequate baggage handling facilities, poor passenger information, trolley and coach parking facilities'. It sounds familiar, doesn't it? I am becoming a little worried because the

scenario described by Senator Richardson will continue to be an accurate assessment of our 2 major terminals for a long time yet unless there is an immediate change of attitude to the redevelopment of Darwin and Alice Springs Airports by both the FAC and the federal government, and I believe that members of the opposition could assist in this matter by giving some constructive support to this government.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I move that the Assembly take note of the statement.

Mr SMITH (Opposition Leader): Mr Deputy Speaker, I must begin by saying that I share the minister's frustrations. Those frustrations are common to the majority of Territorians. It has been a long hard struggle to get the 2 projects up to the mark and it is only fair that I place on record the opposition's appreciation of the minister's contribution. From the time he was elected as a member of this House, he has played a very significant role on behalf of the Northern Territory government in promoting the need for airport redevelopment, as have my federal colleagues. I find it unfortunate, however, that when we can almost taste the fruits of those efforts, for motives which I do not understand, the honourable minister lets loose with a whining, negative, carping barrage which will not help the redevelopment of the Darwin and Alice Springs Airports. The essential question in this debate is what value the minister's statement will have in bringing closer the redevelopment of the Darwin and Alice Springs Airports. I believe that it has no value in that respect and, indeed, could be counterproductive.

I understand from the federal minister's office that, 3 weeks ago, a member of the minister's staff was given a very full briefing by the federal minister's office on the current situation and the problems in relation to the Darwin and Alice Springs Airports. As a result of the minister's statement this morning, that may well be the last time that the federal minister and his staff are prepared to be as open, honest and outgoing on this particular matter as they have been.

I will say again that the airport redevelopment projects are extremely important. They have the capacity, unlike the \$100m to be spent on State Square, to create permanent jobs in the Northern Territory and to encourage economic growth in the Northern Territory. We all accept that. In that context, we should not forget that we have just seen the benefit of the other major Commonwealth investment at Tindal during the last few years. It has poured \$200m into Tindal, creating 500 permanent jobs with another 500 being created through the multiplier effect.

The projects will be a significant catalyst to development in the Northern Territory. In our own ways, we have all been working to get the Darwin and Alice Springs Airport terminals up to the mark. In our own ways, we have all been working as hard as we can to obtain a commitment from the federal government.

Mr Perron: Obviously you've been to Canberra for that one too.

Mr SMITH: We now have that commitment. We are now arguing about the timing of the start of that commitment. I agree that that is a legitimate matter of concern and I agree ...

Mr Perron: What about the commitment on the railway? That was 50 years ago.

Mr SMITH: Why don't you shut up and give me a fair go? You are too gutless to get up yourself and have a go.

Mr Perron: Any time, mate, any time.

Mr SMITH: You really are a little gutless wonder. You sit there and interject.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! I ask the Leader of the Opposition to withdraw that remark.

Mr SMITH: Mr Deputy Speaker, I withdraw.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: At the same time, I ask other honourable members to allow the Leader of the Opposition to continue his remarks in silence.

Mr SMITH: Mr Deputy Speaker, as I was saying, before I was rudely interrupted, each of us, in his way, has been working as hard as possible to get this particular project off the ground. I have already paid tribute to the honourable minister and I take this opportunity of paying tribute to my federal colleagues as well. For the last 4 to 5 weeks, they have been meeting almost on a daily basis with the relevant federal ministers, the FAC and anybody else who has a contribution to make in getting the project off the ground. Those meetings have taken considerable time and I am advised that they have been very important in pulling together the various strands of the project. I am advised that, in the next few weeks, we will see the project come together. I know that it has not met the original timetable. That is unfortunate. Sometimes, however, that happens.

If you want an example of how things slip, Mr Deputy Speaker, the previous Chief Minister said that work on State Square was to begin in February and it is only commencing now.

Mr Perron: You did your best to stop it.

Mr SMITH: Mr Speaker, there have been problems in pulling the project together. None are problems related to the Northern Territory. The problems are connected with the Federal Airports Corporation and its role. The minister outlined some of the problems in that regard.

The federal opposition's attitude to the Federal Airports Corporation has not helped matters. It is clear that the so-called close watch which the Minister for Transport and Works has been keeping on the project and its progress through the Canberra bureaucracy was not close enough to provide him with the information that, last week, the federal opposition tried to sabotage the Federal Airports Corporation in general and, therefore, the redevelopment of the Darwin and Alice Springs Airports. From his huffing and puffing this morning, one can come to no other conclusion than that the honourable minister was unaware that, last week, the federal opposition tried to move an amendment to the Federal Airports Corporation Act which would have had the effect of putting the Darwin and Alice Springs Airports on the back-burner.

He was not prepared to give this Assembly a commitment that he would talk to his federal colleagues and encourage them not to proceed with this amendment or a similar amendment when the matter comes before the Senate either this week or next week. He was asked a specific question but was not prepared to give us a commitment. I will ask him that question again tomorrow unless I receive an answer today. Will he pressure his federal colleagues and

tell them that the economic future of the Northern Territory, in the short and the long term, depends to a large extent on these 2 projects getting off the ground? Nothing is surer than that, if the federal opposition proceeds with this matter in the Senate and gains support from the Australian Democrats, you can kiss goodbye to the redevelopment of the Darwin and Alice Springs Airports for a long time while the Senate standing committee makes its deliberations.

I would have thought that a minister who supposedly has his finger on the pulse in relation to what is happening in Canberra would have been aware of what his federal colleagues were doing last week and would have been taking action to contact his colleagues in the Senate, particularly our own Northern Territory Senator, who probably has not caught up with it either, and told them that, if they proceed on their present course, it will have a dramatic impact on the Northern Territory. But, apparently, his grasp of the situation in Canberra does not enable him even to be on top of what his federal colleagues are doing. I think that that is absolutely disgraceful.

We, in the Northern Territory, are working in bipartisan way to get the Darwin and Alice Springs Airports upgraded. The federal government has made a commitment to do that and federal opposition is doing all it can to sabotage it. The minister opposite was not even aware of that until it was raised in this House today. That is a further demonstration, if the people of the Northern Territory need one, of the incompetence of this government and, in this particular case, the incompetence of the minister opposite. The major threat to the continuation of the Darwin and Alice Springs Airports redevelopment proposals is a federal opposition amendment now before the Senate.

The honourable minister opposite did not even know that the matter was considered by the House of Representatives last week. He has not talked to his Senate colleagues about it and he has not attempted to persuade them that it should not go before the Senate. That is the urgent task that the honourable minister has before him today. He must contact his Senate colleagues - now that he knows that there is a problem - and persuade them that it is not in the Territory's interests for the federal opposition to proceed with its present course of action. He has to come to grips with that problem.

Mr Deputy Speaker, let me make some comments in respect of the Alice Springs situation. I think the minister said that \$1.3m was committed 15 months ago. I am not sure if that is the exact figure or not. The problem in Alice Springs has not been the federal government; it has been one of the airlines which has not been prepared to agree to the proposition that has been advanced. It may well have good reasons for that but the fact is that it is not the federal government which is handicapping the temporary works at the Alice Springs Airport. I can assure members opposite that that problem will be fixed very quickly ...

Mr Perron: We do not want bandaids. We want a new terminal.

Mr SMITH: ... and we will have the \$1.3m ...

Mr Perron: Peanuts!

Mr SMITH: ... and perhaps more put into an upgrade of the Alice Springs facility.

It is not the perfect solution. The Chief Minister knows so much about peanuts because he is close to being one himself. It is peanuts, but it is significant peanuts for the passengers who will pass through Alice Springs, because it will at least put in place a reasonable, temporary facility until the permanent facility is constructed.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I will conclude where I began, on a positive note.

Mr Perron: You are just going around in circles.

Mr SMITH: Yes, I am going around in circles on this particular issue. A great deal of hard work from all sides of the House and from the federal government in Canberra has gone into getting us where we are in relation to the Darwin and Alice Springs Airports. There has been a positive attitude from the members opposite and from ourselves. It is a pity that, at this late stage and for cheap political purposes, that bipartisan approach has been dropped. The real pity is that the minister's statement has not advanced the cause of the Northern Territory or the cause of the Darwin and Alice Springs Airport redevelopments in any way whatsoever.

Mr DONDAS (Casuarina): Mr Speaker, I rise to support the minister's statement on the upgrading of the Alice Springs and Darwin Airports. The Leader of the Opposition has just attempted to introduce red herrings in an effort to confuse the issue. As far as members of this side of the House are concerned, the upgrading of the Alice Springs and Darwin Airports certainly has been a matter of considerable importance for a long time. It is not something new. For the Leader of the Opposition to stand up in the House today and start castigating the minister for not being aware of what is occurring in the House of Representatives and the Senate is a bit rough. More importantly, it is probably done by stealth more than anything else.

Mr Smith: What is done by stealth?

Mr DONDAS: They probably introduced the amendments to the act that you spoke about through the Lower House.

Mr Smith: Yeah.

Mr DONDAS: They did it by stealth. You did not know about it.

Mr Ede: It was the federal opposition that did it.

Mr DONDAS: You did not know until yesterday. More importantly, Mr Hawke came here 4 years ago with an election promise. We have been hearing for 4 years about his great bulldozer ride and his hard hat and turning the first sod for a new airport terminal in Darwin. Many Territorians accepted that act of the Prime Minister in good faith and earmarked financial resources to expand their businesses. After all, if the Prime Minister says that something will happen, people expect it to happen.

I do not believe, however, that the delay has been the fault of the Prime Minister. In fact, I might even come to his defence today and lay the blame fairly at the feet of the former federal Minister for Transport, Mr Morris. I had occasion to have discussions with Mr Morris and I believe that the reason we have not seen any redevelopment of the Darwin and Alice Springs Airports is that ...

Mr Collins: You upset him, did you?

Mr DONDAS: ... he does not like the Territory and does not like Darwin.

The member for Sadadeen has interjected and I will pick up his point. Certainly, we must have done something to upset him. When he came to Darwin and stayed at the Beaufort Hotel, honourable members would be aware that he was confronted by a group of people who said: 'Let's get this development under way'. Mr Morris claimed that the crowd was not truly representative of the Darwin people. He said that it was just rent-a-crowd. I remember that the former Leader of the Opposition, Senator Bob Collins, was there. Other members of this House were there, along with some members of the CLP. However, people in Darwin and the Territory were genuinely concerned and were trying to give the minister a very subtle message in saying: 'Look, this is not only the CLP. The whole of the Northern Territory is waiting for this to happen'. Still, 2 years later, he referred to that group of people as a 'rent-a-crowd'. If that upset him, I believe it would be one of the main reasons why the airport redevelopment works have not been commenced to this day.

We all know that Australian Airlines, Ansett of the Northern Territory and Ansett of Western Australia have been using the airport facilities for a number of years, as have the RAAF and other armed services. Let us look, however, at the situation in relation to international carriers. Qantas and Garuda have been using the Darwin Airport for years. Singapore Airlines came into the equation recently, as did Royal Brunei, and Merpati has used it off and on for a number of years. The main reason why we need some action, however, is that Thai Airlines, Malaysian Airlines, Continental Airlines and other international carriers are looking at establishing a service in and out of the Darwin region. As they are aware, tourist infrastructure has been improved in Darwin and the Northern Territory which would enable additional international carriers to pass through the region and discharge their passengers.

This year, a statement was made by Senator Bob Collins and Warren Snowdon that the hand-over to the FAC would be completed by the end of October. I think we need to be honest in this matter. I do not believe that the FAC wants anything to do with the Darwin or Alice Springs Airports. Other members may argue that that is rubbish but I believe that, because the FAC has so much else on its plate, the Northern Territory projects are too hard and it will quietly forget them. The minister said today that a decision to take over might occur in March next year. The handover was supposed to occur in October this year! If the FAC is 100% interested in getting on with the job, as the Leader of the Opposition would have us believe, it should have been here last month. However, the indications are that it will not come until March next year. My gut feeling is that we will not see it next year either although I hope that the Minister for Transport and Works will prove me wrong about that.

The FAC has shown absolutely no interest in what is going on as far as Darwin is concerned. It has expressed some small interest in Alice Springs because Alice Springs seems to be a little less complicated. If the FAC does not want anything to do with the Darwin Airport redevelopment, I cannot understand why the federal government does not hand the project over to the Northern Territory government and let it put the infrastructure in place so that the FAC can run it at some later stage. At least we would know that things were being done.

Our tourist figures have increased by about 12%. Those figures have been confirmed by the Travel Monitor of 24 September 1988: 'The figures released by the Northern Territory Tourist Commission show that the number of tourist

visits to the Northern Territory increased by 22% in the year ending 1988'. The biggest increase was in the overseas market with the number of international tourists increasing by 44%. Those statistics show why other international carriers are expressing an interest in this region. They know that the Northern Territory is certainly the flavour of the year and all indications are that the Northern Territory will be a very popular place to visit during the next 2 to 5 years.

Another important factor has been the accelerated interest in long-haul flying. Until 1984-85, international tourists were mainly interested in flights which took from 2 to 5 hours. During the last 12 to 18 months, however, there has been an upsurge in the number of people who are interested in reaching destinations which involve flights of 12 to 24 hours duration. Many Europeans have seen what their own continent has to offer and have been to the United States. They are now interested in more distant destinations. The flight to Australia from London takes about 21 hours, as does that from Los Angeles via Hong Kong. Japan is only 9 hours away. The Japanese market will certainly have a very significant impact on the Australian economy although I believe it will take 12 to 18 months for that to really be felt. Tourist visitations to the Northern Territory are increasing. The Travel Monitor tells us that, since 1981, the average annual increase has been 12%. That justifies the decision to do everything in our power to bring about the construction of new airport terminals in Darwin and Alice Springs.

If we turn our attention to transport modes for which the Northern Territory government is responsible, it is clear that it has the ability, the will and the financial resources to put things in place. Take our roads for example. Most members would be aware that the Northern Territory government, together with the Commonwealth and local government authorities, has provided financial resources for the upgrading of many tourist roads throughout the Northern Territory. The Stuart Highway has been upgraded and that has enabled a very large number of people to use their motor vehicles to travel here. I believe that the sealing of the link between Adelaide and Alice Springs has considerably increased vehicular traffic during the last 18 months but that is not enough.

We have also provided financial resources for the upgrading of the Port of Darwin, not only as a cargo port but also as a passenger port. The facilities are there and I believe that, in the last 2 years, we have had a significant increase in the number of passenger liners coming into Darwin. Our Waterside Workers Federation has played a very small part in the development of that increase. It has blotted its copybook a couple of times with regard to the Transport Workers Union and different types of people who are able to drive buses to transport passengers from the wharf to the city area but, nevertheless, I believe that there has been increased interest in what is happening as far as the port is concerned.

The completion some years ago of the Alice Springs to Tarcoola line made another important contribution to the volume of tourist traffic into central Australia. All this activity has been part of a long-term plan which started in 1978. In those days, we were still operating with the old Northern Territory Tourist Board which had 6 people working on developing and promoting the Northern Territory. The government took a conscious decision at that time to develop infrastructure in the Territory and in the states to try to encourage and promote tourism into the Northern Territory. That has certainly happened. As I said a few moments ago, since 1981, there has been an average annual increase of 12% in tourist visitations. That has been the result of considerable hard work by members of the Tourist Commission and its staff in

offices in Australia and overseas. Why cannot the Commonwealth government, in its wisdom, take a greater role in the development of infrastructure for the Darwin and Alice Springs Airports? Mr Hawke promised that that would occur. I believe that the blame for the lack of action lies fairly and squarely with the former Minister for Transport, Mr Peter Morris.

Mr Speaker, I do not know what remarks Charles Blunt has made but I am quite sure that the Minister for Transport and Works will have made some inquiries during the luncheon adjournment and may be in a position to inform us of their results at a later stage. My memory of my discussions with a former federal opposition spokesman on transport is that he was very supportive of what the Northern Territory government was trying to do in terms of improving infrastructure at both airports. The content of the Leader of the Opposition's comments contradicts serious information which I have been given about the federal opposition's attitude. I do not believe that Mr Blunt would comment on what is happening in Darwin or Alice Springs without at least conferring with the Northern Territory Minister for Transport and Works. I will be interested to hear more about that from the minister.

The Leader of the Opposition raced off to Canberra last week and his justification was that he was trying to save a proposed housing scheme. I believe that was a load of nonsense and that the general public of Darwin and the Northern Territory see it as a load of nonsense, irrespective of the Leader of the Opposition's efforts to cover his tracks in the Sunday Territorian. I believe that most people thought: 'Poor old Terry has done it again'. I withdraw that, Mr Speaker. 'The poor old Leader of the Opposition has done it again and has committed a faux pas'. Certainly, if he thought that a member of the federal opposition was trying to do some harm to the Northern Territory in respect of airport infrastructure, he should have fixed it while he was in Canberra.

The former federal Minister for Transport, Peter Morris, said that the airport redevelopment would happen. The Prime Minister said that it would happen. Members opposite have said that it will happen. Senator Bob Collins and Warren Snowdon are saying that it will happen. Why couldn't the Leader of the Opposition have done 2 or 3 jobs while he was in Canberra? Today he castigated the Minister for Transport and Works for not doing his job. I believe that the Leader of the Opposition is not performing. I believe that every member of this House, together with the people of Darwin and Alice Springs, needs to know where we are going. All the Leader of the Opposition has achieved today is to create further confusion and I hope that, this afternoon, other members of the opposition may be able to clarify the situation so that, when people in the business community ask me what is happening, I can at least tell them something. Maybe I will have to say that things will happen in 1990 rather than 1989 but at least that is better than telling lies by repeating information supplied by members opposite.

First of all, we heard in August that the FAC would take responsibility for both airports in October. It is now almost 1 December and that has not occurred. I believe in my own heart that the FAC does not want to have anything to do with airport redevelopment in the Northern Territory. If that is so, let it come clean. Let us know about it now so that our Minister for Transport and Works can commence discussions with the federal minister and perhaps create an opportunity for the Northern Territory government to proceed in a joint development with private enterprise. As the minister said, if we had been able to do it ourselves, we would have been on track and, this month or next month, we would have been calling tenders so that something positive could happen in 1989. But, as it is now, we are debating the fact that we do

not know where we will be in 1989 because 1988 has certainly slipped by and nobody seems to know what is happening.

If the member for MacDonnell is going to pick up on points made in this debate, I hope he will be able to assure me that the FAC definitely wants to undertake the redevelopment works and have them completed within the next couple of years. Otherwise the only response I can give when people in the business community and my electorate ask me about the airport is that the Leader of the Opposition and the members of his party have been pulling a big con on the people of the Northern Territory. It goes back to the biggest con ever when the Prime Minister sat on his bulldozer wearing his hard hat and said: 'We are going to build the airport to try to win the federal seat for Mr Warren Snowdon'.

Mr COLLINS (Sadadeen): Mr Speaker, I well recall the time, about 4 years ago, when the development of a new terminal on the northern side of the Darwin Airport was to begin. I believe \$1m had been spent on a construction site building and a flagpole had been raised. At that stage, somebody came up with a bright idea, saying: 'If we built it on the southern side, we could save \$18m'. The only problem was that \$20m had already been spent. When I heard in today's debate that the upgrading of the Alice Springs Airport would cost \$20m, I was disgusted because that is the amount which the federal government spent to provide us with something we cannot use in Darwin. If it had not been so busy playing politics, the \$20m could have been spent to complete the Alice Springs project and it would be out of the way.

It is a typical case of people spending money which they did not earn themselves. If it had been their own money, they would never have contemplated spending it in the way they did and, as far as I am concerned, that shows one of the real weaknesses of government. Someone else provides the money and the government spends it on someone else again. The degree of care in spending that money and getting value for it is not the same as it would be if members of the government had earned the money themselves. The federal government ploughed \$20m into work on the northern side of the Darwin Airport, an amount which would be worth considerably more today as a result of inflation, and which would have been sufficient to totally complete the upgrading of the Alice Springs Airport.

The minister mentioned the sum of \$65m to be spent on the Darwin Airport and indicated that the new terminal will be built on the north side. Hopefully, that will mean that some of the \$20m that was spent 4 years ago will not be totally wasted. The minister has indicated that the \$65m is in addition to the money put into the development years ago.

I believe that it would have been much better for the Territory government and the conservative side of politics if the federal government had allowed the Territory government to undertake the construction of a new terminal. I am sure that a great many Territorians would have been much happier to see the money which has been borrowed for the State Square project going into an airport terminal which most of them will use on some occasion, which will also be used by an enormous number of visitors and which will encourage people to invest in the Territory. That is the type of wealth-creating project which Territorians can support and for which the government would have gained considerable credibility. It has no credibility on the State Square project. A very small number of people make apologetic remarks to the effect that some places have lovely parliament buildings but I, for one, am prepared to wait.

Mr Dale: Talk to the people.

Mr COLLINS: Don't you talk to me about talking to the people. I do not have to talk to them; they come and talk to me. There is no support for State Square and, if you think there is, I am afraid you are doomed for the slippery slide at the next election.

Mr Coulter: Well, rejoice.

Mr COLLINS: I would not rejoice. I would certainly be far from happy if the socialists were elected to government.

Mr Coulter: You vote with them 90% of the time. Why are you worrying now?

Mr COLLINS: Mr Speaker, let's have this little one out. It would appear to the simple minds of the government members opposite that voting against the government means that one is voting for the opposition.

Mr Coulter: There is another interpretation.

Mr COLLINS: There certainly is, Mr Speaker. Government members have always voted at the party call and never thought of thinking for themselves at all. They do not appreciate that sometimes people who oppose them are not necessarily opposing them for the same reasons that others are.

Mr Coulter: Is that why you wanted to censure the housing minister the other day?

Mr COLLINS: I do not believe that I wanted to censure the minister at all. However, I believe that debate should occur. The minister knows my position and I support his scheme wholeheartedly. I did offer, however, the advice that, in a sense, it would have been nice if he had contacted the federal minister and covered his own backside. If he had done that and thereby gained the support of the federal government, it would have been the end of the story. It would have been all good news for Territorians whereas, as it was, many people had their hopes built up and dashed down. Fortunately, they have been raised again. It is a good project and I think we wasted a lot of time in this House last week in grandstanding.

Mr Speaker, it is interesting to note that about 120 000 people have been through the Alice Springs Airport this year, which is more than went through the Darwin Airport. I have long suspected that that is the case and it was good to hear those figures. Sydney has large problems but no one has had the courage to build another runway there because of political pressure. It is a long-held dream of Alice Springs people that Alice Springs Airport could become a destination for international flights. People could fly out from Alice on commuter flights to the other capital cities. It may well be that the dream will become a reality in time. However, that is down the line.

The federal government is really playing politics. If it does not have the money, it should have the courage to admit that and say that the upgrading of our airports will not proceed. It is tantalising people and building up their hopes. When it cannot deliver its promises, it certainly will not do itself any good. I am sure ordinary people want some honest answers and they want some common sense. You do not spend \$20m, say that you could save \$18m by building it on the other side and then stop the project and use that as an excuse. The whole matter stinks. The issue has been used as a political football and it is about time the federal government woke up to itself and started treating Territorians in the same manner as it treats other Australians. We deserve some straight answers and some action.

Mr SETTER (Jingili): Mr Speaker, in rising to support the minister's statement, I would like to make the comment that, quite often, we have matters of public importance brought forward by members of the opposition. In most cases, they are quite frivolous. Members opposite waste the time of this House over and over again with such useless MPIs. This issue is a matter of public importance and I ask those faceless people, who have disappeared from the Chamber, why they do not have the gumption to propose an MPI on this matter. The answer is that it would be embarrassing to their masters in Canberra. It is all very well for the Leader of the Opposition to jump on a plane and disappear from this House for 2 days to pursue a matter which, from his point of view, was frivolous. He could have really justified that visit to Canberra by motivating his 2 Labor colleagues in the federal parliament, as well as the federal minister, to undertake some action in relation to the upgrading of the Darwin and Alice Springs Airports. Unfortunately, he did not have the forethought to do that.

Let us cast our minds back. Paul Everingham, the Chief Minister of the Northern Territory for quite a number of years, had a vision for the future. He saw the development of tourism infrastructure as the easiest way to fast-track development in the Northern Territory. He was right because tourism created the greatest and quickest opportunity to do just that. At that time, tourism did not suffer from the same sort of problems as a number of our other industries. Our uranium mines were tied up and many areas were subject to land rights claims and Aboriginal veto over mining development. Mining development has been retarded during the last decade or so.

When Paul Everingham was the Chief Minister of the Northern Territory, tourism was the way to go. His master plan included a whole range of projects. It included the construction of quality hotels. Yulara, the casinos and the Sheratons were all the result of Everingham's thrust to put the infrastructure in place. He also took steps to ensure that there was easy access to our parks with all-weather roads. We now have some of the best roads in Australia. There are no problems at all in driving out to Ayers Rock, Yulara or Kakadu.

Mr Poole: Do not forget the Olgas.

Mr SETTER: There are many problems in driving from Yulara to the Olgas. You are lucky if you make it. You are lucky if the corrugations, which are a result of the inactivity of the federal Labor government, do not thump your car to pieces. It has been asked again and again to upgrade that road, but has ignored the pleas of this government and the tourism operators who have suffered damage to their vehicles.

One of the other major issues raised at that time, and part of Everingham's vision for the future, was the development of the Darwin and the Alice Springs Airports. It is on record that Everingham lobbied the Fraser government intensively in the late 1970s and early 1980s until, at last, he obtained a commitment. On 5 August 1980, the Fraser Cabinet approved the redevelopment of the Darwin Airport to the extent of \$40m to \$45m. In April 1982, the federal Cabinet, again under Fraser, approved a redevelopment project for examination by the parliamentary Standing Committee on Public Works and, on 24 November 1982, the minister of the day, Mr Wal Fife, announced an \$86m redevelopment of the Darwin Airport.

Mr Speaker, before I continue relating the story of what has happened at the Darwin Airport, let me remind honourable members of what is in place there today. The terminal is a World War II hangar that has been patched up with

bandaids ever since it was bombed by the Japanese. It was devastated by Cyclone Tracy. I can recall walking through it in late 1974. Electrical cables were hanging from the roof, the ceiling panels had gone and water was dripping everywhere. Several thousand refugees were being evacuated out of the place. It was quite a sight. Subsequently, the hangar was refurbished. Of course, until very recently, the baggage handling facility was very antiquated. For many years, the baggage was brought in on trolleys towed by a tractor. At least now we have a mobile facility. In Alice Springs, however, the baggage is still brought in on a trolley. The access at the Darwin Airport for setting down and picking up passengers has been inadequate and the parking facilities are ridiculous. There is a walk of half a kilometre from the car park to the terminal buildings. The seating facilities in the domestic and international terminals are totally inadequate and there is no under-cover access for passengers moving to and from aircraft. It is necessary to walk out across the tarmac, in the heat or in the rain, to board the aircraft.

The situation at Alice Springs is much worse than it is in Darwin - much, much worse. On any day of the week, 6 or 8 aircraft can be seen lined up on a small hard stand area. The terminal is about a quarter of the size of the one at Darwin. Alice Springs Airport handles about 500 000 passengers a year through a facility that is not much bigger than this Chamber. Recently, a couple of demountables were added to it. That facility handles an enormous volume of traffic. Have you ever tried to access the traffic counters, Mr Speaker, to check your baggage in or to purchase a ticket? It is absolutely chaotic. It is easier to get to the bar than it is to check your baggage in. I shudder to think of how the hundreds of thousands of international passengers feel about the place. The passenger lounge is cramped. There is standing room only. Again, there is no under-cover passenger access to the aircraft and, of course, in more recent times the staff have become very unsettled and discontented. In fact, earlier this year, they decided not to handle baggage or seating arrangements for politicians and, for a week or 2, politicians could not obtain access to an aircraft until, so rumour has it, Warren Snowdon sorted the whole thing out. Well, let us see if he can sort it out this time.

Members interjecting.

Mr SETTER: He claimed to have sorted it out.

I hear rumbles, Mr Speaker, I hear rumbles. It may be that the natives are becoming restless again. It may be that something will happen there again. I would suggest to those members opposite who live in Alice Springs, that they have a contingency plan in place if they intend to fly out for their holidays this year. They could be in for a shock.

We all know what happened when the federal Labor government came to power. Earlier this afternoon, in fact, the member for Casuarina reminded us of the occasion when Prime Minister Hawke visited the Darwin Airport, climbed on a bulldozer wearing a hard hat and turned the first sod on what was to be the new terminal. Of course, that was after he had promised that the Labor Party, if elected to government, would fund the new terminal. That was not the only promise he made. He said that he would fund the railway. He said he would spend \$70m on infrastructure in Kakadu National Park. What have we seen, Mr Speaker? The promise in relation to the new airport terminal was broken after about \$20m had been spent on basic infrastructure, as the member for Sadadeen pointed out. We saw the promise over the railway broken and we saw almost no infrastructure go into Kakadu. A number of other promises were also broken. I could continue on that subject ad nauseam.

We saw the Prime Minister turn the first sod on a \$100m project. After only 6 months, he pulled the rug out from under us. The contractors were paid out and \$20m went down the gurgler. All we have to show for it is a great monument that looks like a funnel - a partially completed water tower which collects rain at the top and pours it out at the bottom. Nothing has occurred at the site for the past 4 years. The subject of population drift from the Northern Territory has been raised. I am aware that the Commonwealth Department of Housing and Construction had leased at least 60 houses in Darwin to accommodate the staff who were to come here to work on the new airport terminal. When work ceased in 1984, the houses remained empty and the department continued to pay lease fees. It is probably still paying today.

Since that time, the Northern Territory government has offered several solutions. We suggested that an area of land be excised so that we could develop the airport terminal ourselves. We called for expressions of interest in the private enterprise development of the terminal and received about 60 offers. We took those offers to the federal government but none of them was taken up. Four years after the cessation of work on the project, nothing has happened.

The next step in the saga was a milestone in the history of the Northern Territory. It occurred on a day which one could be forgiven for describing as black Friday. On 19 August 1988, Warren Snowdon MHR and Senator Bob Collins made an announcement about a \$65m development. The NT News reported the announcement in the following terms:

Detailed arrangements for the transfer of responsibility of both airports to the corporation were expected to be finalised over the next month. They will include adjustments to cover civil and defence operations at Darwin, Canberra and Townsville Airports. Senator Collins and Mr Snowdon commended the corporation for the initiative it had shown in putting to the federal government an attractive and balanced package which would ensure Darwin and Alice Springs Airports were managed expertly and developed to meet the needs of the Territory.

On 20 July 1988, an article in the Centralian Advocate was headed 'Work on Airport to Start this Year'.

Mr Bell: This is continuous and tedious repetition, Rick. We have already had this.

Mr SETTER: It would not surprise me that you find it embarrassing because every time it gets a bit hot in the oven, you start to complain.

Mr Bell: I am not embarrassed.

Mr SETTER: Mr Speaker, I quote from the article in the Centralian Advocate. 'Senator Collins said at the weekend that he was absolutely confident that the federal government would authorise the start of the upgrading of the Alice Springs terminal this year. He said that he expected provision for the Alice Springs and Darwin works to be included in next month's federal budget'. That was very interesting in the context of an article which appeared soon afterwards in the NT News. It was written by that well-known journalist, Tracy Jones, and was headlined 'Airport Next Year'. I quote: 'Work on Darwin's planned \$65 airport is unlikely to start until next year. The Federal Airports Corporation's chief executive, Mr Bill Swingler, said today that he was still waiting for a formal airport takeover offer from

the federal government'. The article of 19 August 1988, however, said: 'Senator Collins and Mr Snowdon commended the corporation for the initiative it had shown in putting to the federal government an attractive and balanced package which would ensure Darwin and Alice Springs Airports were managed expertly and developed to meet the needs of the Territory'. There is a conflict there, Mr Speaker. On one hand, we have the 2 federal members saying that the FAC had put a proposal to the federal government and, on the other, we have the Federal Airports Corporation's chief executive saying that he was still waiting for a formal airport takeover offer from the federal government. I would like the Leader of the Opposition to explain that to me and to other honourable members.

Even more upsetting is an article which appeared in the Sunday Territorian under the heading 'Island Casino Go-ahead Welcome'. In that article, Mr Snowdon said that \$2m would be spent to upgrade the airport on Christmas Island. Mr Speaker, I will put it to you and to honourable members that Mr Snowdon's responsibility lies in the Northern Territory, at the airports in Darwin and Alice Springs, not on Christmas Island. Perhaps there are a few swinging votes there which might keep him in office and that is why he is paying them so much attention. I say to you, Mr Speaker, that his responsibility is in the Northern Territory and not halfway to South Africa.

I support the minister's statement. I believe that we have been let down very badly by the federal Labor government. It makes many promises but we see very little action. It is about time that the Leader of the Opposition and his colleagues got off their butts and did something about it.

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

Mr POOLE (Tourism): Mr Deputy Speaker, one of the matters which really has not been canvassed in this debate is the reason why we urgently need the upgrading of the airports in Darwin and Alice Springs.

Mr Bell: It has been canvassed ad nauseam, Eric.

Mr POOLE: It is obviously not recognised by your federal colleagues in Canberra.

A few days ago, the Chief Executive Officer of Qantas, John Menadue, spoke at the Pacific Hotels Conference. He made a point about airports and international gateways. The gist of his remarks was that Qantas thought it had a hard job servicing the 11 to 15 international gateway ports in Australia and it did not want to see any more developed because it was not satisfied of the government's intention to service those gateways properly by encouraging development in their vicinity.

Darwin is a prime example of that situation. Basically, the airport has not changed since about 1938. I can remember bringing my father-in-law up to the Territory a number of years ago. He was the first commanding officer at the Darwin air base after the war, after flying out of Darwin during the war. He got off the plane, looked at the building and said: 'It has not changed a lot. They have obviously simply painted it'. That was his impression about 3 years ago and we all know that not much has been done since then.

Some 15 international airlines have options to fly into the Northern Territory. The reason they do not exercise the option is, basically, because they do not believe that the level of business in the Northern Territory would support additional airlines, apart from the 5 or 6, including Qantas, which

currently operate fairly limited services. Mr Deputy Speaker, I am quite sure that, in previous years, you have had dealings with many airlines - such as Thai, Continental, SAS, British Airways, Lufthansa, Swiss Air, Singapore Airlines, Royal Brunei, Garuda, JAL and ANA - trying to encourage them to upgrade services and increase services into Darwin Airport. Very few airports in Australia have so many international airlines with landing rights. We all know how people are scrambling to get into Sydney in particular.

The lack of a decent airport in Darwin is a major disincentive to the development of the tourist industry in the Northern Territory. I do not say that only in relation to handling tourists themselves, but also in relation to property development. I believe that the federal government has particularly let down the hotel chains, such as the Sheraton, Beaufort and casino groups, by failing to carry out its promise for so many years. When I first came to the Territory in 1979, the upgrading of Alice Springs and Darwin Airports was high on the agenda.

Whilst I accept that the opposition acknowledges the need for the airports to be upgraded, I believe that it is out of step with the perception in the community. It is certainly the case that Labor politicians in southern Australia do not appreciate the situation. It amazes me that people like Senator Graham Richardson, the federal Minister for Tourism, makes comments like those he made about a fortnight ago with regard to the upgrading of airports. He spoke specifically about the problems in Sydney but did not even mention Darwin and Alice Springs. The problem in Sydney is not so much a lack of money but how to handle the issue politically. I think everybody accepts that there will be a second major airport in Sydney at Badgerys Creek. I believe that huge amounts will be spent on the new Sydney Airport, which will be given to the FAC, and that that will be to the financial detriment of the Darwin and Alice Springs Airports. When one speaks to people in the corridors of power in Canberra, it is clear that they believe that work on the Alice Springs Airport, in particular, is at least 2 or 3 years away. That does not bode particularly well for the tourist industry in the Northern Territory.

It is only in the last 2 months that an x-ray system has been used to handle baggage at both Alice Springs and Darwin Airports. That is quite incredible because I cannot remember when Sydney Airport did not have x-ray machines. We only got them in the Northern Territory because Australian Airlines purchased them and put them in our terminals for us. When you think of the amount of money that has been spent on the Melbourne, Adelaide, Sydney and Brisbane Airports, the lack of attention that has been given by the federal government to the Northern Territory's major ports is incredible.

In Alice Springs Airport in particular, I foreshadow industrial problems. I have been a regular user of that airport in the past couple of months and the staff have made it quite apparent that they are completely fed up. It is absolutely disgusting that people working for major companies in federally funded facilities are not able to use the toilets because they are blocked up almost every day. There is a total lack of facilities. The security people have no facility where they can sit down to have a cup of coffee. They are on their feet for hours at a time and stand behind a curtain to hide from the general public. It is ridiculous. The federal government is able to find a couple of million dollars to spend on the upgrading of Christmas Island Airport. It is to find \$10m to \$12m to spend on the Vanuatu Airport but it cannot find any money to spend on the good old Northern Territory.

Australian Airlines has already indicated that, with the advent of deregulation, it has plans to make Alice Springs a major hub port, with

flights to destinations all over Australia. I can assure the honourable members opposite and the federal government that I am quite positive that those plans will not come to fruition unless something is done about the facilities at the port. The lack of parking space, the lack of facilities in the building, the lack of baggage handling facilities, the poor security systems, the temporary extension to the terminal made me feel, on disembarking in Alice Springs, that I was arriving in the boondocks of Russia. There is not even a sign on the building to tell people that they are in Alice Springs. The building does not have a window overlooking the runway and therefore the people who go to the trouble of going to the airport with their friends and family cannot see them depart. The situation is impossibly bad. It would be the only airport in Australia with such woeful facilities and it is even worse when one considers that it caters for half a million passengers a year.

In Darwin, the poor immigration and health facilities and the poor customs facilities have been doing us a disservice for many years. I believe they contribute to the lack of interest that has been shown in further development, particularly by international airlines and international hotel groups. The problem is, quite simply, a lack of action by the federal government. Nobody could honestly say in this place that the federal government has not been given ample opportunity to construct a new airport in Darwin or to upgrade the facilities in Alice Springs, and I am not talking about a bandaid approach involving \$1.3m.

It is quite apparent that the terminals in Alice Springs and Darwin need replacing urgently and that is what we should be talking about, not upgrading Alice Springs Airport. We should be talking about replacing that terminal so that residents and tourists can receive decent service when they need to use the airport terminals. Compared to Orly Airport in France or Changi in Singapore, the facilities at Darwin and Alice Springs look like those of a Third World country. It is certainly time the federal government got its act into gear. I do not accept that any action taken by the opposition in Canberra could have or would have delayed the FAC takeover of the airports any more than the Commonwealth government has delayed it to date. For the sake of all Territorians and for the sake of our tourist industry, I suggest to the members of the opposition that they should do all that they can to assist my colleague, the Minister for Transport and Works, to achieve the desired result and have the new facilities built.

Mr BELL (MacDonnell): Mr Deputy Speaker, I very much welcome the opportunity to contribute to this debate about airport development in the Northern Territory, both in Darwin and in Alice Springs. It is a subject that I have spoken on in this Assembly on a number of occasions in the past. Let me say at the outset that, as a member of this opposition and a member of this Assembly with the Alice Springs Airport in his electorate, I am a very strong supporter of the push to have those terminals upgraded. I believe that the points raised by many government speakers and the Leader of the Opposition indicate the degree of bipartisan support for this sort of development in the Northern Territory. I believe that it is important that that be placed on record.

As the member for Leanyer once confided to me, his campaign for the Darwin Airport when he was a candidate at the last election and prior to his elevation to the ministry was perhaps one of the great electoral success stories of his life. Few of us will forget that wonderful photograph of the then member for Wagaman, who has subsequently been transplanted to the electorate of Leanyer several miles to the east. It depicted him, with his customary stern and determined demeanour, holding a spade which looked as if

it had been made for building sand castles and standing in front of a bulldozer which positively dwarfed him. Mind you, Mr Speaker, it would not take a particularly large bulldozer to dwarf the member for Leanyer. However, I do not intend to make invidious personal reference in my contribution to this debate. Suffice it to say that I think the determination with which the Minister for Transport and Works has pursued this issue has reflected well on this Assembly.

At times, he has attempted to simplify the capital works task that faces the federal government and I believe that at times he has been less than straightforward in his criticisms of the federal government. On occasions, regrettably, he has lent himself - as indeed have so many government ministers - to unreasoned and unreasonable bashing of the federal government. That unreasoned and unreasonable public criticism certainly weakens the case of my colleagues on this side of the political fence, both in this Assembly and in Canberra, particularly in the case of the Leader of the Opposition and the Labor members who represent the Northern Territory in the Commonwealth parliament. Mr Deputy Speaker, you would be aware that they have worked very hard to ensure that the Territory receives a fair go in the federal capital works program. Hearing the comments which emanate from ministers in this CLP government, one would imagine that all the federal capital works budget had to worry about was infrastructural development in the Northern Territory. However one-eyed the Minister for Transport and Works may appear at various times, I do not think that even he believes that.

Everything which has been said about the overcrowding and the lack of passenger comfort in both the Darwin and Alice Springs terminals is absolutely true. As I have said before in debates on this subject, I have had the opportunity, as have other members of this Assembly, to visit terminals in north Queensland. Comparisons are often made between Territory terminals and those at places like Townsville and Cairns. The fact is that they are palatial in comparison with ours. I believe that had much to do with the Queensland government's willingness to take the local ownership option when it was available. Previous CLP administrations were reluctant to become involved in aerodrome local ownership plans with the exception of the Connellan Airport at Yulara. If he looks through the files zealously, the Minister for Transport and Works will scratch his head as he wonders why the Territory government was prepared to be involved in an aerodrome local ownership plan at Yulara whilst a similar plan for the Alice Springs Airport was not proceeded with.

I was delighted, Mr Deputy Speaker, to see former Senator Bernie Kilgariff in the gallery this afternoon. It is always a pleasure to see any of my constituents and, as honourable members will recall ...

Mr Coulter: They do not see you that often.

Mr BELL: In response to the interjection from the Leader of Government Business, I hear that a few of his constituents at Palmerston do not see him very often either. I further point out to him that his electorate does not cover an area which is somewhat larger than the state of Victoria. I am quite happy to place on record that I am very much looking forward to doing some doorknocking down at Eridunda Station and having the opportunity to be apprised of some of the entrepreneurial efforts which Bernie Kilgariff and his wife Eileen are undertaking. I do not expect that there will be too many votes in it but I am sure that, in terms of being informed, it will be of great value.

I refer to the former Senator because he would be well aware of the matter to which I refer. I suggest that some honourable members who have become involved more recently, such as the Minister for Transport and Works, would do well to inform themselves about the applicability of the aerodrome local ownership plan and the history of that particular plan in the Northern Territory. I suggest that the zeal with which the National Party government in Queensland took up those aerodrome local ownership plans indicates that this government lost a valuable chance to address the problems it now complains about.

Mr Manzie: They knocked us back. You don't even know what happened in your own patch.

Mr BELL: It is always wonderful to hear the member for Sanderson. At least I have taught him to interject so that we can hear what he has to say.

Time and time again we hear unreasonable criticisms of the federal government and its supposed lack of action. Mr Deputy Speaker, together with other members on this side of the House, I am fairly satisfied that this government is occasionally somewhat selective in its interpretation of history. Members opposite quite rightly point to the failure of the federal government to pursue the upgrading of the Darwin Airport after promising to do so and this opposition has no hesitation in joining with the government in that criticism. As all honourable members will know, Labor members in this House screamed loud and long about that. It certainly is not the way to do business.

Mr Deputy Speaker, with those few comments, I substantially endorse the statement made by the Minister for Transport and Works. I place on record my preparedness to support, in any forum, the need for the upgrading of the airport terminals. Their present condition creates a cost to the Territory in terms of lost opportunities for repeat business in the tourist industry. Visitors talk about such matters when they return home. We want to encourage visitation to the Territory and we therefore want visitors to go home saying that their time in the Territory was terrific, comfortable and exciting. This legislature cannot afford to ignore the implications of the condition of the terminals in terms of repeat business and new business in the tourist industry. I have no hesitation in endorsing this campaign to ensure that the 2 main air terminals in the Territory are upgraded to a suitable standard as soon as possible.

Mr HATTON (Nightcliff): Mr Speaker, I rise to support the statement by the Minister for Transport and Works. I would like to place on record a couple of points, particularly following on from the comments by the member for MacDonnell. I preface them by welcoming the substantial support which the member gave to the minister's statement, together with his expression of his desire to support the government's moves to expedite the processes involved in establishing these vitally important infrastructural developments in the Northern Territory. However, I would advise honourable members that the member for MacDonnell's comments with respect to local ownership plans were, shall we say, selectively wrong. He was claiming that we were being selective in our criticism. We are saying that his is fundamentally wrong.

The fact is that the Northern Territory government was in the process of extensive and continuing negotiations on local ownership for Alice Springs and Tennant Creek Airports. We were not permitted to participate in local ownership negotiations for Darwin because the federal government said it would not countenance local ownership of a defence base. There were also some

concerns in relation to the Alice Springs Airport because of some of the military aircraft activities which occur there. Nonetheless, negotiations were proceeding very successfully, to such an extent that in-principle agreement had been obtained in relation to local ownership of both the Alice Springs and Tennant Creek Airports. If my memory serves me correctly, that was in 1985. Subsequently, the then Minister for Transport, Hon Peter Morris, sent us a letter saying all negotiations were off. That was the end of that, no matter what protests were launched. It was yet another nail in the coffin of Territory airport development.

At times, we may be accused of being somewhat paranoid about the objectives of the Commonwealth government when it comes to infrastructural development in the Northern Territory. However, perhaps our paranoia, our cynicism, is born of hard-earned experience. As has been outlined in this House on many occasions, the Commonwealth government has given clear and unequivocal undertakings in relation to these important developments and breached them time and time again. We are all becoming sick and tired of having to go through that process.

We remember the battles that occurred in the early 1980s with the Fraser government, the workings of the Public Works Committee, the 2 or 3 plans and the final approval of a new airport terminal for Darwin. It was all set to go. Then came the 1983 election. Both the coalition parties and the then brand-new leader of the federal opposition, Mr Hawke, gave unequivocal, cast-iron guarantees that the new terminal would be built, as would the railway. The election was fought and won. In fact, there was a Labor member for the Northern Territory and a Labor government in power. It took 30 days for it to break the understanding in respect of the railway. In respect of the airport terminal, it simply did nothing. Then came the quick election in 1984. In launching his campaign in the Northern Territory, the Prime Minister jumped on a bulldozer on the north side of the airport, pushed a bit of dirt around and announced the commencement of construction of the terminal. We all jumped for joy and said it was fantastic.

I can remember doorknocking. I certainly was not campaigning for the Labor Party. I was campaigning for Paul Everingham, as were all members on this side of the House. Perhaps I was young and innocent then, but when constituents asked me whether I thought the airport would be built, I said that, little as I trusted Labor and little as I wanted to see Labor in power, it would certainly let the contracts, begin construction and finish the job. I said that I believed the new terminal would be built. How wrong I was! A mere 6 months after the election, construction was stopped for 6 months on the pretence that the project would be re-evaluated. Now, 4 years later, we are still waiting for that re-evaluation. The sites were specifically re-evaluated and, subsequently, the original site was chosen. We never heard anything about the other parts of the project re-evaluation. The federal government was playing political games with us. That is what it was about and that is why we are so critical of its behaviour in this matter.

The Minister for Transport and Works has almost made a political career out of fighting for airport developments in the Northern Territory. He has done a blasted good job, if I can use the phrase. He has made substantial progress in the face of the best example of creative inertia that I have ever seen from the Commonwealth. When we were getting frustrated, the minister encouraged us to hold our tongues while he kept on working the matter through. He said that it would happen, that the Commonwealth would act on the proposals we had placed before it. We met with Mr Dunstan and Senator Evans last year, prior to the changeover. Mr Holding took over. Soon afterwards, he made way

for our old pariah. I must say that a shiver went down my spine when I found out the identity of the new Minister for Transport. The Minister for Transport and Works, however, said: 'Do not worry. The airport's time has come. It will happen. Either we will do it or the FAC will do it, but it will be done'.

Mr Ede: Is he censuring you?

Mr Finch: He is just demonstrating my tolerance and patience.

Mr HATTON: That is exactly right. The minister displayed tolerance and patience and worked in a dedicated fashion. The officers of the Department of Transport and Works showed great professionalism in repeatedly resolving problems for the federal government. Indeed, they brought forward proposals for both Alice Springs and Darwin Airport terminals which would have enabled both to be under construction now, had the federal government given its permission. We were told that the you-beaut Federal Airports Corporation would take charge of the matter and that things would happen quickly. I must admit that I had my doubts, having seen previous examples of its operation and knowing that it has priorities elsewhere in Australia. Its interest is not in the Northern Territory. However, we went along with it. We supported it, encouraged it and offered the assistance of our people in the Northern Territory to expedite the process. What has occurred? The project has been stalled because of a nonsensical, bureaucratic game.

The federal government, which has traditionally run airports on an operating budget plus a capital works budget, has suddenly told the Federal Airports Corporation that it must take into account the value of the assets it has been given and that it must get a return on that investment, a return which will only occur if the money is ripped out of the pockets of airline passengers. The next question, of course, relates to the value of the assets - assets which were written off years ago by the federal government. Depreciation or asset upgrading are not the issues. What matters is the return on investment, as in private enterprise. Furthermore, as in the case of Australian Airlines and Qantas, the federal government subjects the FAC to global limits in terms of public sector borrowing requirements. It does not have the ability to go into the market and access funds for investment. It is tied to the public sector's apron strings through artificial limits on borrowings. Its access to money is restricted. It is hamstrung by the requirement to produce a return on over-valued assets which it did not buy. It is enmeshed in a bureaucratic tangle and the people who will suffer are the citizens of the Northern Territory and tourists. They will have to pay exorbitantly for this nonsensical game. If I sound a little paranoid, that is because I am so familiar with the federal government's record in this matter. The new terminals could be under construction now had the federal government given us permission to carry out the work. Instead, we are stymied by a nonsensical bureaucratic and political game.

Perhaps Peter Morris, the federal Minister for Transport, really is a friend of the Territory. Perhaps he has been watching Crocodile Dundee and thinks it is really important for our airports to maintain an outback image. They certainly offer some unique experiences. It has even been suggested that we should decorate them with jungle ferns and so forth so that people can have a taste of the real atmosphere of the bush and the outback as they come in through our terminals. That is a last resort solution but it is probably the only way we would make something positive out of the current situation. I am sure, however, that that would not impress people experiencing the crushes which occur in our terminals. Of course, one has a great opportunity to

stretch one's legs at the Alice Springs Airport. The seats are usually taken very quickly, leaving large numbers of people with nowhere to sit. One also has the opportunity to meet the entire world as one stands shoulder to shoulder in the crowd waiting to board one's aircraft via that interesting demountable, the white box, and as one moves through it.

Mr Ede: Move through. That is about all you do.

Mr HATTON: I would probably spend more time in Alice Springs than you do although I must admit that that would not be hard.

The terminal in Darwin is almost as interesting. In the interests of security, a beautiful new game has been introduced. You go upstairs to go through the exit terminus so that you can go back downstairs to walk through the rain to get to the aeroplane. We do not want to change the great experience of the Alice Springs and Darwin Airports too quickly. We really want to build up our Crocodile Dundee reputation. I am sure that Peter Morris has that idea in mind because that is the only logical explanation for the nonsensical games that are being played.

After spending \$20m on redevelopment works in Darwin, the project was stopped cold for 3 or 4 years. Eventually, after an enormous amount of fiddling around, it was decided that the new terminal should be built on the site originally chosen for it. Carriage of the project was given to the organisation that originally wanted to undertake it and had designs ready. However, detailed design work cannot proceed until the FAC gets title to the land. The transfer of title, however, is delayed because agreement has not been reached on the amount of returns to be paid. That is just a nonsense!

In the meantime, the federal government has seen fit to build a new international terminal in Townsville, to upgrade the terminals in Canberra, Broken Hill and Perth, to pay for the upgrading of the Vanuatu Airport, to unnecessarily relocate Brisbane Airport totally against the wishes of the domestic airlines and to upgrade the facility on Christmas Island. While that is happening, we have to pay for half the cost of works at the Tennant Creek Airport. The federal government would not even pave that airport to allow jets to land there, despite the fact that it owns it and actually cut off negotiations on local ownership. That is just not good enough, Mr Speaker.

It simply is not good enough for members opposite to sit back and say that we are engaged in unreasonable or carping criticism of the federal government. We have good reason to be critical of the federal government in this matter and we have good reason to expect that members opposite will join us in loudly criticising their colleagues for their disgraceful lack of attention to the people of the Northern Territory in the fastest growing tourism area in Australia. At least this government has a record of being prepared to criticise people on its side of politics publicly and vociferously when they go against the wishes of the Northern Territory people.

Mr EDE (Stuart): Mr Speaker, it is time we moved away from the rhetoric and looked at the facts. The Leader of the Opposition has clearly stated the belief of members on this side of the House that we need to move with maximum speed to accomplish the upgrading of both airports. I have certainly gone on the record on a number of occasions to state my support for the upgrading of Alice Springs Airport because of the problems which are occurring as increasing numbers of people move through it. As has been stated already, it has taken over from Darwin as the busiest airport in the Northern Territory. In fact, I think it is about the second-busiest airport in Australia outside

those in the capital cities. Its facilities, however, come from the prewar era. The fact is that, since Warren Snowdon and Bob Collins have been in Canberra, they have had considerable success in taking on the ministry and the bureaucracy in relation to this matter. They work on practically a daily basis in the attempt to bring some reason into this situation which was a problem before their election to the federal parliament.

The Federal Airports Corporation is a significant part of the problem with the new terminal in Darwin. In Alice Springs, the problem is the difficulty of negotiating agreements with the operators in relation to the space they will take up. It is my belief that those negotiations are nearing fruition. In fact, I believe that a recent newspaper report stated that the operators had been given about a week to come back with final proposals so that the initial upgrade can proceed. That, of course, is very much a stopgap measure. We really have to get beyond that and to proceed with the \$20m upgrade of Alice Springs which the federal government has spoken of. I believe that the day will come, perhaps later this century or early next century, when Alice Springs will be the primary international gateway for Australia. There will only be space for 1 airport taking rocket aircraft in Australia and that will be in Alice Springs. From there, shuttle aircraft will carry people to other destinations in Australia.

The problems with the Darwin Airport relate to the Federal Airports Corporation which was set up as a government business enterprise. On 1 January 1988, it assumed responsibility for the ownership, management and development of Australia's major airports and commercial activities at airports. The problem is that, under the Federal Airports Corporation Act of 1986, the FAC can only operate aerodromes which are situated on land owned by the corporation. That has been a major part of the difficulty. There is a legal impediment to the FAC's ownership of land in the ACT and it would not be possible for it to take over civil aviation facilities there. It also has difficulties in situations of joint ownership. The Darwin Airport is actually owned by the Department of Defence and cannot be owned by the FAC. A couple of airports are in that category, which is the main problem in relation to the takeover. Certainly, there have been difficulties in determining the overall value of the assets that are to be transferred. I am surprised that this was not raised up by the member for Jingili. Although he has not been on the Public Accounts Committee for very long, as a member of that committee, he will understand the conceptual problems involved in deciding how to value assets, how to ensure that they are efficiently utilised and how to ensure that they are properly accounted for in an organisation's books. It is my belief that the view of the Department of Finance has been that the FAC should take over the assets at their full market value and that its success or otherwise should be determined on its ability to produce a return on assets at their current market value rather than on some historical value which may be completely unrelated to their present value.

Be that as it may, I understand that progress is being made as a result of the work of Warren Snowdon and Senator Bob Collins and, hopefully, the results will emerge within a couple of weeks. A problem was created by the need to amend the act to clarify the tenure arrangements in relation to airports utilised for both military and civilian purposes. The federal government had to make the necessary legislative amendments and it was at that stage that the federal opposition ceased to act in any way that could be construed as being in the interests of the Northern Territory. It was quite obvious that it had decided to throw us to the wolves and to pursue its own political interest.

The federal opposition decided that, when the bill came before the House of Representatives on 24 November, which was last week, it would propose an amendment which would have the effect of referring the whole bill to the Standing Committee on Transport Communications Infrastructure for inquiry and report with particular reference to the 8 points read into Hansard this morning by the Leader of the Opposition. We must stop looking at the past and throwing historical problems back and forth in an effort to score political points, with each side trying to blame the other. We must forget all that and put it behind us. The aim of both sides of this House is to have the improvements made to our airports. Firstly, the matter of the valuations must be clarified. The next step is to obtain an agreement from the operators in Alice Springs so that works can proceed there. We have to keep moving ahead.

When the minister speaks in reply closing this debate, I hope he will state clearly that he has been in touch with the federal opposition and that its spokesman on transport matters, Mr Blunt, will change his public stance on this issue. If the federal opposition had been able, in the House of Representatives, to have the legislation referred to the standing committee, we would have been waiting for months, and probably years, before the upgrading of the airports could proceed.

Mr Perron: What is the difference? We have been waiting for years.

Mr EDE: The Chief Minister asks what the difference is. Obviously, he is quite happy for a delay to occur so that we have to wait and wait. In slavish support of his federal colleagues, for whom he is an apologist, he asks what the difference is. I would ask him to stop apologising for his federal colleagues and to rise in this debate and slam them because they deserve to be slammed. At this very late stage, they have come up with an amendment, in an attempt to have the whole thing put back years ...

Mr Finch: You do not understand.

Mr EDE: The minister says that I don't understand. I understand, Mr Speaker. I can read: '... the bill should be referred to the Standing Committee on Transport Communications Infrastructure so that the corporation's plans for developing its airports and, in particular, its proposals for Sydney, Brisbane and Perth airports ...'. Darwin does not even rate a mention. The amendment relates to the Sydney, Brisbane and Perth Airports, and we can go hang as far as the federal opposition is concerned, as long as it is able to pursue its political games.

One could argue that it does not really matter because the federal opposition does not have the numbers to make changes to legislation in the House of Representatives. However, it does matter, Mr Speaker, because other government legislation passed by the House of Representatives has been frustrated by an unholy alliance between the federal opposition and the Australian Democrats in the Senate, enabling the opposition to achieve there what it could not achieve in the people's House.

I would hope that, in reply, the honourable minister will say that he has an absolute and categorical assurance from Mr Blunt, the federal opposition spokesman on this matter, that he will drop the amendment and that it will not proceed in the Senate. I hope he has that assurance that the federal opposition will not attempt to play games in the Senate in order to delay the FAC obtaining the authority it needs to facilitate its involvement in airports which are owned by the Department of Defence, where it will operate them under a lease arrangement or in a joint ownership scheme.

The fundamental problem we are now facing has been created by the federal opposition and this House can do something about it. We need to send a message to Canberra. We should apply pressure where it is possible for us to achieve something. I suggest that this House should send a message to Mr Blunt and his cohorts in Canberra, telling them to drop their amendment right now. We want the FAC to go ahead right now because we need it in place so that we can proceed with the redevelopment of Darwin Airport. That is the message we should be sending. Any responsible government would have brought that message into this House. It would have moved a motion to that effect and it would have received the wholehearted support of every member in this House. We could then have sent it to the federal opposition. I do not know how members of the federal opposition would react to that. Hopefully, they would recognise that the message came from a parliament where the government is of their own colour and, hopefully, that might have some effect. Obviously, the Minister for Transport and Works has been unable to have any effect on his federal colleague, Mr Blunt.

Mr Finch: Not true.

Mr EDE: Not true? Are you involved in this? Did you support this?

Mr Finch: Would you like to sit down and just ...

Mr EDE: You supported this?

Mr Finch: You have asked the question. Sit down!

Mr EDE: That is absolutely ridiculous. The honourable minister said that he has been involved. He says that he has been involved with Mr Blunt and, therefore, with this whole situation.

Mr Finch interjecting.

Mr EDE: Mr Deputy Speaker, surely the honourable minister is not going to follow his colleagues down that path.

A member: He said sit down and find out the facts.

Mr EDE: Don't you like the truth? Am I supposed to sit down and keep quiet because you do not like to hear it? The fact is that the amendment was moved last week and it is still possible that it could be put to the Senate, thereby bogging down the whole process. We need a categorical assurance that the honourable minister has obtained a guarantee from his federal colleagues that that will not happen and that they will support the passage of the FAC legislation through the Senate so that we can get this thing on the road.

Mr Deputy Speaker, this House can take action and produce a result. It is pointless reflecting on the history of the matter. The member for Nightcliff did that, as did the member for Jingili in his mutterings. We must look forward and determine where we can and cannot have an effect. We can send a message to Mr Blunt and his colleagues in the federal opposition, telling them to drop their amendment.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I will sit down in the hope that the minister will rise and give us a categorical assurance that his slavish support for the initiatives of his federal colleagues, which he displayed in question time this morning, is a thing of the past and that he has had a change of heart in the last few hours and is now supporting the FAC legislation and the federal government.

Mr FINCH (Transport and Works): Mr Deputy Speaker, I can assure all honourable members that, in the last 2 hours, I have not changed my mind, nor my approach, nor my support for the federal opposition. I would like to begin by acknowledging the almost total support of all members of the Assembly who have spoken in this debate. I say 'almost total' because the House has expressed total support for the statement with the exception of the Leader of the Opposition's futile attempts to clutch at straws, the member for MacDonnell's very minor and totally incorrect observations and the member for Sadadeen's continual carping about State Square. Mind you, Mr Deputy Speaker, the mere support of members opposite is not enough. It is not good enough just to have their federal colleagues sneaking around the corridors and whispering in ears in Canberra.

Mr Ede: That is more than your federal colleagues are doing. They are trying to knock it off.

Mr FINCH: Mr Deputy Speaker, if the member for Stuart would like to contain himself for a few moments, I will come to the points raised earlier by himself and his colleagues.

What is required is some action. What I am seeking is a cessation of the noise made by the opposition and by federal politicians since the early 1980s. What we need now is some sign of action. It is time for the words to stop.

In regard to the clutching at straws, the diversionary tactic of the opposition to try to throw some responsibility or blame at the feet of the federal opposition was absolutely and totally inappropriate and ineffective. The Leader of the Opposition already knew that that amendment proposed by the federal opposition was not for the purpose of frustrating the passage of the FAC amendment bill. It was seeking an inquiry into the operations and cost structure of the FAC. At no time did the federal opposition indicate that it did not support the passage of the bill itself. In fact, it voted with the government ...

Mr Ede: 'Omit all words after "that" and substitute the following'.

Mr FINCH: Mr Deputy Speaker, if the member for Stuart will open his ears and shut his mouth for a moment, the amendment to the bill sought to set up an inquiry and it was defeated. It will now go before the Senate. The opposition voted with the government on the bill itself and will do so in the Senate. Charles Blunt has given an undertaking that the opposition will not in any way frustrate the passage of the FAC bill itself. What it is seeking and what it will continue to seek is an inquiry, and for good reason.

The member for Stuart endorsed the move by the federal Department of Finance to value existing assets - assets which, in many cases, were paid for decades ago - at full market value. In fact, what he is endorsing is an increase in charges to users of airports, not only for passengers on large commercial aircraft, but for those using light aircraft. If he took the time to read the full debate in the House of Representatives last Thursday, he would understand the frustration, the concern and the annoyance of the federal shadow minister. I share that frustration. Light aircraft users in Darwin, who have no option but to use the primary airport, will be facing a doubling or tripling of the current rates. This is a matter which I raised previously ...

Mr Ede interjecting.

Mr FINCH: Mr Deputy Speaker, it is already happening. People in Aboriginal communities and remote areas of the Northern Territory, who rely entirely on the general aviation industry, will have no option but to face increased charges on the only method of communication and transport available to them. Members of the opposition who represent remote areas should be ashamed of themselves for not taking the trouble to understand what will occur as a result of these increased charges brought about by the method of valuing assets. If they would like to communicate with some of the airlines run by Aboriginal groups, even in Alice Springs, they would realise how concerned they are about the potential increases in charges if the interstate norm is to apply here.

Mr Ede: When you finish, we will go outside and I will explain it to you.

Mr FINCH: Mr Deputy Speaker, I could learn zilch from the member for Stuart because he not only fails to understand, he fails to take the trouble to find out.

Quite correctly, the federal opposition is raising a concern about the cost burden that is being placed on the FAC by the minister and the Department of Finance. Certainly, my office was in contact with Mr Blunt's office last Thursday when this amendment was being put before the House. As the Leader of the Opposition knows, when the government rejected those amendments, the opposition voted with the government on the bill itself. I have an absolute assurance from Charles Blunt that the opposition has no intention at all of hindering the passage of the FAC bill itself. It will, however, continue to pursue the matters outlined in its amendment.

The contact with Mr Blunt's office obviously was part of the basis on which I proceeded with the statement today. When I received information from his office that the bill would be passing through the House of Representatives, I made some amendments to my statement indicating that we were receiving excellent feedback in relation to the progress of the FAC bill. Contact with the FAC resulted in its indicating to us that it clearly understood our frustration and annoyance. When you have 4 bodies trying to come together in respect of one transfer and cost package arrangement, it is cumbersome but what is needed is for somebody to provide the catalyst for things to happen. If that is to be myself, so be it. The matter should not rest there however. There are people in Canberra who carry responsibility for it.

Mr Ede: Not Charles Blunt.

Mr FINCH: Not Charles Blunt, the current ALP government.

Mr Deputy Speaker, let me turn to a couple of minor furbies from members of the opposition. The Leader of the Opposition alleged that my staff had received a full briefing from the federal minister's office a month ago. My staff and I have been in continual contact with the federal minister's office since I first took over the portfolio of Transport and Works. Certainly, about a month ago, neither the federal minister's office nor the FAC could give us an assurance as to when the transfer would take place. There are indications that it may be at the end of the year, but that simply was not and should not be good enough for Territorians.

The member for Stuart indicated that one of the airlines has been frustrating negotiations in relation to the Alice Springs situation. He indicated that, a fortnight ago, the airlines were given a week to make up

their minds. That may very well be so. However, at the ATAC meeting in Adelaide in July, they were also given a week to make up their minds. What is needed is some positive action, some leadership and some decisions by the appropriate body - the federal government. It has taken 15 months. If the airlines cannot make up their minds what they want or what they will accept, they ought to be told, and told positively. Let us get on with the job. Let us not hang around until everybody is happy, as occurs with this latterday emphasis on consensus. We need some positive decisions.

In regard to the member for Sadadeen's continual carping about State Square, let me say very simply that airports were to be included in the same package as State Square. We undertook to proceed with the airports ourselves as part of the package put forward to the federal Treasurer who, on our behalf at the Loans Council this year, negotiated an amount of \$30m, of which \$10m was to go towards the airport. The member for Sadadeen continually knocks our decisions in relation to the utilisation of the balance of our loans entitlement. It ought to be clear to him by now that we do not have the freedom to spend that money on what is now to be retained as federal government property. Why would we and how could we? The situation concerning expenditure of the funds on other projects has been explained time and time again. It is about time it sank into the mind of the member for Sadadeen that, despite his suggestions, the entire community might not be against the State Square project.

I have a copy of a letter to the editor which appeared in the Sunday Territorian on 27 November 1988. A concerned constituent of the member for Sadadeen wrote to the press expressing concern that all he could hear from the member for Sadadeen was more and more carping on the State Square project. The letter referred to the member's part-time grape growing activities and suggested that he ought to spend more time listening to his constituents. I am sure that, in years to come, the letter will make most interesting reading. I seek leave to have the letter, which is headed 'Just a part-time politician', incorporated in Hansard.

Leave granted.

Sir,

In recent weeks, I have watched your part-time letter writer, part-time columnist and part-time politician, Denis Collins, at part-time work in your newspapers - the Centralian Advocate and Sunday Territorian. He's been on the issue of the new Court House and Parliament House.

At the outset, let me say that, as a long time resident of Alice Springs, I felt very sorry for Denis when he lost preselection in 1987. I voted for him.

As a regular reader of Hansard, I have noted that on most occasions he votes with the ALP on issues which I personally believe the government deserved support.

But it is on the issue of the Court and Parliament Houses that I wish to take issue with my local member.

Although not a frequent visitor to Darwin, I have on a number of occasions had the opportunity of visiting the Legislative Assembly. I believe that the conditions under which the members and the Assembly staff operate are deplorable.

The building and the attendant facilities leave a lot to be desired and are certainly not in keeping with other parliaments around Australia and are not a building of which Territorians could be proud.

At a recent function in Alice Springs, Mr Collins seemed more intent in putting his view forward concerning these new buildings than he was in listening to us.

No longer will Mr Collins receive my or my friend's support because on many calls to his office we are informed that he is unavailable. Where could he be?

Mr Collins, would it be fair to ask that, if the Territory cannot afford the new proposed buildings, can we therefore, no longer afford a part-time politician paid \$45 000 a year plus allowances and who is also a part-time grape farmer. A grape farm which would appear to most residents of Sadadeen to be subsidised by the Territory taxpayers.

G. Martin,
Telegraph Tce,
Alice Springs.

Mr FINCH: The facts are simple, Mr Deputy Speaker. We have had enough of chat and it is time to get on with the job. I do not feel in the least bit nervous about having taken this action. Unlike the Leader of the Opposition, I have great confidence that the current federal minister bases his decisions on an analytical and responsible approach, not on political vindictiveness as was the case in previous times. I do not feel in the least bit nervous. I am confident that what we are doing now, whilst some might consider it to be moderately provocative, is providing a focus and is reassuring Territorians that we have not forgotten them in the last 4 months despite the fact that they have heard nothing at all from the federal government. We are letting Territorians know that negotiations have been going on and will continue until we get results, which will be buildings and facilities rather than words. Indeed, this statement may provide the catalyst to bring about the long overdue decisions required to get things moving. I am sure that everything this government and members of the opposition can do will be greatly appreciated by all Territorians.

Motion agreed to.

STATEMENT Inquiry into Land Degradation

Mr MANZIE (Conservation): Mr Speaker, I rise to make a statement regarding land degradation in the Northern Territory and the work which is being undertaken to combat this problem. In March this year, I advised the Assembly of the Inquiry into Land Degradation being conducted by the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Environment, Recreation and the Arts. Officers of the Conservation Commission and the Departments of Primary Industry and Fisheries, and Lands and Housing have prepared a Northern Territory submission to the inquiry. I would like to take this opportunity to brief honourable members on some of the matters addressed in that submission. For the benefit of honourable members, I will read again the terms of reference of the inquiry. They are:

To inquire into and report on degradation with particular reference to: (a) ongoing causes of land degradation; (b) the effectiveness of policies, programs and practices designed to alleviate land degradation; and (c) measures required to protect the environmental and productive values of the land.

Members of the committee visited the Territory in September. They carried out a number of field visits and site inspections ranging from the coastal plains of the Top End through Katherine and the Victoria River District to the Alice Springs region. They were assisted by officers of the Conservation Commission and the Departments of Primary Industry and Fisheries, and Lands and Housing. They also held discussions with pastoralists, members of the Northern Territory Cattlemen's Association, the Victoria River District Conservation Association, CSIRO, the Northern Land Council and the Environment Centre.

In the view of the commission and the departments which collaborated to prepare the submission, land degradation is taken to mean 'the process by which there is a decline in the quality or quantity of a land resource caused directly by over-utilisation by man or indirectly through human agency'. Put simply, land degradation occurs as a loss of the physical or biological resources of the land. It is a complex and, at times, emotive issue and even the term 'land degradation' means different things to different people.

I think it is important that this Assembly has a clear understanding of this issue and of its implications for the Territory. We are fortunate in the Territory in that, because of our low population density and recent history of development, we do not have significant degradation over large areas as has occurred in many other parts of the world. As I pointed out to honourable members in March this year, in the Territory, and especially in arid and semi-arid areas, it is often difficult to distinguish between land degradation caused by the activities or by the agency of man and the effects of naturally occurring processes of landscape change. These processes may be seasonal and regular, cyclical or even episodic and irregular. However, in the sense that they are largely beyond the scope of human intervention, they should not generally be considered to be degradation.

The CSIRO has acknowledged this difficulty in distinguishing between natural and grazing-induced erosion. Thus, while allegations are continually being made about the extent of degradation, particularly in the arid and semi-arid areas of the Territory, it is the view of the Conservation Commission that these allegations are very subjective. It should also be pointed out that the allegations are also frequently politically motivated. In fact, the reality is that what may appear to the less experienced eye to be serious degradation may simply be the natural consequence of a period of drought. At this stage, our research indicates that, in the great majority of cases, the country appears to be able to recover as the seasons improve.

There is very little objective data on the status of land degradation over the whole of the Territory. To collect such data, repeatable assessments must be made in areas where comparative assessments can be carried out on the same area over a period of time. To date, such assessments in the Territory have been confined to recent, regional or localised surveys. An integrated land resource database for the Territory, incorporating topographical, cadastral, resource and development information, is urgently required. In order to meet this need, a geographic information system has been developed in consultation with the Departments of Lands and Housing and Primary Industry and Fisheries. This system, which is now being evaluated, will utilise existing databases of

biological, soil, land system, recreation, scenic and cultural values of the land. Meanwhile, work is continuing on extensions to the existing data. It is intended that the GIS system will be integrated with the current Mapnet system which proves topographical and cadastral information for the Territory. I have no doubt that this land information system will become an essential component of future land use appraisal and management systems.

The priority action of the Territory is to obtain quantitative data on the status of land degradation by a repeatable, statistically valid assessment method. Methodologies developed by the Soil Conservation Service of New South Wales and by the joint CSIRO National Soil Conservation Program are being assessed this financial year by the Conservation Commission with a view to implementing a Territory-wide assessment as soon as possible. I am afraid that, until we have hard data that can be statistically analysed and can be repeatedly assessed to give the true picture, the emotional debate and allegations about land degradation will continue. As a consequence, there is a real risk that the energy of the community will be misdirected on red herrings rather than applied to addressing the real problems.

In March of this year, I advised this Assembly that 'it would be remiss of me not to acknowledge that there is accelerated, man-induced erosion in specific areas. We are aware of these problems. They have been reported to the House of Representatives inquiry and we are taking action to address them. I would like now to describe the measures being undertaken.

Potential land degradation of cropping lands is a significant issue in the Northern Territory. Particularly in the Top End, high rainfall, rainfall intensity and the structureless nature of the soils mean that careful land selection is essential. Even so, slopes of more than 1% require some sort of soil conservation structural works before they can be developed for agriculture. Land management and erosion assessment surveys undertaken since 1983 in all dry land cropping areas of the Northern Territory - that is in areas receiving an annual rainfall of between 625 mm and 1200 mm - have shown that, in the initial 1983 growing season, 18% of land under crop production suffered from rill or small gully erosion, 1% suffered from major gully erosion and sheet erosion was extensive. The latest figures indicate that rill erosion has been reduced to 12%, that no areas under crop are affected by gully erosion but that sheet erosion is still extensive. The reduction in erosion on crop lands in Territory has been the direct result of large areas being farm-planned - indicating the installation of soil conservation structures - and, to a lesser degree, the adoption of conservation tillage practices promoted through increased use of government extension services.

Introduced pests and feral animals degrade land through overgrazing, trampling of fragile vegetation and other destructive habits such as rooting, burrowing and wallowing. This reduces the productive value of the land and, importantly, its ability to resist erosion. Honourable members would be aware that the Territory has a major feral animal pest problem. A combination of climate and topography highly favourable to the establishment of feral animal populations, coupled with a sparse human population and an extensive pastoral management system, makes the control of feral animals and pests over large areas a costly and difficult task.

Dry land salinity, induced by the action of man, is not presently a significant problem in the Territory as it is in some of the states although we have some problems with induced salinity in the Alice Springs township area. We have a more serious problem with salt water intrusion or, as some of

our soil conservation experts would prefer to express it, 'lack of retention of fresh water'. Salt water intrusion is confined to the coastal plains of the Top End, particularly in the Mary River area. The causes are complex, but the influence of feral buffalo is a factor in creating and deepening channels between freshwater and tidal reaches of the floodplain system. Approximately 170 km² are recorded as being degraded by salt water intrusion and another 300 km² are threatened. This is a significant proportion of the freshwater coastal wetlands which are considered to be the main area at risk from salt water intrusion in the Territory. The commission is mapping the extent of the problem and honourable members would have seen recent reports in the media advising of trials proposed by the commission to construct levees to retain freshwater on the floodplains in order to rehabilitate salt-damaged areas.

These are not the only matters affecting the conservation of our coastal plains. Already, we have taken action to reduce and control the vast, uncontrolled herds of feral buffalo that once roamed across these plains. The BTEC program has been the most significant factor in controlling the environmental damage caused by feral buffalo and allowing the affected areas to regenerate. Unfortunately, the story does not end there. The commission is concerned that, with the removal of the threat from buffalo, there is growing evidence of a significant increase in pig damage. Research programs into the control of pigs will be a major priority for the commission in future years, and I am pleased to advise that there are some promising signs of a potential industry utilising wild pig for game meat export. Currently, a Queensland company is negotiating with landholders in the Top End to obtain access to feral pigs on a trial basis. Hopefully, finding a commercial value for these feral animals will afford some measure of control over wild populations.

Undeniably, feral animals and pests have resulted in changes to the natural environment and, in that context, I refer honourable members to the report presented by the Letts Committee in 1979. However, an insufficient quantity of research has been conducted to enable full assessment of the effects of feral animals. Usually such research is restricted to monitoring studies on limited areas; for example, observations on the coastal plains and Malay Bay concerning buffalo and salt water intrusion. Quantitative assessment of the environmental impact of feral horses in central Australia is under way and this study is expected to be concluded within 2 years.

Studies have been carried out on the distribution and impact of rabbits in central Australia. Rabbits are capable of completely denuding some areas and have significantly reduced the productive vegetation in others. Soil erosion resulting from rabbit feeding habits, as well as from burrowing, is widespread on some soil types in the arid zone. The last survey of the feral buffalo population in the Territory estimated the uncontrolled herd at 340 000 in 1985. The Conservation Commission does not have a updated survey of buffalo numbers but believes that they have been significantly reduced as a consequence of the BTEC program. There are an estimated 200 000 feral horses, 140 000 donkeys, and pigs and rabbits are innumerable. Indeed, perhaps I should say that they are uncountable.

Honourable members will be aware of the Feral Animal Control and Research Program carried out by the commission and by individual landowners. Members will also be aware of the heated and emotional debate generated by possibly well-intentioned but often ill-informed or biased television coverage of this subject. The government officers and the responsible landowners involved in these control programs are not gun-happy sadists. They get no pleasure from shooting animals. Commission officers involved in feral animal control programs are highly-trained marksmen committed to the conservation and

protection of the resources of the land. There is no practicable method of reducing large number of feral animals in wild, inaccessible and rugged country other than by using trained marksmen in helicopters.

In the interest of protecting our natural resources for future generations of Territorians, the Territory government has no option but to continue this program, and I include our native and often unique flora and fauna within the definition of 'natural resources'. These are being placed under incredible pressure by feral animals, among other causes. Indeed, at the recent National Conference of the Australian Conservation Foundation it was estimated that some 50% of arid zone mammals were either extinct or close to extinction.

The cane toad, a species that is spreading north-west from the Queensland border has the potential to threaten populations of native fauna.

Mr Hatton: And flora.

Mr MANZIE: And flora. The Conservation Commission is collaborating with the James Cook University to research possible control methods.

I turn now to the subject of weed control as it affects my portfolio. Weeds are a highly-significant cause of land degradation. The rapid spread of the introduced plant, *Mimosa pigra*, has the potential to make entire floodplains unusable. As honourable members will recall from my budget speech, this year the Conservation Commission and the Department of Lands and Housing will spend more than \$300 000 on mimosa control on lands for which they are responsible. Work to be carried out includes mapping of mimosa-infested areas, construction of access tracks to marked target areas, application of herbicides from the air or on the ground and chaining treated areas for subsequent burning. This year, the program aims to treat all mimosa in the Mary River Reserve and to contain the weed in the Murrumbidgee Reserve. Both reserves are major areas of infestation. In addition, this year, the Department of Primary Industry and Fisheries will undertake major mimosa control and research programs, bringing total government expenditure on mimosa control to almost \$1m. The mimosa control program is expected to continue over the next 5 years while biological control methods are developed and tested.

As you would be well aware, Mr Speaker, the most extensive form of land use in the Northern Territory is pastoralism. It occupies approximately 747 000 km² or 55% of the Territory. Almost all of this area has now been mapped to the land system level, either at a reconnaissance scale of 1:1 000 000 or at a more detailed regional scale of 1:250 000. The reconnaissance mapping technique enables broad land capability analysis to be used to identify the likely productive potential of the land resource. Only a very small area has subsequently been mapped to a level where land capability analysis can be used to identify specific land management requirements in order to contain degradation.

Much of this mapping coverage has been undertaken at the request of competent managers who are seeking detailed advice to further improve their management techniques. Land unit mapping allows the identification and, if necessary, removal from use of highly susceptible areas. Alternatively, it can also identify and focus management on highly-productive or stable areas and this will result in significant improvements to the management of the land resource on pastoral lands. Without this information, it would appear that, in some areas under current pastoral management strategies, the level of utilisation may still be exceeding land capability. This results in the

reduction of good natural pastures and an increase in less palatable species and woody weeds.

In other areas, existing degradation may have been the result of historic land use practices combined with highly-erodible landforms and soil vegetation associations in these particular areas. The commission's continuing land resource mapping and evaluation programs are giving priority to: land capability analysis of new developments in areas where there is increasing development; appraisal of existing areas where land use and intensity of utilisation may not be in accord with the capability of the land; and situations where landholders are prevented from making changes to land management techniques through lack of information.

Whilst, at present, there is a lack of scientific data on degradation and a need for further mapping, I would point out that the regular pastoral lease inspection program of the Department of Lands and Housing provides a valuable means of pinpointing areas of possible degradation. These can then be subjected to more scientific investigation and monitoring. All pastoral leases are routinely inspected at intervals of 2 to 3 years and may also be subjected to ad hoc inspection to consider requests for subdivision or other specific requirements. At each of these inspections, a general assessment is made of lease management and particular problem areas identified. It is obvious that sound land use and management decisions are more likely to result in a profitable business atmosphere. Such an atmosphere is generally more conducive to a longer term view on the part of managers, with management decisions aimed at sustainable use of the natural resource.

Mining activities in general are not a major cause of land degradation in the Territory. The problems which are brought to the Conservation Commission's notice are handled expeditiously. The affected areas are generally quite small and strict rehabilitation requirements are applied. I might mention, however, that one impediment to rehabilitation, especially in arid areas, is continued public use of tracks made for exploration purposes. That is one of the problems associated with the increased use of off-road vehicles.

One of the most promising developments that I am able to report to honourable members is the formation of the Victoria River District Conservation Association. This association, which comprises nearly all landowners in the Victoria River District, has been formed to provide an integrated and positive approach to conservation issues in the area. The Conservation Commission, with National Soil Conservation Program funding, has engaged an experienced consultant to report on conservation awareness in the VRD. I understand that the next step is to develop a strategy to address these issues in conjunction with the Victoria River District Conservation Association.

There needs to be a significant increase in federal assistance to landholders and landholder associations through initiatives such as the National Soil Conservation Program. Funding through such programs should be integrated and funding assistance to landholders should be channelled through existing Territory extension and advisory services. In addition to more traditionally-oriented programs of soil conservation and erosion control works, funding assistance to landholders should be extended to facilitate the development of coordinated district or regional programs for land appraisal, fire and land management and the control of feral animals, pests and weeds.

As you are aware, Mr Speaker, many land managers reside in remote locations and manage large areas. They have limited ready access to the

advisory services which are so important in decision-making. Existing centralised extension and advisory services in the main centres require funding for expansion and support to improve their effectiveness. In addition, appropriate means of informing and influencing isolated land managers, including the use of videos, require appraisal and development. These are programs which the Territory supports with the limited resources at our disposal and for which we seek additional federal support. I am pleased to advise that the National Task Force on Soil Conservation, created by Senator Cook, also views this as a national priority.

The matters raised in this statement are being brought to the attention of the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Environment, Recreation and the Arts as it proceeds with the Inquiry into Land Degradation. This government is vitally concerned with the preservation of our land resource and looks forward with great interest to the findings of the inquiry.

Mr Speaker, I move that the Assembly take note of the statement.

Mr BELL (MacDonnell): Mr Speaker, I have to say at the outset that this statement represents something of a victory for the opposition. It is quite obvious that the status of the Territory's land resource is one of the most important areas of public policy that this Assembly has to deal with. The opposition has succeeded in at least placing the issue on the government's agenda and I congratulate the minister for directing the Conservation Commission to make a submission to the standing committee of the House of Representatives which has been carrying out investigations.

Whilst the minister was on his feet, I was reviewing the record of the debate on this matter which took place in this Assembly in March this year. You may or may not recall, Mr Speaker, that on the General Business Day on Wednesday 2 March, this opposition moved that the following matter be referred to the Sessional Committee on the Environment:

the use of non-urban land in the Northern Territory with particular reference to:

- (1) the allegation of the degradation of the Territory's range land; and
- (2) the regulation and management of the Territory's rural land use resource with particular reference to -
 - (a) the information base relating to natural resources; and
 - (b) the transfer of appropriate and useful techniques to landholders.

Mr Speaker, the Minister for Lands and Housing may recall that he fulsomely praised my contribution to that debate. He said that I put my arguments clearly and concisely and that I gave all honourable members some food for thought. Obviously, I not only gave honourable members food for thought but particularly gave the honourable minister food for thought. I appreciate the minister's statement and hope that it will keep this issue on the public agenda.

I do not believe that the government did the right thing in failing to accept the opposition motion which sought the referral of specific matters to the Sessional Committee on the Environment. The minister's statement referred

to problems which have occurred since self-government in the dry-land cropping areas of the Northern Territory. It stated on page 5 that 18% of land under crop production has suffered from rill erosion, that 1% has suffered from major gully erosion and that sheet erosion was extensive. To get that into perspective, I will point out that the minister qualified that by saying that the latest figures indicate that rill erosion has been reduced to 12%, that no areas under crop are affected by gully erosion, but that sheet erosion is still extensive.

The minister did not refer to the urgency of the land degradation issue in the Territory. The opposition sought to have specific matters referred to the Sessional Committee on the Environment because of the particular nature of the Territory's land. I am not a geologist, a biologist nor an agricultural scientist, but I am told that the Northern Territory has a comparatively thin layer of topsoil and that that makes land degradation an even more serious issue here than elsewhere. That is an argument in favour of making a reference to the Sessional Committee on the Environment. I believe that the issue is of vital importance, not only to people who are living in the Territory now, but to future generations of Territorians. Whilst the government is to be congratulated for bringing forward these issues for debate, it has had to be dragged into the field to some extent.

One of the lacunae in the minister's statement relates to the efforts of the Centre for Arid Zone Research in Alice Springs. I have been briefed on the work of that unit of CSIRO on 2 occasions since becoming a member of this Assembly and I am surprised that the minister did not refer to it. Its work has worldwide importance and, Mr Speaker, you may recall that we both met Dr Barney Foran and Dr Margaret Friedel at the Darwin Airport. They were on their way to India for an international conference on range land management and I very much appreciated the opportunity to discuss with them the opportunities of gaining information of use to the Territory at that conference. In that context, I am rather surprised that the minister did not refer to work of the CSIRO's Division of Wildlife and Ecology in relation to opportunities for our Conservation Commission to obtain information.

I understand that CSIRO has been carrying out work on satellite imagery and that its software package in fact has been purchased and put to use by the Conservation Commission. I hasten to add that I am not seeking to argue the virtues of one organisation as opposed to the other. Obviously, the CSIRO people are involved in developmental research and not in end use. It is quite appropriate that there be a relationship between the relevant sections of CSIRO and the Conservation Commission. I would be very interested, at some stage, to have the opportunity to see how that particular software package is being utilised within the commission. Having seen it on 2 occasions, firstly at an early stage of its development and later at a much more advanced stage when it was being marketed for interested organisations, I would be very interested to see what use it is being put to by an organisation with considerable interest in land management and land degradation - the Conservation Commission. I think the minister referred to the Mapnet system, which makes use of satellite imagery to increase the applicability of the land information system. I would be very interested to see that in operation.

Mr Speaker, I draw the minister's attention to his statement that the assessments of the status of the land resource 'have been confined to recent regional or localised surveys'. I am not quite sure how that squares with the availability of the information that I have already referred to. Prior to that, the minister said: 'There is very little objective data on the status of land degradation over the whole of the Territory'. I would have thought

that we were rapidly heading in the direction of having an appropriate database for addressing those sorts of issues.

I note that the minister was very quick to say that there were difficulties in distinguishing between natural and grazing-induced erosion. I really believe that he was underestimating the capability which is available to determine that as well as the information already available. I would refer the honourable minister to the comments made in the March debate. It was quite clear that there was some evidence, not merely of erosion or physical damage to soils but also of the disappearance of particular types of plants from specific areas. I suggest that there is not quite the vacuum of knowledge that the honourable minister has suggested.

The only other comment that I will make is to remind the honourable minister that there has been considerable public debate on this matter. I do not propose to repeat the arguments about land degradation and the pastoral inspection system which have been put forward in previous sittings of this Assembly in the context of comments made by Mr Hockey during the Warumungu Land Claim hearing. I simply remind the honourable minister that this is not a new debate by any means and that there is a responsibility on the government, given the magnitude of the issue, to make a reference to the Sessional Committee on the Environment so that this Assembly is in possession of the facts rather than the latest emotive statement of one group or another.

The minister referred to emotive statements about land degradation. I would imagine that the best way of ensuring that such emotive statements are kept to a minimum is to do what the federal parliament has done: have the problem assessed by a standing committee of the parliament. It seems to me that, if the question of land degradation or, to put it positively, the question of the conservation of the Territory's land resource, is as important as the honourable minister says it is, perhaps he should accede to the proposal from the opposition that there be such a reference to the Sessional Committee on the Environment. I believe that would be an expression of responsible public policy. It is certainly a matter of serious concern to me that not only is the minister not listening to me but that he indicates no real interest in such a proposal. I would like to think that he will have a change of heart.

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH (Koolpinyah): Mr Speaker, in rising to support this statement of the Minister for Conservation, I believe that the minister is indicating that the government is coming to grips with a problem that has been around for some years - land degradation, a phenomenon which is to be greatly deprecated by all caring conservationists. The minister's statement is something that one can get one's teeth into. I believe that the officers of the Conservation Commission who prepared it are to be complimented. It is quite an extensive statement. Unfortunately, the minister only touches on several matters which are deserving of statements in themselves. I hope that the minister's statement is a precursor of similar work to come from the Conservation Commission. This is the sort of work that the Conservation Commission officers should be doing.

I have brought to the attention of the government on previous occasions - and I do not think it will hurt to rub it in now - that the Conservation Commission was previously regarded as a band of glorified suburban gardeners. It was directed to build all those gardens in the northern suburbs. It is good to see reports like this coming from the Conservation Commission. If the minister makes future statements of such substance, we can really look forward to something interesting.

I have a high regard for the capabilities of the officers in the Conservation Commission and I only hope the government recognises them as much as people like myself do. I do not believe they receive the proper recognition and reward that they deserve. That is pretty obvious and I do not think anybody in the Conservation Commission would argue with me. They may not want to do so publicly but I do not think they would argue with me privately.

The recognition owed to the Conservation Commission was completely ignored when it was taken out of its very comfortable offices in Berrimah. They may have been slightly cramped but they were adequate and all the facilities were there - workshops, nurseries, laboratories etc. The commission officers were put into a third-rate building in Palmerston which may have been improved by their presence now. No doubt that has occurred, because they are very energetic people. I visited the building when the commission was first moved there and I was absolutely disgusted. If I had been one of the officers moved there, it would have really knocked the stuffing out of me. I considered that it was completely unsuitable and so did many of the officers. It was damaging to their esprit de corps which had grown strong in the lovely, friendly location at Berrimah.

The minister did not mention a point which the government and the commission do not make publicly. It is that, when the commission was located at Berrimah Farm, it paid no rent. I believe the rent for the space in the building in Palmerston is between \$800 000 and \$1m. That has to be paid out of the commission's budget allocation which means that there is less to spend on conservation work. That is enough about the Conservation Commission itself. I only hope that the commission staff continue their good work.

The subject of land degradation is very important. The member for MacDonnell seems to think that members of the opposition and people with similar views are the only ones who care about conservation of our flora, fauna and soils. I believe that they do a grave disservice to the subjects of their concern by seeing themselves as the only protagonists of all things bright and beautiful.

We all know what land degradation means in general terms, Mr Speaker, although people's view of it is affected by the extent to which they see it as the product of normal environmental change. Unless significant trends are reversed soon, we are about to see what some people would call land degradation. It is not only man's intervention with nature that causes land degradation; it can also be caused by natural events. Rivers erode land due to the speed of flow, the volume of water carried, the height of the drop and so forth. Prehistoric animals generated great changes in their environment and there were times of prehistoric terrestrial heating and cooling which also created changes which could have been considered land degradation if one had been around at that time.

In his statement, the honourable minister gave a definition of 'land degradation'. He said: 'It is a process by which there is a decline in the quality or quantity of a land resource caused directly by over-utilisation by man or indirectly through human agency'. I believe that that is a very restrictive definition. Land degradation can be observed to occur not only through the intervention of man but also through the intervention of other agencies. The definition given by the minister is very subjective and could be open to considerable argument. Further on, he stated that the Conservation Commission says that the allegations of land degradation in the arid and semi-arid areas of the Territory are very subjective. That supports what I

have just said. I say that land degradation is a very wide subject and does not occur only as a result of the activities of man.

It is good to see that, through the Conservation Commission, the government is going to such lengths to gather data, with the help of the Departments of Lands and Housing and Primary Industry and Fisheries. The minister said his department will use the geographic information system and the Mapnet system. Methodologies developed by the Soil Conservation Service of New South Wales and a joint CSIRO National Soil Conservation Program will be used also with a view to implementing a Territory-wide assessment as soon as possible. All this information will then be statistically analysed and repeatedly assessed. I would like to know what will happen after all that work has been done. What application will it have? Is the intention merely to process and reprocess information and to create jobs, jobs and more jobs for people? What about the people on the land? Will they benefit from the collection of all this knowledge? I assume that they will, but nowhere does the minister talk in terms of reality. What is to be the end result of the collection, reassessment and reprocessing of all this knowledge?

Mr Speaker, I turn now to the problem of feral animals and pests. I admit that there is a feral animal problem in the Northern Territory and other parts of Australia due to human intervention. People have let their domestic animals go wild. However, I do not believe that these feral animals should be killed out of hand. The very fact that feral animals have existed by themselves under conditions chosen by themselves for years and years, points to the fact that, along the line, they have developed, either by heredity or environment, certain traits which make them resistant to disease and give them better survival capabilities than other species. I believe that, rather than having massive shoot-outs of feral animals, it might be worth while to investigate how and why they have survived for so long and try to preserve the genetic content of these animals. We could cross-breed and so bring some of the valuable qualities of those animals into the broader population of a particular species.

I was interested to hear the honourable minister talk about salt water intrusion in the coastal plains, particularly in the Mary River area. Like other people, I believe that may be due partly to the action of buffalo over the years but I think we are hiding our heads in the sand if we do not also consider the Greenhouse Effect. I do not know whether the minister mentioned a scheme, which I heard of, which involved using sand bags in an attempt to stop the intrusion of salt water. When I was told about it, I said that it sounded as if the minister was doing a King Canute. He will have about as much chance of success as King Canute did when he tried to stop the tide coming in.

There is an interesting point to be made here. If the Greenhouse Effect is already becoming apparent through salt water intrusion into parts of the Mary River system, there are implications for a favourite project of the Chief Minister. From my time in the Country Liberal Party, I know that he tried for years to have a salt water lake created within his electorate. Now that he is Chief Minister, he has been successful, which just goes to show that there are perks in every office. Works have commenced on a salt water lake in the Fannie Bay area, just behind the beach. Would it not be much more economical if, instead of spending all that money on constructing an artificial lake for the benefit of the Chief Minister in his electorate, the government dug a channel to the sea and let the Greenhouse Effect do the rest? That would create a salt water lake which would fill and drain with the action of the tides and we would get some benefit from the Greenhouse Effect.

Now we come to the honourable minister's statement that there is growing evidence of a significant increase in pig damage in the environment. Anybody could have told him that and I am really surprised that the honourable minister is only now thinking about a pig control program. Anybody with half a brain could have told him that years ago, when the buffalo were first shot out. For the benefit of the honourable minister, the sequence is something like this. The buffalo were shot out some 7 or 8 years ago. That was one of the rare occasions when Senator Bob Collins and I agreed on something. That did not happen often, but we did agree that the shoot-out undertaken at that time was completely unnecessary. I am not certain whether it was the Northern Territory government or the ANPWS that instigated it, but about 1500 head of buffalo were shot out and the bodies were left to rot. It stands to reason that the pigs, being carnivorous, ate them. The buffalo were shot, the bodies were left, the pigs ate them, more pigs survived to breed and there was an upsurge in the pig population.

A similar sequence of events will occur if feral pigs are hunted as rapaciously as the buffalo were. If they are shot out in large numbers, there will be an increase in the numbers of pig carcasses on the ground. Dingoes, being carnivorous, will eat them. More dingoes will survive and there will be an upsurge in the dingo population. Much as I like dingoes, having been one of Australia's first dingo breeders, a balance must be maintained in nature. By the time all the pig carcasses are eaten out, the dingo population will have increased enormously and it will do either or perhaps both of 2 things. Either the dingoes will move closer to areas of human habitation and prey on small stock and birds owned by humans or they will eat out the native marsupials.

Mr Speaker, it would benefit the Minister for Primary Industry and Fisheries if he listened to what I am saying because, although he does not realise it, it makes a lot of sense.

Mr Perron: It is going into Hansard, Noel. He reads it religiously every evening.

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH: I am sure he does.

Mr Speaker, the honourable minister spoke about the cane toad and, whilst I recognise that it is a pest in the Northern Territory, I think he is drawing a rather long bow when he talks about it in connection with land degradation.

Mr Manzie interjecting.

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH: I am not arguing with you but I think it could have been discussed as an undesirable pest in another context.

Mr Speaker, we now come to the subject of weed control. It is very pleasing to hear the honourable minister speak about weed control, especially *Mimosa pigra*. I would like to request the honourable minister to send a copy of his statement to the senior officers of the Australian National Parks and Wildlife Service so that they can see what the Northern Territory government is doing. It might give them some ideas about looking after the noxious weed infestations in Kakadu. I am rather concerned that the minister said that the mapping of the mimosa areas includes construction of access tracks. We all know what that means. Somebody going for a drive at the weekend will see these tracks. They will go into those areas and, whilst the people who are actually doing the work on the eradication of the mimosa are careful, the access tracks will provide a fresh means of spreading this pest throughout

that area and other areas. I hope the honourable minister will make certain that those access tracks do not provide a further means of spreading mimosa through any particular area.

I would suggest to the Minister for Conservation that, if he cares to contact the prison officers at the Beatrice Hill Prison Farm, he may hear something to his advantage in relation to the control of mimosa. There was just a small patch out there. It was not dealt with by goats; it was something that happened by chance. People other than the minister are trying to combat mimosa.

All in all, the minister's statement is not a bad one. I hope that the minister will take up my points of concern and do something about them.

Mr REED (Primary Industry and Fisheries): Mr Deputy Speaker, I rise to make a few brief comments on the minister's statement and the reflection it throws on the pastoral industry which frequently bears the full brunt of the land degradation argument and is cited as the principal reason for much land degradation in the Northern Territory. Pastoralists, in the main, are fairly good land managers. They are dependent on land resources for their livelihood. As a result, they are very much aware of the consequences of land degradation and the need to manage their resources as effectively as possible. It is in this context that the priority action that the minister has outlined is to be undertaken. Quantitative data will be obtained on land degradation and statistically valid assessment methods will be of particular benefit to land users, principally the pastoral industry. As a result of these studies, land users and managers will have available to them the base data required for management of the resource which they are using at present and which they will pass on to future generations in the longer term. I guess that is what we are on about when we address the problem of land degradation.

The matter of feral animals has been raised. It seems to go hand in glove with the land degradation question and the problems that result from it. The figures provided in this document indicate that hundreds of thousands of feral animals are impacting or have impacted on the land systems of the Northern Territory. Numbers such as 340 000 buffalo in 1985 and 200 000 feral horses and 140 000 donkeys at present must have a considerable impact on the environment and contribute to land degradation. We must recognise that impact and take the necessary action to control these animals and minimise their numbers. The benefits from such action are obvious. The reduction in numbers of feral animals reduces the impact on the environment which, in turn, enhances the pasture from the pastoralist's point of view. That, of course, would lead to a rise in productivity.

The matters raised by the member for Koolpinyah in relation to feral animals are a little puzzling. The member suggested that these animals have adapted well to the environment and that the attributes they have gained through this process of adaptation should be utilised in breeding programs. I have no argument with that but the simple fact is that it can be done at any time by anyone. It is a matter of a person taking the opportunity of initiating breeding programs utilising animals that have adapted to the wild. It is simply a matter of making the necessary arrangements to obtain animals and establishing one's own breeding program. I do not think there would be too many barriers to that occurring. The fact that it has not been done would throw into question the proposition that the honourable member has put forward.

It is time that groups such as those which form the animal liberation lobby realised the consequences of their theory that animals should not be destroyed but left as they are. I consider that to be a totally impractical proposition. The fact is that, in large concentrations, feral animals do not do well. They are generally unhealthy, particularly in times of stress such as drought, which occurs not infrequently in the Northern Territory. Anyone who has seen large numbers of feral animals, be they donkeys, horses or buffalo, in stressful situations where they are dependent on muddy soaks for water would be shocked. They become very stressed and their need for water becomes so acute that they gulp large amounts of mud which accumulates in their stomachs, causing them to die a very miserable death. It is circumstances such as that that the member for Koolpinyah and the animal liberation people must come to terms with. They need to recognise that ignoring the problem is neither good for the environment nor good for the animals concerned. I understand the concerns which people have in relation to the destruction of feral animals but, when we consider the issue in the context of the future use of the land and what we hand on to future generations, I see little alternative. It is the most practical position to adopt.

It is pleasing for me to participate in the control of weeds in the Northern Territory. This year, \$1m is being spent on the mimosa control program. It is good to see the cooperation between a number of organisations including the Conservation Commission, the Department of Primary Industry and Fisheries and the Department of Lands and Housing. It illustrates clearly the government's serious approach to this problem which requires urgent attention. The process is well in train.

I would like to touch on a matter relating to national parks. We are fortunate in the Northern Territory that large areas of land have been set aside for national parks. Apart from pure conservation principles, tourism and other attributes of national parks such as the protection of aesthetic areas and the provision of recreation facilities, we need to look very closely at the databases that can be derived from these areas and the consequent benefits. There is an opportunity, particularly with recently-acquired areas, to monitor regeneration and to make comparative studies between areas within national parks which are not subject to grazing and those areas outside them which are grazed. The benefits flowing from such studies would be much appreciated by the pastoral industry.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I welcome the statement and support it strongly. On behalf of the pastoral industry, I would like to offer my support and indicate that the results which will flow from it will benefit not only the current generation of pastoralists but will certainly lead to better land management and utilisation in the future.

Mr COLLINS (Sadadeen): Mr Deputy Speaker, a couple of sittings ago, I asked raised the matter of an article which originated from the CSIRO and appeared in the local newspaper in Alice Springs. I accept that CSIRO staff did not have a free hand in writing it. It was written by a journalist and perhaps some liberty was taken. On the one hand, it seemed to condemn the Territory and its government for not doing enough in respect of land degradation and, on the other, to ask for money so that the CSIRO could provide data so that its suspicions about land degradation would actually be based on hard information. My discussion of this article led to an invitation to visit the CSIRO at Alice Springs and receive a briefing. I am grateful to have received that briefing.

When a drought occurs in the desert areas of central Australia, the only vegetation will often be a few shrubby trees with not a blade of grass to be found. Few people, however, including the so-called greenies, take much notice of the effect of termites in central Australia. Termites are voracious little creatures which, it is claimed, eat more than cattle in a season on a well-stocked property. Particularly in times of drought, they reduce the dry grass to nutrient material which is beneficial to new plants when the weather changes.

In December 1970, I went out to Ringwood Station which is 60 air miles to the east of Alice Springs. The only vegetation consisted of a few stunted bushes and the few remaining cattle were trying to eke out an existence by eating those native plants. They were barely surviving. I saw the station again in March of the following year after it had received very heavy rains. It had received 13 inches in a weekend and a lake had been created. It was 8 miles long and 5 miles wide and, when I visited the area again a few weeks later still, every imaginable variety of bird was present. Country which one thought could never recover was covered in grass 2 or 3 feet high. That was an important lesson to me about the way the country can regenerate. Its capacity to come alive after rain is marvellous to behold.

The CSIRO people had photographs of that sort of country before and after rain. One of them told me that it is not simply a matter of looking at the lush grass. You have to determine what type of grass it is. Almost a natural selection process occurs because, if cattle have a preference for a particular type of vegetation, they will eat it down. Whilst the country may look great when drought is followed by rain and revegetation, a grass species which is of little nutritional value to cattle may predominate.

The people from CSIRO also gave me information about the nature of the Territory's topsoil which is generally only a few inches thick. I recall visiting the Douglas-Daly area soon after the project farms commenced. The topsoil there was 4 inches deep at the most and could not be tilled if the slope was more than 1° because of the danger of its being washed away by heavy rains. It could not be plowed in the normal manner, by turning it over, as occurs down south. The ploughing process had to actually rip through it so that the topsoil would stay in place rather than being buried, where it would not be available for the growing of plants. There are some problems with our soil type in the Territory and the CSIRO scientists pointed out to me that there is a tendency, where wind and water erosion occur, for topsoil to be washed away and concentrated in low-lying areas where it is often several feet thick. Their photographs showed, as common sense would suggest, that those areas are ideal for woody plants such as mulga and for eucalyptus, to the exclusion of the grasses which the cattle want. The scientists were able to demonstrate to me, in a reasonable manner, that degradation is occurring. That is a matter of concern to all Territorians, particularly people in the pastoral industry. Efforts need to be made to stop the erosion.

One technique for avoiding erosion is to ensure that watering places for cattle are located appropriately. If a bore is on a slope and watering troughs are located near it, cattle will churn up the ground and there will be a tendency for rain and wind to remove the topsoil. The scientists suggested that pastoralists should place the troughs on flat ground even if that meant placing them a couple of kilometres away from the bore. There are other commonsense techniques which aim to avoid erosion.

I was not aware that the minister intended to make a statement on this matter today. The issues are of considerable importance but it seems to me

that, before we rush in and do too much, we need to obtain hard data. We have to use Mapnet and the various survey and photographic techniques. Such information will show us the actual extent of degradation. In that context, I would refer all honourable members to page 45 of the Weekend Australian of 12 November 1988. An article appears there under the heading of 'Avoiding Our Just Deserts'. The article describes how agricultural land is being ruined throughout the world through salt encroachment. It states that the wheat-growing areas of Australia have virtually been ruined. However, it gives a ray of hope when it states that there are people in Australia who recognise the problems of what is called desert creep, which is ruining agricultural land, and have tackled the problem. It refers particularly to a small factory in the Perth industrial suburb of Osborne Park which houses the Australian Revegetation Corporation and the dynamic energy of Mr Steve Hill who is determined to prove that Australia has the technology, skills and resources to tackle the menace of desertification on a worldwide scale.

The article is very interesting. It particularly talks about a plant of Australian origin call atriplex, more commonly known as saltbush. If honourable members do not know what saltbush looks like, next time they come into Alice Springs through The Gap, they should look at the grey shrubs roughly 4 or 5 ft high on the lefthand side near the Housing Commission houses. Those bushes are what is called giant saltbush. There are other examples in the boxwood swamp in the Sadadeen area. According to the article, saltbush is the only plant which is hardy enough to tackle the salt conditions created by desertification and to reclaim country.

The article goes on to say that saltbush cannot be established by throwing seeds from an aeroplane, as some of the Arab people wanted to do. Unfortunately, it does not work like that. Mr Hill and his group have developed machinery to till and seed the ground in an appropriate manner. The soil has to be compacted slightly around the seed so that, when rain occurs, the moisture will be concentrated in sufficient quantities to allow plants to establish. Something similar was depicted in a photo of the Alice Springs Airport which appeared on the cover of the telephone directory a few years ago. It showed the circles created by machines which thump the ground and make indentations which concentrate soil moisture and encourage the growth of buffel grass, a very useful grass which has done a great deal to stabilise the soil and to keep the airport open. It would be ironical if we finally got a brand new terminal at the Alice Springs Airport and then ran into a period of drought like that which occurred in the 1960s and 1970s. Certainly, it would be much nicer to be in a brand new building watching the dust blow than to be outside it, as one would probably have to be today with the overcrowding problem.

The article refers also to types of machinery which have been developed to carry out such tasks as hedging acacias and other types of fodder trees so that cattle can eat them. It refers to the discovery of various types of shrubs and plants which are very nutritious to cattle. The work of the enterprise referred to in the article is very exciting. It could turn our farm machinery industry into one which earns \$200m per year from exports instead of the current \$80m. It is believed that a little effort will lead to worldwide acceptance of new techniques and knowledge, which will help to revegetate areas. Australia could have a very big share in an export industry which would be of great benefit to the world.

Mr Deputy Speaker, my intention in discussing this article has been to bring it to the attention of the Conservation Commission. I would also like to think that the Minister for Primary Industry and Fisheries might get in

touch with the Australian Revegetation Corporation to obtain information which may be of use to pastoralists in the Territory so that they can act on their own initiative. We should not wait until we receive all the Landsat data and other data before we act. I know that many people have a very keen interest in their properties. They are keen stewards and they want information which will help them to reclaim and improve their properties so that they will be in good condition to be passed on to future Australians and Territorians. I would particularly ask the Minister for Conservation and the Minister for Primary Industry and Fisheries to refer their departments to the article and the information which it contains. I hope that, if they believe the information is valuable, they will spread the word in the Territory so that people will become aware of techniques which can be used.

In the last few weeks, I recall reading another article which also contained some relevant information.

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

Mr McCARTHY (Labour, Administrative Services and Local Government): Mr Deputy Speaker, I rise to make a few comments on this statement because it concerns a matter of extreme importance to the Northern Territory, as indicated by the Minister for Conservation. Although the opposition has tried to claim credit for putting the matter on the public agenda, this government has a very sound record in terms of promoting land conservation and being careful to ensure that land is used to the best advantage.

People on the land in the Northern Territory, particularly the pastoralists who are responsible for the management of such large areas of our land mass, are extremely responsive to the needs of the land which gives them their livelihood. I have long held the view that we would be better off if our pastoral land was owned by the people who manage it, rather than by distant landowners. In fact, a considerable percentage of our land is owned by people who farm it and who exercise great care in ensuring that they do not lose their livelihood because of bad land management practices. I could cite a number of individual examples of that, although I do not intend to do so today.

The formation of the Victoria River District Conservation Association, whose inaugural meeting I attended recently, is a very positive initiative. Although, unfortunately, I have not been able to attend all of its meetings, I was very impressed by the responsibility of its members in recognising that there is land degradation in some areas and that it needs to be stopped from going any further. Many landholders in my electorate of Victoria River have gone to considerable lengths to prevent degradation, particularly along rivers. In many areas, they have fenced off the river banks and put down additional bores at a fairly substantial cost in order to ensure that the river banks will not be further degraded. I commend the pastoralists of Victoria River for their efforts in establishing the new association. At its first meeting, they made it very clear that they would not be asking the government to pick up the tab. They said that, if anything was to be done, they would be the ones to do it. Their attitude is: 'We are the people who use the land and we are the people who expect to make our living from it. We, therefore, are the ones who should put up the money to ensure that there is no land degradation in our area. If there is criticism, we will accept the criticism and ensure that land degradation does not go any further'.

Feral animals are fairly prominent in the Victoria River area, particularly horses and donkeys. Buffalo are not as common in the western

regions of the Top End as they are elsewhere but horses and donkeys are very common. The number of donkeys in the Victoria River region diminished fairly significantly a few years ago, but it is now increasing again and donkey numbers need to be controlled. Strangely enough, when I was visiting the various parts of my electorate recently a long-time Territory pastoralist said to me: 'Don't knock the donkey. During the very dry period we have been having over these last few years, the donkey was the only animal to find water. Other animals hung around the bores and died but the donkeys went out, found it and dug it for themselves. In some cases, they created areas of accessible water which were used by other animals'.

We hear about the buffalo and the damage it is doing. I have seen the damage caused by pigs along the Top End coast and, frankly, I believe that the pig is by far the greater problem. The buffalo causes damage through its wallowing along the Top End coast, but the pigs burrow and root around in the topsoil. They rip everything off and devastate vast areas of land and I believe that salt water intrusion can be attributed largely to pigs. In areas where buffalo have been almost entirely shot out, the pigs are causing enormous damage, and I think that we ought to be looking at getting rid of them in vast numbers. Frankly, I do not think that the feral pig trade to East Germany or wherever we are sending them will be significant enough to dispose of the numbers that we have and, if we are talking about shooting out animals, we should be shooting out the pigs. Perhaps that is something for the hunters to take up.

The member for Koolpinyah spoke about using feral animals genetically. In the case of donkeys, I cannot see much that they would be useful for apart from finding water. There is not much meat on them. I suppose that they can become kids' pets or be placed in zoos, but there are not many zoos around and not everybody wants a donkey in their backyard. Unfortunately, I really do not think that much use can be made of the old donkey, as attractive as it may be when one sees it without having to put up with it.

It is probably fortunate that animal liberationists were not around a few years ago when the myxomatosis program was under way throughout the southern parts of this country. I am sure that they would have made an enormous fuss about the way rabbits were being devastated by myxomatosis. I come from a dairy farming area that was very heavily infested with rabbits. Although we used to trap them, ferret them and shoot them, there was no way that we could control the numbers. They were doing enormous damage to our land. We were very much a part of both the 1080 and myxomatosis programs which greatly reduced rabbit numbers and made it possible again to make a living off the land. We must take steps of that kind to control feral animals.

There is no doubt that some erosion is man-induced but, as I said, most people working the land in the Northern Territory are responsible people. I doubt very much that I could name more than 1 or 2 people who do not put some effort into controlling both weeds and soil degradation on their land. Most put a great deal of effort into it. Certainly, we need to watch clearing and repasturing activities more closely, but that sort of development in the Northern Territory is inevitable, particularly in the Top End. Recent efforts to clear land and repasture or grow crops in the Top End of the Northern Territory have had an effect and some people would say that those activities have not been controlled well enough in some cases. However, we have controlled it extremely well when we make a comparison with what has occurred in other parts of this country and other parts of the world. If we look at the Douglas-Daly and the contouring that has been done there to ensure that the land is not washed away in years of heavy rainfall, and the clearing at

Tipperary that has been done in strip form, leaving trees along the waterways, we will see evidence of that. Clearing is inevitable. It must happen. We have to populate this country and the clearing will be done sooner or later. I believe the time has come when people are prepared to do that and to put a bit of effort into bringing their land to a more productive stage.

I will speak briefly on 1 or 2 other matters which relate to damage caused to the bush. If we take Litchfield National Park as an example, more damage is done there by suburban Rambos in their 4-wheel-drive vehicles than was ever done by buffalo. It is continuing to happen, although to a lesser extent because some control measures have been implemented. Unfortunately, the control measures are still not comprehensive enough. Fences that have been put up to keep people back from sensitive areas have been knocked over by suburban Rambos - not by buffalo - in order to get right down to the waterways. Woe betide any Conservation Commission ranger who tries to stop such people. I would not vouch for their safety. People who live in the area and see that sort of thing happening are disgusted by it.

The member for Koolpinyah commented on the Conservation Commission's move to Palmerston and the cost of that move which, she believes, meant that less money was available to the commission to carry out conservation work in the Northern Territory. The Conservation Commission did not pick up the cost of that move. The Department of Labour and Administrative Services pays for the rental for that building. Let us look at what the shift of the Conservation Commission has done for Palmerston. Premises were available at Palmerston, at a very reasonable cost, and we were able to move the Conservation Commission there, into an area that was flagging at the time because nobody had taken up the available office space. I believe that was a responsible move on the part of the government to ensure that all areas of the Northern Territory are properly catered for. The officers of the commission are able to use the services of Palmerston and their own area has a very high profile. People know where to find the Conservation Commission. They wander through that area on every day of the week. I have no regrets about the government's decision to move the Conservation Commission to Palmerston.

The period of time for which the farm at Berrimah might have been available was always in doubt. The commission now has a home which is very prominent and I think it can only do well for the Conservation Commission in the future because it will be seen. In the past, it was tucked away in a back corner at Berrimah. It is a very high-profile organisation, and one that I think all Territorians should be proud of. The Conservation Commission in the Territory has possibly the best name of any such organisation anywhere in this country. It is one which I feel proud of as a Territorian and I was very proud to be its minister for a limited period.

Returning to the land degradation issue, I believe that the people of the Northern Territory who are on the land are probably the best to judge what their land can take, and we should be listening to their advice because they have a great deal of advice to give. It is all very well for us to look at our planning maps and to talk about the Greenhouse Effect. The member for Koolpinyah suggested that a lake could be created in Fannie Bay simply by making an excavation and waiting for the Greenhouse Effect to fill it. If we want to end up with a muddy swamp, that is the way to go. As it is, Fannie Bay will have a beautiful lake, designed and established by the Conservation Commission.

The farmers and the pastoralists of the Northern Territory, who have been on the land for a long period and who have put much of their lives into

developing it, know what it will take. They tend their resource with a great deal of care and should be listened to, as I know they will be. I strongly support the minister's statement.

Mr EDE (Stuart): Mr Speaker, nobody on either side of the House would deny that we have problems. Land degradation is shaping up to be one of the national issues of the 1990s. In the Northern Territory, we have our own areas of shame. I have spoken previously in this House of my disgust at seeing that annual export, the topsoil of the Barkly, which is washed down the Georgina River every time there is a decent wet season and blown away whenever there is a bad drought. In the area south of Alice Springs, rabbits are definitely on the increase and have done incredible damage. There are areas which used to be covered with large stands of mulga and now contain only bits of dead wood with no grass growing at all. While those areas were never grass land, they were very valuable as sources of seed and formed part of the micro-environment which enabled vegetation in surrounding areas to re-establish after drought.

I read the 1979 report of Dr Goff Letts and was most impressed by the amount of detailed information it contained. The sorry thing is that, nearly 10 years later, we still seem to be saying the same thing. When the minister replies, I would like him to begin by providing us with the details of the ultimate penalty which he can invoke through his pastoral inspectors and to tell us how often it has been invoked. That will give us some indication of what the government has done in relation to land degradation in the decade following the completion of the report by Dr Letts, apart from beating its breast and commenting on what a difficult matter it is. I understand that the number of times on which the ultimate penalty is used is not an indication of our success in tackling the problems. Obviously, that has to be measured in terms of the changes in the practices of landholders who are responsible for land degradation. Such changes are an indication that they realise that things need to be done differently for their own good and the good of the Territory.

I support most of the statements of the member for Victoria River. The vast majority of owner-operators in the pastoral industry have their land at heart and attempt to come to grips with the problems. Everybody talks about the need to drought-proof their properties and the work done by Mr Bob Purvis at Atartinga has been discussed by myself and by others in this House time and time again. Pastoralists will point out that BTEC is not only taking up much of their resources but also much of the resources of the Department of Primary Industry and Fisheries. They would like to have seen such resources applied to providing them with more ideas on how to overcome the problems of degradation, how to assist the country to regenerate more rapidly after droughts and how to ensure that the mix of grasses referred to by the member for Sadadeen is maintained. Pastoralists need to ensure that the grasses most attractive to cattle are not wiped out, leaving only the less nutritious grasses.

I would also like to support the member for Victoria River's remarks in relation to pigs and buffalo. Anybody who has spent time in western Queensland will have seen the incredible damage done by pigs. The pig population in the Northern Territory has exploded as a result of BTEC. The shooting to waste of buffalo provides a magnificent food source for pigs and they carry the TB with them. I believe we should have had a pig eradication program before we had a BTEC program.

I have also been told of damage caused by pet meaters during a recent wet season who went in to collect the carcasses of buffalo which had been shot from the air. They cause an incredible amount of damage with their 4-wheel-drives. It has been suggested that they probably caused more damage than the buffalo. The Northern Territory does not need to be an area which controls its degradation problem simply by getting rid of its feral animals. They can be a source of real economic benefit to the Northern Territory.

The member for Sadadeen spoke of the CSIRO's work on saltbush. I know the honourable minister is aware of the number of people who have attempted to get industries started by collecting seed for export. He probably knows about the difficulties they have had in maintaining cash flows because it is a pretty vicious industry and difficult to break into. We could use the experience of the CSIRO and the Conservation Commission on reversing degradation to establish an industry which would not only bring very significant financial benefits, but also would contribute in many different ways to reversing the trend towards degradation around the world.

I once spoke to a Mr Beck, who was an employee of either the Conservation Commission or the CSIRO Centre for Arid Zone Research. He told me about some machinery which had been developed within the organisation for which he worked and which was a world-beater in terms of regenerating desert areas. He was most upset, as I was at the time, to hear that nobody was able to develop that machinery on a commercial basis. He attempted to buy the patents, as he was one those who had developed the machinery. He was told, however, that because he was a public servant, he could not buy the patents. He was also told that they would not be sold to him if he left the public service. He was very keen to set up an industry in central Australia to profit from the knowledge which had been gained about the regeneration of land in the arid zone. Perhaps, in his reply, the minister will be able to indicate whether the patents for the machinery are still held by the Conservation Commission and, if so, whether it intends to undertake further development of it or whether it will use those patents as the basis for setting up an industry in central Australia which could export technology to other parts of the world, such as Africa, which are afflicted by famines.

In conclusion, I would like to join the minister in giving my support to the National Task Force on Soil Conservation which was set up by Senator Cook. It has taken the view that soil conservation is a national priority. After all, it is the source of more than three-quarters of our national wealth. It was passed down to us and we have to pass it on. I believe that the task force can do much in terms of identifying not only the problems but also some of the solutions and to ensure that those are given widespread coverage. Because the Northern Territory has considerable areas of arid land and is in the process of establishing a new university, we should become involved in commercialising our knowledge. We should use the patents for machinery developed here to establish industries in the Territory, not only for our own benefit but for the benefit of that third of the world's population which is periodically ravaged by massive famines.

Mr MANZIE (Conservation): Mr Speaker, I would like to record my thanks for the contributions of honourable members. The condition of our land is a very important matter in the Northern Territory. The government's attitude is that we must be positive in our actions to ensure that we maximise the land resources available in the Territory. There are continuing problems. An example that no one mentioned is the fact that the Territory government itself has control over only 50% of the Territory in terms of being able to take action in respect of problems that are occurring. One day, that may cause us

a great deal of concern. At the moment, we can only allude to it and to the potential problems in that regard.

It was good to hear the member for MacDonnell support the statement. I cannot fully agree with him that this statement was made as a result of his and the opposition's actions. The developments described in the statement have been under way for a considerable period and there will be a continuing increase in work done in relation to our precious land resource.

Most members did not comment on the geographic information system which has been developed. It utilises technology, including satellite imagery and computer power, to integrate the Mapnet system with other computer systems so that we can assess large and small areas. At present, the satellite imagery can be utilised quite effectively in fire control techniques, areas that are burned ...

Mrs Padgham-Purich: That was not in the statement.

Mr MANZIE: Obviously, I could not say everything in the statement and I do not think any member would expect me to. I am now pointing out some of the advantages which can result from the use of modern technology. Bushfire control is a very good example, both in terms of preparing fire breaks, being aware of areas which are potential hazards and being aware of the extent of areas that are burning. I am sure that the department would be quite happy to show members some of the developments which are occurring in that area.

I saw an impressive demonstration of the use of satellite imagery when I viewed the areas available for waterfowl in the Top End. It showed which areas had plenty of water and which areas were dry and where waterfowl were found from one year to the next. It had the capacity to predict what bird numbers would be, as well as the extent of egg-laying activity. The information is much better than can be obtained from an educated guess and provides considerable detail as a basis for further work. The same applies to the use of the Mapnet system and cadastral systems which provide information not only for pastoral areas but also for mining and all sorts of applications.

The ability to collect the data, to assess it and to emphasise certain areas of the Territory will provide the Conservation Commission and other users with the ability to work out what is going on and what is required. This statement has clearly illustrated that we are doing something about one of the biggest problems which CSIRO has identified: the inadequate nature of current information in terms of making any firm pronouncements about the extent of land degradation in the Territory.

I did say that people have made emotive statements. The member for Stuart gave an illustration of that when he climbed on to one of his favourite hobbyhorses. He spoke about the evil pastoralists and how the government needs more teeth to punish them. He asked what sort of penalties are imposed and sought their application. That all boils down to an impression that the pastoralists are somehow destroying all the land and that, unless we take action against them, the land will not recover. At certain times of the year and in certain weather conditions, it may appear to the layman that such statements about the condition of the land are correct. However, as the member for Sadadeen pointed out, variations in weather patterns create different variations in vegetation and the appearance of the land. Until we have the information and until we are able to determine what is occurring and to evaluate the results of particular climatic conditions and patterns of land use, we cannot make definite statements concerning the results of man's use of

the land. We will always have problems in making those judgments until we can collect the relevant data, assess it and make some meaningful decisions. Even then, we will never get rid of the emotive statements.

As the member for Stuart pointed out quite correctly, the use, abuse and the misuse of the land right across our country will be an issue in the 1990s because people are aware that it is a pretty finite resource and that, if we do not look after it, our descendants will not eat in a hundred years time. Certainly, we have a responsibility to ensure that we properly manage the small amount of land that is available in Australia for the production of crops and livestock.

I thank honourable members for their contributions. The Conservation Commission is doing very good work in conjunction with the Departments of Lands and Housing and Primary Industry and Fisheries, the CSIRO, and the National Soil Conservation Program. It is a joint effort and it has to be a joint effort. Pastoralists and other landholders, as private individuals, are vitally interested in the productivity of their land and they are playing a very important part in the work which is being carried out. I believe that the future will be very positive if all parties realise the problems, recognise the frailty of our country and work towards conserving it.

Mr Speaker, I have been shown quite an interesting photo by the Minister for Primary Industry and Fisheries. The photo might be worth tabling because it depicts the Marrakai floodplain after being free of buffalo for a year. It shows a 4-wheel-drive vehicle which is visible only from the windscreen up and ...

Mr McCarthy: Hidden by the mimosa.

Mr MANZIE: There is no mimosa there. It is good, lush grass. Only a couple of years ago, that area was a rolling plain covered in buffalo wallows with grass no more than an inch high.

Mrs Padgham-Purich: There was a lot of meat on those buffalo.

Mr MANZIE: Buffalo will be quite valuable now that they are to be domesticated and held behind wire. In years to come, the member for Koolpinyah may rue some of the remarks she has made in relation to what will occur with buffalo.

Mr Speaker, I table the photograph so that members may see it. In conclusion, I again say that the staff of the Conservation Commission and others involved in preventing the degradation of our land deserve our support. They are doing a good job.

Motion agreed to.

STATEMENT Northern Territory Offshore Fishery

Mr REED (Primary Industry and Fisheries): Mr Speaker, I rise this afternoon to make a statement on the Northern Territory offshore fishery. Decisions taken by the Commonwealth during the last 6 months have raised grave doubts about the likelihood of a substantive onshore fish processing industry becoming established in the Northern Territory in the foreseeable future. Honourable members will be aware that offshore trawl fishing in the Australian Fishing Zone is controlled by the Commonwealth through the Australian Fishing

Service. On 17 and 18 May this year, officers of that service sat down in Darwin with officers of my department and representatives of Seanorth and Kailis Kaohsiung, who were then the licensed operators in this area, to outline the future of foreign fishing arrangements.

Among other matters raised by the Commonwealth officers were the priorities for access to the fishing zone and the level of Total Allowable Catches or TACs. The priorities for access were confirmed, in accordance with the agreement, as follows: first, Australian vessels; second, joint venture foreign vessels; and, third, fee-fishing foreign vessels. This obviously makes sense because it is clear that Australia should give a higher priority to boats whose catches will be processed by Australian facilities than those whose catches will be processed in other countries. That makes sound economic sense.

The Commonwealth announcements in relation to TACs came as something of a shock. Because of its geographic location, Darwin potentially services the 3 separate management areas which make up the foreign fin-fish trawl zone: the North-west Shelf, the Arafura Sea and the Timor Sea area. The Commonwealth proposed a total reduction of 35% in the TAC for the combined area; that is, from 33 000 t to 22 500 t. The Commonwealth's arguments were that this would further protect the resource from over-exploitation and would reflect any potential changes in trawling practices employed by the foreign fleets. Although surprised by the cuts in the TACs, we were happy to hear the Commonwealth claim that the major determinant in deciding who would be given access to the fishing areas would be the extent of the benefit any operation would give to the Australian economy, particularly in terms of onshore activity.

Over time, joint venture fishing arrangements offer the potential to provide substantially more benefit than do fee-fishing arrangements. Of course, we would prefer to see a totally Australian industry operating in this country. At the time of the meeting, 2 major foreign fishing operations were approved for operation in northern Australian waters. The Darwin-based company, Seanorth, was operating under a 3-year joint venture agreement and Kailis Kaohsiung under a 12-month fee-fishing agreement. The agreements were due to expire in September and October this year respectively. It was common knowledge at that time that, in addition to Seanorth Pty Ltd, several joint venture proponents were interested in replacing the Kailis Kaohsiung fee-fishing operation in 1988-89.

Future prospects looked promising. At least 2 joint venture fishing fleets would be potentially operating out of Darwin in the future. The decision on who they would be rested to a large extent on what benefits they could offer the Australian economy, particularly in terms of onshore processing and marketing. The Territory would therefore seek to capitalise on the situation in order to further to develop its economy by providing the necessary infrastructure to encourage the operation to use Darwin for processing and marketing the catch. Obviously, there was also potential for spin-offs to ancillary service and maintenance industries.

Our deliberations were complex but I have kept my explanations simple for the benefit of honourable members opposite. It appeared that there was an emerging opportunity for the development of a strong shore-based industry in Darwin. Therefore, the Territory government was keen to see the Commonwealth undertakings met. Unfortunately, Mr Speaker, nothing is that simple.

September and October were very frustrating months for both Seanorth and the Territory government. On 18 August, Seanorth signed a memorandum of intention with the Commonwealth which set out the terms for the new 3-year agreement. The Territory officers had been involved as observers in preliminary meetings between the Commonwealth and Seanorth and everything seemed fairly straightforward. The Commonwealth was obviously supportive of the proposal and the Territory had made its support known. It should have been fairly straightforward to arrange for Seanorth's new agreement to follow directly on from its old one which expired on 30 September. Unfortunately for Seanorth, the new agreement was not approved until 25 October. Prior to 30 September, Seanorth tried unsuccessfully to get the Australian Fishing Service to get its act together. My department tried and failed, and representations at ministerial level went unheeded. Consequently, Seanorth's vessels were tied up for 25 days while it waited for the new agreement to come into effect. The cost to Seanorth was in the order of \$48 000 per day.

Whilst reflecting on the activities of some members of this House last week, it is interesting to note that, despite the press releases I issued explaining the position of Seanorth, neither the opposition spokesman nor the Leader of the Opposition saw fit to do much about it or even to comment. Members opposite had an opportunity to lobby the federal government as they sometimes seem prone to do. Indeed, there might even have been some value in the Leader of the Opposition hopping on a plane and going to Canberra to talk to Mr Kerin. However, because the situation involved productivity and jobs for the Territory and had nothing to do with being negative or destructive, he did not want to know anything about it. That is typical of what we expect from members opposite.

Nevertheless, Seanorth is a comparative success story. It is a joint venture company which has been using Darwin as the base for its operations and the processing of its catch for the last 3 years, and that is being allowed to continue. It has also benefited the Territory through the establishment of a processing and marketing company called Offshore Fisheries (NT) Pty Ltd in Darwin. Through this company, it has brought the national and international marketing expertise of Angelakis Brothers of Adelaide to the Territory fishing scene. It is providing employment for up to 17 Territorians in fish processing and marketing, and it has increased the tonnage of fish processed and marketed through the Northern Territory.

Seanorth is looking to further the growth of this industry over the next 3 years. It intends to develop a new processing plant in Darwin and minimum landings are to increase from 600 t a year to 1200 t in 1990-91. Indeed, it is well worth noting that a requirement of the joint fishing arrangements is that the performance criterion is to increase by 300 t over the next 3 years. It is also worthy of note that Seanorth already has markets for some 800 t in the Middle East for the year 1988-89 and is already supplying European markets. That gives a clear indication of the potential of our fishery and our ability, if only we can obtain some cooperation from the federal government, to really maximise onshore processing, develop our economy and provide jobs to Territorians. Obviously, more employment will become available through these activities.

As difficult as things were made for Seanorth, the Commonwealth performance went even more steeply downhill. While Seanorth is continuing to contribute to the Territory economy, the potential benefits from the rest of the fishery have not been evidenced. I have already mentioned that the Kailis Kaohsiung agreement expired in October. The Territory is aware that several joint venturers were interested in bidding for the catch quota which

has previously been allocated under the Kailis Kaohsiung fee-fishing agreement. One new Darwin-based company, Tai-Aust Oceanic, commenced negotiating with the Commonwealth in May and progressed to the point that the Commonwealth drafted but did not sign a memorandum of understanding with the company in August. The next official advice the company received was a letter dated 26 October 1988, telling it that it had been unsuccessful.

The Commonwealth, contrary to its own priorities, had chosen to reject 5 out of 6 joint venture proposals in favour of 2 fee-fishing licences. I have already indicated the benefits which Seanorth and, consequently, the Northern Territory, will derive from land-based operations and the ability to process fish in Darwin. The term 'fee-fishing' means that a fee is paid for the right to fish. Neither the Northern Territory nor Australia derives any long-term benefit. Most of the catch is exported.

I have no argument with the companies the Commonwealth has chosen to deal with. I am very disappointed, however, that the Commonwealth took the decision to reject not only the Tai-Aust Oceanic joint venture proposal but several other similar proposals. Any of these proposals would have been of far greater benefit to the Territory than fee-fishing. However, I cannot forgive the Commonwealth for the way it has handled this very important matter. Neither the companies, departmental officers nor ministerial representations could get any information from the Commonwealth.

Honourable members will recall my press release condemning the lack of consultation on the part of the Commonwealth. They may also have heard the Territory's federal member say on radio that I was wrong and that there had been consultation. The Territory member and I obviously have a different understanding of the term 'consultation'. I subscribe to the Oxford Dictionary definition which refers to the verb 'consult' as meaning 'to have deliberations ... to seek information or advice ... to take into consideration another's feelings or interests'. The Commonwealth's actions were straightforward. It told my officers that it would consider new licence and agreement applications. We assumed that it would work to the guidelines which it had laid down in the previous May. It did not volunteer any further information and my officers only learnt of what occurred through third-party hearsay. That hearsay said that the Commonwealth was pulling back from Tai-Aust Oceanic and was considering late applications from other joint venturers and fee-fishing concerns.

Needless to say, we quickly sought confirmation of these stories from Canberra and, in that way, we were able to maintain a watching brief. Nevertheless, the Canberra officials neither volunteered information nor sought the Territory's views. In particular, they totally ignored the Territory's submission regarding the approaches which would be of greatest benefit to the Territory. To my mind, the Commonwealth did not consult with the Territory. Although we tried to get it to listen to us, we were unsuccessful. We have not even been advised of who all the applicants were, even after the federal minister has announced his decision - a decision, I might add, which was contrary to the Commonwealth's previously stated position.

The difficulties we are having in gauging the intentions of the Australian Fishing Service are also well illustrated by the saga of the Total Allowable Catch. Before the May meeting at which the new TACs were announced, the Territory had been advised informally that they were being reviewed. We were not invited, however, to provide input, notwithstanding our fisheries research activities specifically directed to this area and our local knowledge. To

date, we have been unable to find out why the figure of 35% was chosen as the level of reduction. We have found out that the log book catch data provided by Seanorth for the past 3 years, which we have collected on behalf of the Commonwealth and sent south, has still to be entered into its computer database. We have been advised that there was no scientific justification for the Commonwealth's decision. I would add that the CSIRO has criticised the non-scientific basis for the decision. Of course, we all know what the federal government's position is in relation to the CSIRO at the moment. It has closed every research facility so that it will be as inefficient and ineffective as possible. Unfortunately, we seem to be the victims of a similar approach in relation to our fishing industry.

It is also confusing that the TACs were reduced in May by 35% to avoid over-exploitation of the resource whilst the same argument was used in October to torpedo the joint ventures. That is confusing because there is no evidence that the resource is in danger of being over-exploited. The Commonwealth seems to be wanting to reduce industry effort in the Northern Territory fisheries because it fears the unknown. Normally, a fear of the unknown is not necessarily a bad thing, particularly when environmental issues are at stake. In this case, however, the raw data was available to the Commonwealth. There should have been no unknowns and no guesswork. We have offered to help the Commonwealth keep its database up to date. It cannot even decide whether or not to take up that most reasonable offer.

The Territory government firmly believes that the potential exists for this relatively large offshore fishing industry to be of major benefit to our economy, given the chance. Unfortunately, the major decisions on the future of this industry rest with the federal government and, in the current situation, we are unable to gain a clear picture of where it is going. I hope to be meeting with the federal Minister for Industries and Energy, Hon John Kerin, when I visit Canberra in January. I would hope that any discussions which I have with him at that time may lead to an improvement in the position, particularly in terms of the degree of communication, so that the Commonwealth will consider the Territory's views on the fisheries issues which directly affect us. We, in turn, can gain a better understanding of the direction the federal government is taking. Only through developing such a cooperative approach can we hope to maximise the potential of our northern fisheries for the benefit of all Australians.

This government seeks to develop our offshore fishery. We also seek to develop land-based fish-processing operations in the Northern Territory. We believe that the benefits of this would flow directly to our economy. Fish-processing operations would provide employment and attract more vessels to Darwin, thus providing work for our ship maintenance facilities and also creating a demand for victualling, refuelling and other services. The potential benefits to the Territory are considerable.

I call upon the opposition to support the Northern Territory's case in dealing with the Commonwealth in relation to offshore fishing agreements. The Leader of the Opposition was not reticent in visiting Canberra last week to take up a non-issue. Let us hope that he will take up this cause and inform the federal government and his Labor Party colleagues of the benefits which the Northern Territory might derive from its fishery and from the development of onshore processing.

Mr Speaker, I move that the Assembly take note of the statement.

Mr EDE (Stuart): Mr Speaker, I would like to place on record the fact that I do not believe in fee-based fishing. If I had anything to do with it, it would not occur. The lousy \$1m which is derived from it is not worth while. If I had my way, I would want the whole catch to be processed in Australia, initially through joint venture partnerships which would help us to gain the necessary expertise about the processes and markets so that, gradually, we would see the involvement of Australian firms operating efficiently and supplying a top quality value-added product to world markets.

Mr Perron: You will go downhill from here, I guess.

Mr EDE: In your eyes maybe.

I wanted to place my view on record before I enumerate some of the mistakes and misinterpretations which were contained in the minister's statement. The product has to be top-grade. We do not want the Australian fishing industry to have the reputation of producing a second-class product. We do not want low returns to the local industry because particular enterprises have been cobbled together to look like joint ventures when, in fact, a deeper look at their structures shows that the benefits of their operations go offshore. In a previous occupation, I had some involvement with the negotiation of joint venture fishing deals. I must say that overseas negotiators were pretty hard to deal with. The Japanese were hard enough but at least they consider that a deal is a deal. When you reach a deal with the Americans, they seem to view that as the starting point for negotiations.

The minister said that the Commonwealth's decision on the award of quotas is inconsistent with the stated priorities. That is wrong. Any tender is objectively assessed on the basis of competence, capacity and interest in developing the low-value resource. On the evidence which they themselves presented, some of the joint venturers did not exhibit a real likelihood of success. The people to whom I have spoken have said that, when they develop further proposals for consideration next April, they will ensure that all areas are covered.

If there is a low probability of success or of a worthwhile return to Australia, it is fairly understandable that the federal government rejects proposals. In this case, it reduced the fee-paying quota and reduced the term from the previous 3 years to 1 year, thus ensuring that there would be flexibility and an opportunity for the joint venturers to overcome the difficulties identified in this year's proposals and to submit new proposals next year. I hope that, having done that, they will succeed next year. The Fishing Industry Council recognised the common sense and inherent logic of that approach and, in stark contrast to the approach taken by the new boy over there, the oncer minister, they welcomed the approach adopted by the Australian Fishing Service.

Members interjecting.

Mr EDE: I understand that one bid was made by Seanorth Pty Ltd, which is a joint venture between a Thai concern and Offshore Fisheries in Winnellie. Another bid came from Tai-Aust Oceanic, a joint venture between the Taiwanese and unknown local persons. I hear that the nominal shareholders are James Noonan, a solicitor, and a Raymond Dalton. Rumour has it that the actual persons fronting it are close to the CLP government which may or may not indicate why the minister is speaking out so much on the matter.

Mr Perron: Is that what you call a fair evaluation?

Mr EDE: Mr Speaker, it is not a fair evaluation. I am wondering whether it is an evaluation of the reason the minister has for jumping in on the issue now.

The Department of Fisheries in Fujian Province in China also wanted to be involved in exchange for the supply of scientists to the Fishing Industries Council Tiwi Land Council aquaculture venture. A fourth joint venture application came from Kailis Kaohsiung, involving Michael Kailis from Western Australia and the Taiwanese.

We accept that Tai-Aust Oceanic claimed in its proposal that a plant would be established here. It has been stated publicly that the percentage of the catch which would have been processed in that plant was not 50%, not 20%, but 1%. I heard that it was to be doubled next year, which would have made it 2%. Isn't that fantastic? The honourable minister opposite may think that that is a genuine joint venture with genuine commitment to the Northern Territory, but I would have some doubts. I would want to negotiate with a company which would process a substantial proportion of its catch here so that it could be developed into a major industry.

It has been admitted by the minister that Seanorth has the runs on the board and was clearly in compliance with the criteria in securing some further allowable catch. I would also argue that the proposal by the Fishing Industries Council, the Tiwi Land Council venture, is worthy of support. It is likely to generate a new industry which would not only add to the Territory's productive capacity but also enhance Aboriginal economic independence. I am sorry that the minister did not mention it. I think it is a good proposal and the Fishing Industry Council is talking about reworking it to remedy the problems that it admits existed with it. It will be putting together another application next year.

Mr Coulter: Everybody gets another go.

Mr EDE: Everybody gets another go. That is why the period was reduced from 3 years to 1 year.

Mr Smith: Don't they know anything about it?

Mr EDE: Obviously not. If they knew something about it, they would contribute to the debate. If they know nothing, they simply interject.

An objective observer listening to the minister's statement would have to form the view that the minister's puerile attempt at bashing the Commonwealth is sour grapes and that he is miffed because a particular project, based on narrow commercial interest, missed out. That seems to concern him more than the importance of giving some support to other applications.

When he spoke about the reduction in the total allowable catch, he was up the creek again. The notion that the federal government reduced the total allowable quota by an arbitrary 35% to 22 000 t while ignoring available log book catch data for 3 years is pure and utter bunk. Although it is true that log book data was not used, the same figures were provided by the monthly returns, which were used. The decision to vary the quota was the subject of extensive telephone conferencing between the Bureau of Rural Resources, the local and federal fisheries departments and the CSIRO. As the minister knows, the professional scientists were uneasy about the previous level of exploitation. The decision was based on scientific evidence which suggests that further reduction in the allowable catch may be required in future years.

That also is a fact that people in the industry need to know. That is why it is essential that we work short periods. It is a legislative requirement on the federal minister that he has to adopt a conservative approach to the management of the resource, and that is something that I applaud. I would not want us to be going hammer and tongs at the resource at the moment. I would not like to develop real joint venture involvement, as opposed to an operation that would make 1% of its catch available, and then find that we have ripped the guts out of the resource and fish were not there in sufficient numbers for commercial utilisation.

It is obvious from the approach taken by the minister on the determination of the quota that the allegation about lack of consultation is simply false. I am advised that the Australian Fishing Service was regularly involved, throughout the whole process, in telephone discussions with the local department and that its officers spoke very often with a Mr Dillon and a Mr Blake.

Mr Reed: Long time issues.

Mr EDE: There were also discussions between the 2 ministers' offices.

Mr Reed: One way.

Mr EDE: If the honourable minister is absolutely unable to put his case over a telephone, I would suggest that he not wait until January but hop on a plane as soon as Mr Kerin is back. It is obvious that he is unable to get his point of view across if he sits in here and whinges and whines about consultation being one way. He is supposed to be a big boy now. He is supposed to be a minister; he is not a backbencher any longer but he still sits on the outside and whinges and whines. If he is having some problems, he should get in there and deal with them. He should not simply accept his department's advice, as he does on everything else. He should get in there and argue. As far as the federal government is concerned, there was consultation. It talked. If the minister was unable to talk back, if he simply stood there and said, 'Yes, Mr Kerin, no Mr Kerin, 3 bags full Mr Kerin', he cannot whinge and say that the federal government did not consult with him. What more does he want?

Territory officials participated in each meeting involving relevant potential venturers. The allegation that Territory submissions were ignored is false and should be retracted by the honourable minister. For a start, each was acknowledged in writing. The submission in favour of Tai-Aust Oceanic was given very active consideration and the notion that it was completely disregarded is absolute nonsense. In fact, a draft memorandum was prepared as a record of a very complex meeting. That contained so many blank spaces that no serious operator in the commercial world would treat it as anything more than a very rough outline to assist in potential further discussion.

We have seen the problem that the honourable minister had in the pearling industry when he received a paper with all sorts of crossings-out and annotations and accepted that as constituting an agreement. The federal government does not operate like that. It does not accept that a draft agreement is the same as a record of a very complex meeting. The details have to be hammered out and I would presume that, during the next few months preceding the next round of discussions, enterprises will review their proposals in the light of problems identified at the federal level and, hopefully, will come up with practical proposals next year which will give us

some very real benefits. Such proposals need to contain definite indications that they wish to seriously move from fee-fishing operations, in which they shove the product into mother ships and send it overseas, to establish operations here and to produce a quality product which will bring real benefits to the Northern Territory. That is what we want, Mr Speaker, not a minister who tries to make political capital out of an issue which he has not bloody worked his way through. We do not want these 1% deals; we want somebody who is talking about ...

Mr SPEAKER: Order! the member will withdraw that language.

Mr EDE: I did not notice the language, Mr Speaker. However, I will certainly withdraw any remark which inadvertently slipped through.

Members on this side of the House want genuine joint venture proposals which will seriously address the issues of quality and access to markets, and will bring the catch ashore so that it can be processed in the Northern Territory with a very real involvement of Northern Territorians. We do not want phony operations. We do not want proposals which are cobbled together at the last moment but which actually entail the ripping off of the resource. We want proposals which will ensure that Territorians will ultimately benefit. As a result of our association with overseas enterprises, we want to develop further expertise in areas such as aquaculture. That is what we propose and that is what we will support.

Mr Coulter: Then how come you said exactly the opposite?

Mr EDE: Mr Speaker, I hope that the Minister for Mines and Energy will speak in this debate because he has been allowed to interject extremely noisily. I welcome his interjections because they show us - as if we needed to be shown - what a complete failure he is.

Mr Coulter: How come you did exactly the opposite of what you said? That is all I want to know.

Mr EDE: Obviously, the minister will rise to point out to me where I did exactly the opposite because ...

Mr Coulter: You would not know because it is not written in your speech.

Mr EDE: Mr Speaker, I will now sit down and let the honourable minister have that pleasure. I am sure that he will now stand up and clarify the matter.

Mr PERRON (Chief Minister): Mr Speaker, I was more than disappointed when I heard the federal minister's decision, following the federal government's invitation for applications from companies wishing to take a portion of tonnage in from northern Australian waters. At the time when this invitation was issued, I held the fisheries portfolio and was quite closely involved in the process. As honourable members are probably aware, the Commonwealth took the sensible step of producing a set of guidelines. Those guidelines, which were issued in May or June, listed the sort of criteria which had to be fulfilled by companies which seriously wanted to be considered in terms of operating in northern Australian waters. The Northern Territory has a very real interest in this matter because of its extensive area of northern coastline. We obviously hope that vessels will be based in Darwin and that the local economy will benefit in terms of employment on crews, the provision of onshore processing operations, vessel maintenance and so on. The

guidelines were quite compatible with the notion of downstream processing of primary produce which is part of this government's philosophy.

The Commonwealth's new guidelines on the processing of fishing licence applications were very welcome. The first criterion was that Australian ventures and Australian vessels would receive first preference. No one could possibly disagree with that. The resource within our 200-mile economic zone belongs to Australians first, and so it should. Obviously, however, given that Australia does not have a great historical involvement in the business of fishing, the Commonwealth's second preference was for joint venture arrangements wherein an Australian company enters into partnership with an overseas company. The vessels may be foreign or Australian-owned and manned. The third preference, very much the bottom of the list, is for fee-fishing foreign ventures. In other words, the companies pay an upfront fee for their licence or their right to catch fish and are able to do what they like with the catch.

The guidelines also contained the statement that, in dealing with applications, the Commonwealth would assess the economic benefit to Australia. What is really quite astounding about the Commonwealth's decisions is that, despite telling all the applicants about the rules well in advance, it has offered a significant amount of the allowable catch to companies in the third category; that is, foreign fishing arrangements which will bring miniscule economic benefits to Australia. I understand that at least 1 applicant will conduct an operation similar to those which have been conducted in our waters for 10 years. It will use foreign vessels, foreign crews and mother ships which will take the catch back to an overseas country. The economic benefit to Australia will be virtually zilch although, no doubt, if the ships happen to enter an Australian port, 1 or 2 people may be involved in fuelling and victualling them. In many cases, however, the vessels will be maintained more cheaply overseas than in a place like Darwin and, indeed, they can be victualled from mother ships.

I think we have had enough of overseas vessels with foreign crews exploiting our resource. That has been happening for at least 10 years off the Northern Territory coast. The resource has been taken away with no pressure whatsoever on the companies involved to carry out some onshore processing. One would have thought that that should have occurred by now but that has not occurred except in the case of 1 applicant. It is very pleasing to see that Seanorth, a joint venture involving Darwin business people and Taiwanese business people, has had its licence renewed. That is indeed appropriate. Seanorth has rented a fish factory in Darwin. It employs staff and it has conducted trial marketing programs during the last couple of years. It has sent consignments of fish to the United States and the Middle East. It has concentrated primarily on supplying high-value products, such as snapper, into the high-price markets. Clearly, with cost structures like ours and very long distances to markets, we need handsome prices for our product. In addition to its marketing campaign, Seanorth has made considerable inroads into the pet food industry. It sends much of its lower-value product to pet food manufacturers in Australia. I also believe that, in its current application, Seanorth included proposals for further research into the manufacture of fish balls and light manufactured products for the Australian market in places like Melbourne.

It is very appropriate that Seanorth had its licence renewed. Of course, that did not go without a hitch either. Very sadly, despite the fact that the Commonwealth had the entire year to get its act together and despite the issuing of guidelines in the early half of the year, Seanorth's licence

expired on 30 September. It put a great deal of work into its detailed application to the Commonwealth, setting out its new plans for research and marketing. Its Darwin factory was already up and running. There was therefore no question as to whether or not Seanorth intended to operate. However, it had to sit around waiting for advice as to whether or not its licence was to be renewed because of what one can only assume was incredible bureaucratic procrastination in Canberra. As well as having to watch its current licence expire, the company had to wait for 25 days before it was permitted to send its vessels to sea and start fishing again. That is astounding. The company claims that the cost was in the vicinity of \$48 000 per day. I could not verify that. It sounds like a lot of money to me but I know that several fully-crewed vessels were waiting in Darwin during the whole of that period. They could not be whipped back to Thailand overnight.

In Seanorth's negotiations with Commonwealth officers, it had been told that everything was pretty sweet, that it had done the right thing and would have its licence renewed. Seanorth kept saying: 'That is fantastic. Where is it?' The Commonwealth made Seanorth sit and sweat for 25 days. It is a wonder that companies from overseas even want to do business with Australia when they are treated like that. Even in the case of Seanorth, the one it got right, the Commonwealth got it wrong in terms of the way it dealt with the matter. At least, it could have made people feel welcome and tried to help the organisation to get on its feet and get on with the job. After all, it is doing things that no one else has done before.

My main bitch about the whole affair is the fact that the Commonwealth has rejected a number of joint venture applications. It passed over them and entered into an agreement with a fee-fishing venture. That action should be condemned by everybody in this Assembly, including the members opposite. Even if we agree that some of the joint venture applicants might have found it a little difficult to build a factory in the second or third year of their operations, and most were asking for 5-year licences, they still should have received better consideration. They were expected to put in considerable onshore infrastructure. I know that one company was talking about putting several millions of dollars into a factory, including the sophisticated fish-processing equipment that is available today. Given that, it would obviously have sought a licence for a reasonable period in order to recover some of those funds because there is no guarantee that a further licence would be awarded at the end of the period. That is why it applied for a 5-year licence.

The Commonwealth has set such operations aside, despite the fact that I know that one organisation intended to spend \$0.25m in year 1 on market research to establish exactly what products it could sell in order to design its onshore processing operation. That did not seem unreasonable to me, but we were told that the Commonwealth had decided that these things were a bit uncertain and that it was not quite convinced that the organisation would proceed with what it said it would do. It thought it safer to issue a 1-year fee-fishing licence.

That is appalling and it disappoints me because I have always had considerable time for Minister Kerin. I have met him on a number of occasions and done business with him as a minister, in quite a reasonable manner, on a number of matters, not the least of which was the BTEC program, which is very topical these days in the Territory. I can only put his decision on this matter down to the fact that he has an awesome portfolio. He is looking after the whole of the Australian coal industry and other areas that must cause him considerable heartache. I suppose that some of the matters he has to deal

with would tend to attract his attention much more easily than the half dozen fishing licences to be issued in respect of operations in Northern Territory waters. Apart from that, however, there is no reason whatsoever why the federal fisheries authorities could not have had their act together better, from start to finish.

There is no reason why the applications could not have been processed according to the Commonwealth's own published guidelines and why rather more sympathy could not have been shown at least to those joint venture operations which included an Australian partner and which included plans to service or at least provision vessels in Darwin. That has to be of some economic benefit to us. It seems, however, that such considerations were put to one side in favour of the very simple fee-fishing arrangement which has been operating for 10 years. That decision has set us back 12 months. Even if the Commonwealth corrects the situation in a year's time - and let us hope that it will do so - we have lost 12 months in which we could have been getting on with the job and seeing the establishment of another fish factory in Darwin employing local people and helping establish the Northern Territory as a significant port for the fishing industry. That is what should happen and we are determined that it will happen.

Unfortunately, the Northern Territory fishery is under the control of the federal government because it is an offshore fishery. We have limited authority. However, the offshore constitutional arrangements between the Commonwealth and the states are supposed to provide that the Commonwealth and the states administer their respective fisheries in consultation with one another. In this case, however, the Northern Territory government was not even advised of who all the applicants were even at the time when the minister announced his decision on the awarding of licences. That is appalling and the Australian Fishing Service deserves to be condemned for it.

Mr HATTON (Nightcliff): Mr Speaker, I rise to support the statement by the Minister for Primary Industry and Fisheries. In doing so, I am not in any way required or expected to act as an apologist for the federal Minister for Primary Industry and Energy. Equally, I have neither the access nor the desire to have the access to have my speeches on ministerial statements prepared by the Australian Fishing Service and faxed to Darwin as, quite obviously, the member for Stuart has. From personal experience, I know that he knows nothing about fishing, the fishing industry or fishing industry developments here and, quite clearly, his speech was prepared in the minister's office in Canberra and faxed here in order to offer some excuse as to why the process was mucked up. I was thinking of another term there which would be highly unparliamentary.

Mr Bell: In the extreme.

Mr HATTON: Yes, and I therefore would not use it, Mr Speaker.

I would like to begin by saying that I spent some time sitting on a federal organisation known as the Economic Planning Advisory Council. In spite of all its difficulties, one the things it has achieved over the years is to crystallise a number of key issues in terms of where Australia needs to go. The evidentiary material has been available, but EPAC has crystallised it and set many economic objectives for Australia. One of those objectives - one which is quite critical and has been accepted by the federal government, state governments and all major groups of the community in Australia - is that we must aim to maximise the value-added processing of our raw materials so that we can expand manufacturing industry in Australia. That is the area in which

there has been the greatest growth in world trade and that is the area in which, during the last 20 to 30 years, Australia has fallen down most. We have tended to concentrate on the export of our raw product and have not sought to develop a value-added, manufactured component. Everybody accepts that and it is virtually a motherhood issue. That, as much as anything else, is the nub of this debate.

I would remind honourable members of the study of the Northern Territory fishing industry, conducted in 1984-85, which led to a report which has become known as the Norgaard Report. I had the privilege of being Minister for Ports and Fisheries at that time and was very closely involved in the development of that study and the implementation of some of its recommendations in terms of directions for the industry. It also gave me the opportunity to obtain a good understanding of the economic dynamics of the fishing industry.

Mr Firmin: It is time we brought it back to have a look.

Mr HATTON: The member for Ludmilla will be pleased to know that, not only is the report well and truly in the focus of government but a number of its recommendations have already been implemented. It is absolutely important that we aim to have the catch processed onshore in the Territory and this year's budget has begun to address that with the next stage of development of the onshore facilities associated with the fishing harbour at East Arm.

The fishing industry has an unbelievably good multiplier effect. With some industries, we talk of multipliers of 2, 2.5, and 3 whereas the land-based component of the fishing industry has a multiplier effect of between 7 and 10. Fully developed fisheries, such as those that I have seen in Denmark and other places in northern Europe, as well as in Alaska which is probably 8 years ahead of us now, clearly show that each job at sea creates another 7 jobs onshore.

We have talked in this House many times about increasing job opportunities, building population and developing a wealth-creating industrial base for the Northern Territory economy. We have a great resource available immediately offshore. The demersal catch is located in 2 principal grounds. One is immediately north of Gove and stretches in an east-west direction from the centre of the Gulf of Carpentaria across to the vicinity of Elcho Island in a fairly narrow band. The other, of course, is in the area of the North-west Shelf. Over 50% of the demersal trawl catch is available in that area north of the Northern Territory coastline. The Norgaard Report identified that quite clearly.

We have done extensive work on the identification of marketing opportunities for the wide variety of species in the trawl catch. Work is being done on the handling of product. During the last 3 years, Seanorth has produced good results both in terms of processing and in the marketing of a wide range of products, including new species, within Australia and overseas. We will not gain real benefits, however, unless we have a much greater proportion of the total catch processed onshore. The Chief Minister, in his former portfolio of Industries and Development, certainly took up the cudgels on this matter early this year when he pressed that point with the federal government. In fact, he gained its support in May this year when it finally moved to ensure that fishing agreements with foreign concerns had to put some value into the onshore industry here.

I well remember the 1985 negotiations. I well remember the negotiations to get the Seanorth joint venture going and I remember the political acrimony

that we suffered from AFIC and, in particular the then President of AFIC, one Eddie Kemp. There were accusations of piracy on the high seas and the nonsensical political debate included tales of gun-toting fishermen roaming the waters of Australia. AFIC supported the extension of bilateral fishing agreements rather than a joint venture enterprise.

The joint venture was eventually put in place and has been a great success. It is developing well. The only comment that I have is that the renewed licence is for a 3-year period only and, quite frankly, if we are to ask joint venturers and fishing companies to develop onshore facilities and invest onshore, we must give them a reasonable period of time in which to obtain a return on their investment. I do not know of any business, let alone one operating in a pioneer industry, which can expect to obtain a decent return on its investment in a period as short as 3 years. It takes a minimum of 5 years and probably 10 years and there is a need for some form of guarantee that, if performance is suitable, further licences will be available. Such a guarantee would certainly provide a major incentive in encouraging genuine onshore investment and in developing onshore resources to support the fishing industry and I would ask the minister to take the matter up with some seriousness.

In 1985, Kailis Kaohsiung was being badgered to become a joint venture with onshore facilities in Australia rather than operating under a bilateral agreement with the catch being processed elsewhere. It was hoped that we could begin to develop some onshore benefits through the processing of our fish resource. There were positive indications and some undertakings were given. However, it is now 1988 and we have come no further. What has the federal government done, not only in the last few months but in the last 3 years, to get these fee-paying fishermen to put something back into Australia? All they have been doing is ripping out our resources and whipping them straight back to Taiwan into their own markets with virtually nil benefit to Australia. Now, 2 new licences have been issued on the same basis, with resources being taken from northern Australian waters as a foreign product, with all the benefits flowing to Taiwan or China. That is not what the development of our fishing industry should be about.

It is about time the Australian government started to practise what it preaches in its economic thrust. This is a classic example of its failure to do that and I fully support the criticisms which the Chief Minister has made of the federal government. It has had months to work on these agreements and has done nothing. It says that it will think about the matter again next year and perhaps sort it out in 12 months time. Lord knows what will happen then.

I would like to turn to the matter of the total available catch for 2 reasons. Firstly, the member for Stuart, in his prepared speech from Canberra, spoke of a fear that the resource would be depleted. Under the normal processes of assessment, there is a way of actually determining that. The daily returns are analysed to work out the catch per unit of effort. If that begins to decline, it can be assumed that the resource is being depleted faster than it can be replenished through natural breeding. If the catch is consistent, it can reasonably be assumed that what is being taken is not in excess of the replacement rate and that the resource is therefore not under pressure. Obviously, an analysis of results is required to make such judgments. I am advised that there is no indication of any reduction in the catch per unit effort. I am also advised that there is no such thing as a monthly return. There are only daily logs and, as the minister says, they have not yet been put on computer and have therefore not been analysed. The only work which has been done has not shown any reductions and there is therefore no evidence to suggest that the resource is under any threat.

The reference to a reduction by 35% is a continuation of the sort of nonsense we went through with respect to the pearl fishery resource when the allowable catch was reduced to 50 000 shells when, for 50 years, the resource had been harvested at 10 times that rate without any indication of a serious decline. All that indicated was that the federal government was too lazy to do its homework and therefore imposed artificial restrictions that are so low that it cannot possibly be wrong in terms of overestimating. That is exactly what is being done with the demersal fishery here.

The Norgaard Report states that up to 70 000 t per year could be taken from the entire northern fishery. Although that includes crustaceans, prawns and the pelagic fishery, the amount is certainly well above 22 500 t. Although the member for Stuart thinks that 1% of that sort of volume is insignificant, it actually represents 225 t of fish. I would like to see the number of jobs which would be created by the onshore processing of that volume of fish. Indeed, I would like to see it doubled to 500 t in the next year, perhaps 650 t the year after and 1000 t the year after. That is a logical way to develop a fishery: to develop the resources and the processing and distribution techniques to successfully enter into new markets. A joint venture proposal was rejected because it proposed to do that with 1% of the catch. That, however, is much more than nothing, which is the outcome of the Commonwealth's decision.

This whole thing is a nonsense. The Commonwealth has done nothing for years. It has pandered to the various competing interest groups in the fisheries area and they are making a dog's breakfast of the whole matter. Quite frankly, the great shame in relation to the northern fishery is that a decision had not been made to allow the areas to be managed by the state authorities. There are ways in which the demersal fishery, the pelagic fishery, the prawn fishery and the oyster fishery could be successfully managed by the states and the Northern Territory without cross-border conflicts because they happen to be discrete grounds. That, however, is too hard for the Commonwealth. More importantly, it indicates that there is no need for the Commonwealth to take the leading role and an admission that that is the case would detract from its centralist drive to control every element of resource throughout this country.

There are better ways of managing the resource. There are great potential benefits for the Northern Territory and Australia. This fishery can become a \$500m a year industry for the Northern Territory if it is fully developed with full processing operations. However, it will not get to first base while we continue to enter agreements with fee-paying joint ventures which do no more than pay the wages and direct costs of running the policing role which oversees the rape of our fishery by foreigners.

Mr REED (Primary Industry and Fisheries): Mr Speaker, I thank honourable members for their contributions, although there was not much to be gained from that of the member for Stuart. Certainly, there was not a great deal of fact in what he had said. I guess we would agree with his support for joint ventures which he stated as one of the opening shots in his speech. Unfortunately, from that moment on, he was all at sea and very little of what he said related to the facts.

It is interesting to note that Seanorth started off at 100 t per year and progressed to 600 t in its fourth year. The member for Stuart criticised the Tai-Aust Oceanic proposal on the basis that it would allegedly produce very few benefits in the first year. The member for Stuart has to realise that we are talking about an industry that takes a long while to develop. It is a

high cost, high risk industry. If we do not provide, in the first instance, an opportunity for operators to establish and develop the fishery, we will never get anywhere. The simple fact of life is that it takes time.

Seanorth has a market in the Middle East which takes 800 t per year and another in Europe which takes several hundred tonnes. But what happened in October? Its boats were tied up for 25 days and that cost something in the order of \$48 000 per day. We must bear in mind that Seanorth is the only joint venture company operating in Australia today and that is after 10 years of Commonwealth involvement in the fishing industry. For the Commonwealth, in considering the issuing of licences, to put companies to such unnecessary expense and to cause a loss of production for that period of time is an absolute disgrace. We will never get anywhere with our fishery if we continue to operate in that way. It is clear from the Commonwealth's performance over the last 10 years that we will not achieve any further development of our fisheries if it continues to be involved and ignores the states and the Territory in this regard.

The Tai-Aust Oceanic proposal was very similar to the Seanorth proposal of several years ago. For its first year, its take was to be 100 t landed in Darwin. To complement that, it was to undertake a major survey to determine the amount of trawlable ground and to assess the potential of our industry. We would have derived considerable benefit from those activities and there is no denying that we would have achieved much more than we will through the fee-fishing agreements which have been entered into.

I will briefly describe the details of the fee-fishing agreements. The Chinese fee-fishing arrangement will bring to Australia \$300 000 a year for 4800 t of catch and the KKFC fee-fishing arrangement will reap \$650 000 for a 9000 t catch. The Tai-Aust Oceanic joint venture, on the other hand, would have established a base in Darwin. It intended, in the first year or so, to begin planning for processing plants and land-based operations. That would have been of much greater benefit than the fee-fishing agreements, particularly taking into account the surveys that Tai-Aust Oceanic would have undertaken, even in the first year of its operations.

Mr Speaker, we heard from the member for Stuart about the fishing industry ...

Mr SMITH: Mr Speaker, I draw your attention to the state of the House.

Mr SPEAKER: A quorum is not present. Ring the bells.

Bells rung.

Mr SPEAKER: A quorum is now present. The honourable minister.

Mr REED: Thank you, Mr Speaker. That clearly illustrates the position of the opposition. It will do anything to create a diversion in order to draw interest away from the business at hand and to relieve its own embarrassment.

We did learn something from the member for Stuart today, something which clearly illustrates that the Northern Territory government was never consulted on this issue to the extent that it should have been. The member for Stuart told us that a joint venture application was submitted involving a Chinese concern and the Tiwi people. This is the first time we have heard of such a proposal and that illustrates the lack of consultation on the part of the Commonwealth. It is deplorable.

I now turn to the reduction in TACs. We were advised by the member for Stuart that data from log books is not needed to determine the reduction in the Total Allowable Catch and that other information could be used. The only other possible source of information is 2-day and 6-day radio reports. These are of no scientific value. They are used only for administrative purposes. One can only assume, however, that they provided the basis for the Commonwealth decision to reduce the TAC by 35%. Those reports are useless in terms of providing a scientific basis for information. Log books are filled in progressively as the boats trawl and the data is used for the management of the resource. The Commonwealth did not use that information. There could be no better illustration of the problem and that has been recognised. At a scientific meeting in Canberra last week, the CSIRO criticised the Australian Fishing Service for not using that information. The fact is that the Total Allowable Catch was reduced on no scientific basis whatsoever.

The member for Stuart does not have a clue about this subject. It is a new-found interest. We learned only last week that he is the shadow spokesman for Primary Industry and Fisheries. He took no interest in the matter when the Seanorth boats were tied up at the Darwin Wharf losing \$48 000 a day. That did not concern him. Today, he clearly illustrated his lack of interest in the fishery and his lack of knowledge of it.

The member for Stuart said that the Northern Territory government was involved in the consideration of all proposals. That is wrong. We were involved only in negotiations in relation to Seanorth and Tai-Aust Oceanic. There were 4 joint venture applications and 2 fee-fishing applications in relation to which we were not consulted. I do not know where the member for Stuart received his information, but it is wrong. The sooner he realises that, the better. The sooner he informs his compatriots in Canberra of that, the better off we will all be.

Tai-Aust Oceanic had 2 officer-level meetings in Canberra in relation to its application. After substantial exchanges, the meetings led to a draft memorandum of understanding on 30 August. That was the end of the consultation. Tai-Aust Oceanic heard nothing more until it was advised that its application had been unsuccessful. If that is the way to attract joint ventures to Australia, to expand our fishing industry and to develop onshore processing operations in the Territory, I do not know how we are going to succeed.

I indicated earlier that the establishment of a fishing industry will only come about as the culmination of long-term strategies. A very high capital investment is required to establish a fishing fleet in these waters. The catch has to be developed and markets have to be found. In the short term, only low quantities will be turned off through the Port of Darwin. The majority of product has to be sold overseas in order to produce the cash flow required to allow companies to operate and to generate sufficient income to enable them to develop shore-based operations here. Over a period of time, the sale of product overseas gives operators the ability to increase the size of catches sufficiently to sustain local markets and to establish local processing plants.

We finally received a copy of the Chinese fee-fishing agreement late last week. The department received a copy of the agreement after requesting that it be faxed here. That again illustrates the lack of consultation and the lack of cooperation between the Commonwealth and the Territory which has had such a dreadful impact on our joint venture arrangement and on our ability to establish onshore processing operations in Darwin.

The Seanorth joint venture will have a catch quote of 5850 t of prime demersal raw fish, not the low-quality fish alluded to by the member for Stuart. We are in a position to produce good quality fish. Some species are new to the market but that should not inhibit our efforts. The problem is one of marketing, one which provides us with ...

Mr Coulter: A challenge.

Mr REED: Exactly. It provides us with a challenge and an opportunity to get into new and perhaps more lucrative markets.

The Seanorth venture will involve up to 16 trawlers and 3 carrier vessels. They alone will work out of Darwin. They will provide the Northern Territory with opportunities for economic development through the employment of local people and through the adding of value to our fish production. I have already alluded to the quantities of fish and the access to markets which the company has achieved.

The Kailis Kaohsiung fee-fishing agreement was issued contrary to established policy. The Department of Primary Industry and Fisheries was not consulted by the Commonwealth in relation to the proposal. It was signed by the Commonwealth minister on 31 October 1988 and the agreement provides for a catch of 9000 t of demersal trawl fish. The fee for that will be in the order of \$60 000 per year, an amount which goes straight to the Commonwealth government with minimal benefit to Australia. The agreement provides for the licensing of up to 30 pairs of Taiwanese trawlers - that is, 60 vessels. The Commonwealth has also advised, as I have indicated, that there will be an arrangement with the People's Republic of China for fee-fishing. This is thought to involve a quota of some 4800 t of demersal trawl fish with a licence for up to 8 Chinese stern trawlers. The benefit that Australia will derive is a mere \$300 000.

It is an absolute disgrace that members opposite have stated that they support the fee-fishing arrangements for this year. Those agreements will set back our fishing industry for at least another 12 months. Of course, the impact will be much greater than that. It will take a number of years for us to realise benefits which could have been realised much earlier. Seanorth has indicated that it intends to expand its operations and Tai-Aust Oceanic indicated that it wished to move into land-based operations which would have created particular benefits for the Northern Territory.

The member for Stuart and the Leader of the Opposition should be absolutely ashamed of themselves for not taking the opportunity to lobby the Commonwealth to issue another joint venture licence a few weeks ago when the Seanorth boats were tied up in Darwin Harbour. Last week, the Leader of the Opposition headed for Canberra, like a sucker fish on a whale, to lobby a federal minister for no benefit to the Northern Territory. All he was doing was attempting to obstruct a perfectly good scheme and to dodge the business of this House and his duty to represent his constituents. The opposition's performance is an absolute disgrace. I call on members opposite to lobby the federal minister and to ensure that we have the ability to establish fish processing operations and downstream manufacture of the product in the Northern Territory which can only benefit us. We will never achieve such benefits through fee-fishing arrangements.

Motion agreed to.

MATTER OF PUBLIC IMPORTANCE
Refusal to Appoint Women's Advisor

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

Dear Mr Speaker,

Pursuant to standing order No 95, I propose for discussion, as a definite matter of public importance, the following matter: the indifference of this government to the status of women and the limitations placed on their access to government by the Chief Minister's refusal to appoint a Women's Advisor.

Yours sincerely,
Terry Smith
Leader of the Opposition.

Is the proposed discussion supported? It is supported.

Mr SMITH (Opposition Leader): Mr Speaker, the decision by the Chief Minister not to replace the recently-resigned Women's Advisor has caused an enormous furore amongst women right throughout the Northern Territory. I guess the most visible demonstration of that furore was the crowd that gathered at Brown's Mart with the specific purpose of hearing the Chief Minister explain the reasons behind his decision. What staggered the women who attended that meeting or certainly the majority of them - those who were not brought there by the Chief Minister himself - was not only the way the Chief Minister attempted to justify that particular decision but his general attitude. In the view of the majority of the women present, it was an attitude of contempt and disregard for the opinions of more than half of the population.

That attitude cannot be tolerated in today's society and women have good reason to be concerned. The depth of that concern is enormous and now extends well and truly beyond the people who attended the meeting at Brown's Mart on 17 November. People from all over the Northern Territory are angry, and they are not only women. For example, a large percentage of the people who have signed the petition that I tabled this morning are men. Whether they be men or women, they are concerned about the status of women in our society and the access those women have to government. They want to ensure that the needs of women are continually taken into account by the government when it is addressing a whole range of issues. It is not enough to focus specifically on women's issues. What is important is informed comment on how any legislation, policy, planning and programs would impact on and meet the needs of all women, whether they live in urban or remote areas of the Territory, and whether it comes from an economic or a social development perspective. All of those issues are important.

Ideally, the most effective way for women to have that sort of representation is through a voice in Cabinet but unfortunately - and this in itself is an indictment of the current situation - there is no woman in Cabinet and there is only 1 woman in the Legislative Assembly.

Mr Coulter: How many are there from your party?

Mr SMITH: There are none from my party and that is an indictment of the way this parliament operates.

Given that there are no women ministers in the Northern Territory, it is important that there be a very close link between Cabinet and an adviser who is able to provide an appropriate perspective on how decisions will impact on women in the community. Obviously, this person would be employed to provide political advice, as do a number of ministerial staff. It is not appropriate to call on public servants to provide political advice, as the honourable Chief Minister apparently suggested at the meeting.

Mr Perron: Expand on that point.

Mr SMITH: I will in a minute.

The public service is supposed to operate on apolitical lines. It is interesting and instructive to contrast the attitude of the previous Chief Minister to this issue with that of the present Chief Minister. To his credit, the previous Chief Minister had a positive attitude towards the needs of women in our community. He had an active program of consultation with women in the community and was concerned about issues that vitally affect women. Let us not forget that it was the previous Chief Minister who set the wheels in motion which resulted in the domestic violence legislation that is to be tabled in this House this week, and all credit to him for that. He recognised that women had real and legitimate needs, not only in areas which might be said to particularly apply to them, such as domestic violence, but generally. He was aware of the contribution that women could make and the need to ensure that their views were adequately represented.

The present Chief Minister has demonstrated clearly that he does not wish to receive political advice on women's needs in the Northern Territory and obviously he considers women to be unimportant. He will pay the price at the next election because anyone with any sense will realise that it is suicidal to ignore the opinion of more than 50% of the Northern Territory population. It is a lesson that has been learnt in the rest of Australia. For example, it is a lesson that has been learnt by the Prime Minister who has appointed one of his own ministers to advise him on matters relevant to the status of women.

The current Chief Minister's decision has revealed not only his attitude to women, but his attitude towards public servants. By giving the Office of Women's Affairs direct access to himself, he has indicated clearly that public servants will be expected to provide him with political advice. Because of the Chief Minister's actions on this particular issue, public servants have been given the responsibility of providing political advice. That is certainly a matter of concern to this opposition.

A fascinating concept was put forward by the Chief Minister at the meeting: the so-called 'big P' and 'little p' principle of political advice. It is okay for 'little p' political advice, whatever that is, to be provided by public servants. The 'big P' political advice, as I understand this grand plan, is provided by the party. We therefore have a new definition of the role of public servants in the Northern Territory: to provide 'little p' political advice. I would like to know what happens to those public servants who provide 'little p' political advice that does not suit the 'big P' opposite, Marshall Perron. That is the problem when you become involved with 'little ps' and 'big Ps'.

Mr Perron: What do you call political advice?

Mr SMITH: That is the question that I want you to answer. What do you call political advice, and why are you expecting the public service to provide

'little p' political advice when we have prided ourselves, right throughout the Westminster system, on having a non-political public service?

Another very revealing comment made by the Chief Minister was that he expected the Women's Advisory Council to provide him with policy advice. Given the fact that all members of that council are employed in other full-time positions and meet only every 2 months, for which they receive a minimal sitting fee, the Chief Minister has revealed his support for the concept not of unpaid labour but underpaid labour.

Mr Coulter: Oh, come on!

Mr SMITH: Thank you. Keep on with your 'come on'. It is indicative of an attitude.

Mr Speaker, one does not expect to get advice in other areas from people who are paid a sitting fee to advise in a particular area. You pay people for that, and you pay them properly. For example, the Under Secretary of Treasury is paid an unknown sum of over \$100 000 a year, but to get advice on women's issues, the Chief Minister tells 12 hard-working women, who have full-time jobs, to come to Darwin. He gives them a sitting fee and tells them that they are to provide him with advice. That is indicative of an attitude and it is attitudes that we are talking about in this debate. What the Chief Minister is saying is that he expects the members of the Women's Advisory Council, who work for next to nothing to provide him with advice, to take on more work and provide him with more advice because of his failure to reappoint a Women's Advisor.

There is no doubt that, as a result of the Chief Minister's decision, the Office of Women's Affairs will be required to take on a heavier workload. The Chief Minister admitted publicly that he had yet to discuss this issue with the director of the office and that he would do so when she returned from recreation leave. That is another example of his attitude towards women, of keeping them in the dark and not consulting them on major decisions concerning what they will do in the public service and what their role is.

What does that mean, Mr Speaker? Given the fact that the unit is already minimally staffed, does he plan to try to overwork the current incumbents even further or will he give a commitment to create additional positions? No doubt, if additional positions are created, they will be at a level sufficiently low to enable him to economise on any investment in the area of women's issues. Already, this lack of real commitment has been demonstrated by the statistics on the employment levels of women in the Northern Territory Public Service. There has been some pretty amazing fiddling around with those figures. If you look at the figures as at 4 November 1988, 2 weeks ago, showing the number of male and female employees in departments, there are some startling revelations that clearly indicate this government's lack of commitment to equal opportunity for women. Listen to this, Mr Speaker: 59% of the public service are women.

Mr Perron: Does that mean we should reduce it?

Mr SMITH: The total numbers are not significant. The important thing is the levels at which the majority of women are employed. We all know that, to enable the public service to operate, a huge number of keyboard operators and clerks are required. These are usually classified at A5 level or below, earning less than \$24 000 a year, and women occupy 78% of those positions. In order to see what this government is really doing about providing

opportunities for women to acquire reasonable levels of income and to participate in the key areas of decision-making, we need to look at the other end of the scale. The best way to do this is to consider the executive level designations in the NTPS. Our calculations reveal that, throughout the public service, women occupy 23% of E level positions. Of those, women occupy 29% of positions in the E1 to E3 levels and in the top bracket, E4 and above, where the decisions are made in the public service, they occupy 9.7% of positions.

Mr McCarthy: You could be wrong.

Mr SMITH: I will accept 10%. I will not argue about that.

Mr McCarthy interjecting.

Mr SMITH: 10% at E4 and above.

I have a graph which dramatically illustrates the problem in the Northern Territory Public Service. The orange line represents the numbers of women in the service and the green line represents the men. It shows clearly that women are grossly over-represented at the lower levels and grossly under-represented at the higher levels. The government is failing to address that problem. A fair conclusion which can be drawn from studying this graph is that decisions affecting the lives of women - that is, more than 50% of the population - are being made without sufficient women occupying positions of power in the Northern Territory Public Service and without their having direct political access to the Office of the Chief Minister.

Members interjecting.

Mr SMITH: I hope that all these interjections are going into Hansard. I invite you to speak up so that they will be recorded and so that I can distribute them to women in the electorates of members opposite. I cannot think of a surer way of their losing votes than if they keep on saying the sorts of things they are saying.

Women need to be involved in the higher levels of decision-making and the only way that can be achieved is through an effective EEO program in the public service. Any government that is serious about equal opportunity for women would enshrine its principles in legislation and in public service rules. We do not have that. What we have is the Country Liberal Party's appalling record which I will now briefly refer to.

The Women's Advisor had to work - when there was a Women's Advisor - under the direction of 4 different Chief Ministers in 6 years. The government has failed, 12 months after the tabling of the report 'Women in Remote Areas' to bring it on for debate in this House. It has been forgotten for at least 12 months. Under the Chief Minister before last, a decision was made to relocate the Women's Advisor from his office into the office of a junior minister, giving a clear indication of the regard in which women were held at that stage. It has taken 5 years since the completion of the d'Abbs Report for domestic violence legislation to be introduced. It took 2 years for the government to make a decision to fund the Rape Crisis Centre. We still do not have a government policy on disability, and that is important for women because they tend to be the care-givers for the aged and disabled. We still do not have a policy on ethnic affairs, and that is important because women from different ethnic communities have particular needs in relation to different child-care practices, a lack of extended family systems and social and cultural isolation.

In summing up, it is clear that women cannot expect any real commitment from this government in addressing their needs. Women are aware of the tokenism that exists. They are fed up and they want real change. They are not impressed with a Chief Minister who is clearly out of touch. He does not even know how often gas and electricity bills come in. He leaves that to his wife or so he said on radio earlier this year. What is essential is the formulation of policies and the design of programs that would enshrine the principle that women should be treated as equal contributors to the economic development of the Northern Territory. Such programs should ensure that the skills of women are developed and acknowledged as important so that they can be utilised to the maximum capacity to the advantage of the Northern Territory.

I am not ashamed to say that the Labor Party is committed to ensuring that the status of women is upheld as a major thrust in a Labor government. We would do that by putting in place an office for the status of women which would be an autonomous unit having direct access to the Chief Minister. It would have responsibility, among other things, for policy development, planning and program review, equal opportunity, affirmative action programs, commenting on the broad range of Cabinet submissions and research into both particular issues affecting women and general issues affecting the life of people in the Northern Territory. As well, it would provide effective support to the Women's Advisory Council. In other words, it would be an integrated unit at a high level, outside the public service, which could provide a range of political advice across a broad spectrum of issues. That is what is required and, until we get it, the rights and needs of women will not be effectively recognised and dealt with in the Northern Territory. As long as we do not do that, we are underselling and undervaluing 50% of our population.

I leave the Chief Minister and members opposite with this thought: if they accept nothing else, they must accept that the graph to which I have referred shows that there is something seriously wrong in the public service. There is no logical reason why women should predominate in the lower ranks of the service while men predominate in the upper ranks. Women are as smart as men and as committed as men to the future of the Northern Territory and are able to play as big a role as men in its future. All they want is for the government to give them a fair go.

Mr PERRON (Chief Minister): Mr Deputy Speaker, at the outset, I inform honourable members that, because of the nature of the subject under consideration, the government has agreed that the member for Koolpinyah may participate in this debate. Thus, 5 members will speak on the matter of public importance rather than the conventional 4. Honourable members should note that this is not to be taken as a precedent for future discussions on matters of public importance.

The Leader of the Opposition said that it was an indictment of our system that we do not have a woman in Cabinet but he did not go on to explain what was wrong with our system of democracy in the Northern Territory which is similar to the system which exists elsewhere in Australia. One wonders what he really means by an indictment of the system. I thought the system of letting the voters decide on who represents them in parliament was a fairly good one. In the recent by-election in Flynn, both major political parties proposed female candidates - and I believe that both were good candidates - but the voters decided that a male would represent the electorate of Flynn in the Assembly. I think that the Leader of the Opposition would be on fairly dangerous ground if he said that the voters of Flynn had made an error of judgment in electing a man to represent them.

Is the Leader of the Opposition proposing that we should have a system which guarantees female representation in parliament? If that is what he is proposing, let him tell us. It would not be totally unheard of. I think New Zealand has an electoral system which guarantees certain seats for the Maori population. That is their system and I cast no aspersions on it. If the Leader of the Opposition wants to change the system, let us hear about it because I am sure the public would be interested.

The position of Women's Advisor on the Chief Minister's personal staff has existed for about 5 years. In that time, a range of services advising the government on women and family issues have been established within the public service and the community at large. These advisory services have now been consolidated. In terms of having their advice and policy suggestions implemented by this government, they have an excellent track record.

There is a misconception abroad about the role of ministers' personal staff. Because we all have a number of personal staff, I think there is a belief that those people do much more than they really do as far as the formulation of policy is concerned. That is an important matter in this debate because there seems to be a view that that is where political policy is formed and that all political advice comes from ministers' personal staff. Of course, that simply is not the case. In fact, the government looks to the public service for the bulk of its advice and for policy formulation. A suggestion that public servants cannot or will not perform this function is a nonsense and it is an insult to the men and women who make up the public service. The Leader of the Opposition has made quite a fuss about this matter and issued a press release on 10 November 1988, stating: 'It is not the function of individuals or groups within the public service to furnish political advice to the government. They are there to implement policy, not to formulate it'. That statement really reflects the view of a man who has never been in government. Obviously, he does not know very much about how it operates.

Does the Leader of the Opposition seriously contend that the head of the Prime Minister's Department does not give the Prime Minister political advice? When he gives the Prime Minister political advice, the head of the department calls on the resources of that department in formulating his own views, and so he should. Doesn't the head of the Department of Aboriginal Affairs give the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs political advice? I bet he does. Certainly, the old one did and I am sure the new one will too. It is part of his responsibilities. When formulating proposals for tax increases or tax decreases or new taxes, does the Leader of the Opposition honestly believe that advice on the political ramifications of those decisions is not an integral part of Treasury's development of proposals and advice to the Treasurer so that he can go into Cabinet and argue?

It is almost incomprehensible that the Leader of the Opposition is so naive as to believe that it is not part of the legitimate role of the public service in all governments in this country to give their ministers political advice. Every Cabinet submission in the Northern Territory - and our Cabinet system is based on the Commonwealth system - contains a wealth of political advice from a range of departments depending on the subject being debated. That is exactly what Cabinet is seeking. That does not mean that the public service is not apolitical. Of course governments change and, in many cases, even departmental heads remain to serve different masters. In other cases, the departmental heads and other senior officers go. I can assure you, Mr Deputy Speaker, that they all give political advice to their political masters.

Many of the initiatives which this government has picked up in the area of women's affairs came from the Women's Advisory Council and the Office of Women's Affairs. I guess one could say that it is political advice. The Women's Advisory Council says to the government: 'We think you are not doing enough about domestic violence. We have had a look at the legislation. We asked a few people some questions. We have gauged the feeling of women in the community and we believe there is an urgent need for legislation in the Territory to cope with domestic violence'. The government says: 'That sounds like good political advice to us. We want to appeal to the electorate. We want women to know that we care about their plight and we will adopt policies to accommodate them'. In my view, that is political advice. Am I to say to the Women's Advisory Council that I cannot take any notice of that because it is not supposed to be giving me political advice? The government can adopt the policy on domestic violence as official CLP government policy and, indeed, we have done so. Every piece of legislation that is introduced by this government in this House is the policy of this government. If it were not, we would not introduce it.

We are receiving and accepting political advice and that is exactly what the structure exists for. Let us not take any notice of the nonsense being perpetrated by members opposite. I will read from the recently tabled 1987-88 Annual Report of the Department of the Chief Minister. It states that the role of the Office of Women's Affairs is, firstly, 'to provide government with advice and comment on issues of particular importance and relevance to women' and, secondly, 'to advise the government on the implications for women of current policies and procedures, and to coordinate the initiation of policies that address areas of concern for women and monitor their implementation'. Those are perfectly legitimate roles.

I am sure that every office of women's affairs in this country - in the administrations of governments of all persuasions - would have the same function of giving political advice to the government of the day. I am talking about public servants now. Their role is to give us political advice, to tell us whether the policies that are in place are working and, if they are not, to tell us to what extent that is occurring and what initiatives we need to take in order to improve the situation. Perhaps, by chance, that will improve the government's standing in the electorate. That is what politics is all about. Nevertheless, the Leader of the Opposition argues that, to expect that sort of information from the Office of Women's Affairs or the Women's Advisory Council, is unheard of and preposterous and represents a politicisation of the public service. In the context of reality, his argument falls apart absolutely.

Mr Speaker, even though I have no Women's Advisor on my personal staff at present, I have 3 women in senior advisory positions who are working directly to me. In fact, in the Chan Building, 30% of executive level officers are women. Although I have not counted them recently, I am advised that 15 of the 19 members of my personal staff are women.

Mr Coulter: Ministerial officers 6 out of 9.

Mr PERRON: It would be pretty hard for us to dodge the female perspective even if ministers were of a mind to.

The Office of Women's Affairs is headed by an E4 director. This office provides support for the Women's Advisory Council and obviously receives substantial input from the 14 members of the Women's Advisory Council. It also works for the Office of Equal Opportunity in the Public Service

Commissioner's Office and the Women's Information Centres. The Office of Women's Affairs has direct access to myself and my Cabinet colleagues, both through comments on Cabinet submissions and personally. The Convenor of the Women's Advisory Council has direct access to myself and I have had a number of meetings with her in the relatively short time that I have been Chief Minister.

The Office of Women's Affairs in the Chief Minister's office has direct input to Cabinet. Every submission that goes before Cabinet is subject to comment by the Department of the Chief Minister, irrespective of the subject, and every Cabinet submission which impacts in any way on women or the family goes to the Office of Women's Affairs for advice and that advice is incorporated in the departmental comments which go to Cabinet.

All of these organisations have been very effective from the point of view of Territory women and the Territory government and I believe that it is time for me to shorten the lines of communication between myself and the Office of Women's Affairs and the Women's Advisory Council. Prior to my deciding not to replace this particular position, the Director of the Office of Women's Affairs did not have direct access to the Chief Minister at all. Any input the person wanted had to go through the personal advisor to the Chief Minister.

Let me refer to some of the highlights among the government's initiatives in the area of women's affairs during the past few years. Many of these are the result of advice from the Women's Advisory Council, this body from which we are not supposed to be receiving any political advice. Firstly, there is the establishment of Women's Information Centres in Darwin and Alice Springs. The Leader of the Opposition suggests that the advice to do that in order to enhance our attraction and cater for the needs of women was not political. We commissioned a special study into the needs of women in remote areas. We initiated the 'Women Today' daytime television program for women which, I believe, is quite popular. We introduced equal opportunity principles and practices in the Northern Territory Public Service, including the establishment of the Office of Equal Opportunity. We have increased the availability of permanent part-time work within the public service and I am sure that helps a number of women. We introduced a 20% salary subsidy to Territory child-care centres, established task forces to examine nurses career structures and children's services, implemented the remote areas funding program for mothers and children in Aboriginal communities, established a sexual assault referral centre at the Royal Darwin Hospital and supported the activities of the NT Family Planning Association.

We were involved in the participation of 3 Northern Territory women at the End of the Decade for Women Conference in Nairobi and the establishment of the Chief Minister's Task Force for the Education of Girls. The task force is an interdepartmental body which promotes government policy, identifies areas of concern, supports initiatives and provides government with information and comment. We introduced the use of consent forms for the insertion of intra-uterine contraception devices. This was done in order to ensure that women had adequate access to relevant and important information. A video called 'Women's Business', concerning Aboriginal resource centres, was produced for Aboriginal communities interested in establishing such centres. The appointment of female police officers at Gove and Tennant Creek and the appointment of a marriage guidance counsellor in Alice Springs were also among the initiatives taken by the government during the past few years as a result of advice from the various structures which are in place to offer advice.

We also instituted the annual Women's Fellowship Award. That is quite a recent innovation. In addition, this Assembly will shortly deal with legislation designed to combat the problem of domestic violence. In legislation currently before the House relating to the protection of areas of significance to Aborigines, we have attempted to accommodate the very special needs of Aboriginal women, needs which we believe are not adequately accommodated in existing sacred sites legislation.

Although I do not believe that financial expenditure is necessarily a yardstick for success, it indicates the level of government commitment in certain areas. We currently spend \$1.278m annually on salaries and administration for advice on women's issues and supervision of equal opportunity programs. That amount excludes the salary of the former Women's Advisor on the Chief Minister's staff.

I do not subscribe to the view that programs to advance the status of women should be judged as successful only when we have achieved equal participation in the work force at all levels, although I have no doubt that members opposite hold that view, as the Leader of the Opposition indicated. Does he seriously advocate that we can never claim to have successfully addressed all the concerns of women in society today until 50% of employees in every classification in the public service are women? Indeed, I was recently told that women comprise 54% of the Northern Territory population. I reject that view. Logically, it would mean that, if women comprised 60% or 70%, something would be wrong and the government should perhaps seek to address the problem on the basis that we had overreacted and done too much to promote women's participation. In such a case, presumably, we would then have to promote men's participation until it reached 46%. Those are the very arguments perpetrated by the Leader of the Opposition.

Mr Smith interjecting.

Mr Coulter: You wait until you read what you said this time last year.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order!

Mr Smith: I will certainly have pleasure in circulating this speech.

Mr PERRON: I said it all at Browns Mart.

It is nonsense to advocate that the only way we can judge these things is by having equal participation. Does that mean that, because there is not equal participation in all levels of the public service, by Chinese, Greeks, Italians or Vietnamese, that we have not sufficiently promoted their causes in relation to the work force? The Leader of the Opposition believes that everybody in every sector of the community aspires to be a departmental head or chief executive officer. Did it ever enter his mind that there are some people in society who do not necessarily want to move into areas of significant responsibility?

Mr Smith: You are talking about classes of people.

Mr PERRON: I am talking about classifications of employment.

Mr Smith: You are saying that classes of people do not want to move into higher classifications.

Mr PERRON: You are saying that they all do.

Mr Smith: Yes, I do.

Mr PERRON: Every woman in the public service wants to be a departmental head or an executive officer, does she? That is what you are advocating.

Mr Smith: Of course not. She should have the opportunity.

Mr PERRON: I have made my point. I reject the view that one can judge whether a government is adequately addressing the needs of women by determining whether, in every classification of the public service, there is a percentage of women equivalent to the percentage of women in the work force. That is a nonsensical argument. I know many people hold that view but I reject it. I will not be judging the record of this government on that basis.

Mr EDE (Stuart): Mr Deputy Speaker, when the time comes, it will not be the Chief Minister who will be judging his record in this respect. It will be the people of the Northern Territory unless, of course, as has happened so many times before, his colleagues make their judgment beforehand. We are already hearing rumours about that but, obviously, we are not here to discuss rumours.

When the government makes a decision as incredibly ignorant as the one it has made in this case, there is a temptation for members on this side of the House to simply sit back and rub our hands with glee as we accept the political kudos and the results of the disaffection which a particular portion of the population feels for the government. That is the temptation. It is not, however, an option which we are prepared to take up. That is because 2 years is too long for the women of the Northern Territory to wait. It is essential that we on this side of the House do everything in our power to assure the government that many women consider that it has neglected and slighted them. I am not speaking only of the people who have signed the petition. Ten times that number of women are concerned about this issue.

In recent years, this government has become renowned for its attempts to reduce the status of women in the Northern Territory. In 1985, the then Chief Minister, now the member for Barkly, decided to downgrade the position of Women's Advisor by attaching it to his most junior ministry, the Ministry of Community Development. No doubt the National Party has a conservative policy on women's issues these days. We wait with interest to find out what the National Party has to say on this issue and on other women's issues. In 1985, the Northern Territory government's attitude to women was signalled at a national level. In contrast to all the states, which then had women's advisor positions in premiers' departments, the position in the Northern Territory was attached to the Minister for Community Development. It is now falling into line with the conservative states. In New South Wales, the new Greiner administration has abolished the position of women's advisor. The position has also been abolished in Tasmania.

In 1985, women's advisors from all states met on a regular basis to discuss issues of concern to Australian women. The Northern Territory, in contrast with all of the states, did not send anybody to those meetings. The women of Australia have noticed that. They are concerned that, in the view of this government, Northern Territory women do not rate at a national level. The women of the Northern Territory will not forget the actions of this government. They will remember, for example, the member for Karama who, when commenting on the new housing scheme last Tuesday, stated that the subsidy needs to be of a sufficiently high level to keep women at home. He says that that is right. The female electors of Karama will have their say about that.

They also noted that the member for Sanderson, describing the opposition's approach to the Commonwealth in relation to housing issues, said that it was running to Canberra like a lot of little girls, with all the imputations of that phrase.

The CLP party platform, used in the last Territory election, shows that the CLP has a very limited understanding of women's issues. Its lack of understanding was demonstrated in its housing plan, which contained a strategy for the future based on traditional stereotyped roles, focusing only on child care, mothers and children's campaigns, women's resource centres and sexual assault services. Little thought was given to considering the needs of women in a broader context and providing opportunities beyond the home. Besides, we all know that the Commonwealth funds the bulk of child care. In addition, the Northern Territory government has failed to provide the promised sexual assault counsellors throughout the Northern Territory. The CLP clearly demonstrated its attitude to the involvement of women in politics when, prior to the last Territory election, it failed to preselect its solitary sitting woman member. She showed them how wrong they were when she was successfully elected as an independent. I believe that she now has no intention whatsoever of going back to the CLP, having the good sense to know that her political survival depends on not being a member of that party.

The Chief Minister has said that the voters will decide. That is true. They will make a very clear judgment in relation to the government's decision in this matter. They will recall the history of the report on women living in remote areas. In 1986, at the initiative of the Women's Advisory Council, a study was undertaken by consultants to evaluate the needs of women in remote areas. It was a very well-run study but the fate of the resulting report is indicative of the government's approach to women's issues. Obviously, women who live in remote areas do not count. The government believes that it can afford to ignore them even though they will not allow that to happen at the next election. The study was completed in August 1986. The report was tabled in September 1987 and nothing has been heard of it since. During the last sittings, it appeared near the end of the Notice Paper. Today, it is still ranked at an inconspicuous No 15. As everybody knows, a matter which is ranked so low will never be a matter for serious debate in the House unless the Chief Minister is concerned about the backlash from women resulting from his decision to discontinue the position of Women's Advisor.

We have heard rumours that the Chief Minister intends to make a ministerial statement but he has left it rather too late. The women of the Northern Territory know what his attitude is and any effort now would be simply a token gesture. He has failed to follow up a considerable number of the report's recommendations. The attention the report gave to Aboriginal women is to be commended. It is a pity that the government failed to give them any attention. Given that there is no equal opportunity legislation or sex discrimination legislation in the Northern Territory, how on earth can any attempt be made to promote the equal rights of Aboriginal women in the Northern Territory? Such principles do not operate in the Northern Territory Public Service for anyone, let alone a group with particular needs.

The collapse of the Aboriginal Development Branch in the Department of Labour and Administrative Services is a clear reflection of this government's approach to equal opportunity for Aboriginal women and Aboriginal people in general. Aboriginal women, particularly traditionally-oriented Aboriginal women, will find it very difficult to work within the traditional white decision-making models. As I have stated before, many issues impact particularly on Aboriginal women, such as the need for essential services on

Aboriginal communities. The opposition is so aware of this problem that we ran an MPI on it during the May sittings. The government failed to respond to the recommendations regarding the provision of water on outstation communities and maintains its ridiculous policy that a grouping of people does not become a community until it numbers over 50 people. The obvious neglect ...

Mr McCarthy: Not for water though.

Mr EDE: Not for water? Wait until the adjournment debate. I will be talking to you about your commitment to water and excisions and the way that the money for that ...

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! I ask that the member for Stuart direct his remarks through the Chair.

Mr EDE: Mr Deputy Speaker, through you but in reply to the interjection, in the adjournment debate I shall be pointing out the attitude of this government to the funding of water supplies on excisions. The whole world knows that the state of Aboriginal health in the Northern Territory has been described as akin to that of a third world country.

As the Leader of the Opposition said, women play a key role in health care. Usually, they are the caretakers of the aged, the disabled and the ill. This government, however, has no policy on women's health. It still has not come to grips with the fact that women's health needs are different from those of men. They are specific to their gender, particularly in relation to pregnancy, childbirth, infant welfare and so on.

The few women's resource centres that exist play a significant role in Aboriginal communities, providing a central point for women and children in regard to nutrition, cooking, craft activities and general social support among the women. Those centres need continued funding to maintain and expand their programs. One of the most pressing issues in Aboriginal communities is the horrific extent of domestic violence and the need to provide emergency shelters for women who have been assaulted. Given that women play a significant role in Aboriginal families, it is essential that the extent of abuse is addressed within the framework of cultural practices. Domestic violence legislation, on its own, is inadequate. Culturally appropriate intervention needs to be addressed so that specific problems can be nipped in the bud before they develop too far. I call on the Chief Minister to give a commitment to provide resources to enable research to be carried out in that area. Some time ago in this House, the opposition proposed the formation of a committee to look at the whole matter of domestic violence, particularly violence within families on Aboriginal communities. Of course, that initiative was opposed by members opposite and got nowhere.

Non-Aboriginal women in remote areas experience a diverse range of problems as a result of their isolation. They are plagued by the cost of travel to regional centres, the lack of affordable accommodation when they visit regional centres, the lack of access to health and educational services and the absence of child care. The result is that many women take on a number of roles, all of which often contribute to stress. At present, enormous financial hardship is occurring with the operation of BTEC in pastoral areas and women are finding that they have to take on additional roles such as looking after the bores and checking the fences. This places additional pressure on them because such tasks are in addition to their usual roles.

The government needs to address seriously ways in which women's isolation and stress can be alleviated. There are a number of creative options which have been suggested, but some of them require money. We all know that this government has money to throw around. That has been shown by its backing of the State Square project and its payment of spotter's fees and retainer fees. It is time some thought and money went into addressing the situation of the 51% of the population of the Northern Territory who are women.

In closing, I refer to the statements the Chief Minister made about the political process. We all know that there is only 1 woman in this House. On this side, we have consistently had female candidates in seats which we believed were winnable and, in the past, we have had a number of women members in this House. The place where change has to happen is back in the party structure. The Labor Party has an affirmative action policy for women in politics as part of the rules of our organisation. That ensures that women are elected to positions at the branch level and the administrative committee level and thereby gain the political experience to take on the role of a member of this House. I challenge members opposite to table the details of their own party's workings in respect of women. What affirmative action policy do they have within their organisational rules?

I am sorry to say, finally, that the Chief Minister did not address the whole question of imbalance in the Northern Territory Public Service. His only remark about it, which probably indicates the depth of his thought processes, was to the effect that it obviously shows that there are too many women in the lower levels. That is about the level of debate that we can expect on this issue from the Chief Minister and I am afraid that women in the Northern Territory will have to put up with that unless we can put him under sufficient pressure to make him realise that he is no longer a backbencher or simply a minister. He is the Chief Minister. He is the leading political figure in the Northern Territory and, as such, he has an obligation to do more than carry out his own policies on women's affairs, which he may have learnt from the July edition of the Playboy magazine, but ...

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

Mr McCARTHY (Labour, Administrative Services and Local Government): Mr Deputy Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition opened his remarks this evening by saying that there was an enormous furore among women throughout the Northern Territory over the issue of the position of Women's Advisor in the Department of the Chief Minister. That furore is certainly obvious to the Leader of the Opposition but it is not as obvious to many of us who move around the Territory considerably more than the Leader of the Opposition does. But then, the Leader of the Opposition has a direct line to the head of the unfortunately named Women in Labor, and no doubt receives much of his advice from that source.

I think that each of us has his or her network throughout the Territory. I certainly have, and I know the Chief Minister has a network which gives him information from all areas of the Territory. We all attend school council meetings and our party branch meetings, and women are well represented in both. In every school council that I can think of, women hold executive positions. A woman is the president of one branch of my party in my electorate. Women are on the executive of every branch in my electorate and I know that the same applies in the suburbs of Darwin. We all have information gatherers, people on whom we rely for information in all centres. I have them and I know the Chief Minister has them, and I am sure that every other member has people around the Territory who provide him or her with advice. In most

cases, certainly in my case, there are women throughout the area who are able to provide information.

One of the major organisations in the Territory that I listen to, and I know the Chief Minister listens to, is the Isolated Children's Parents Association. It is an organisation that could as easily be made up of men as women, but women have the majority of all executive positions and have a very large voice in Territory affairs, not only in education matters but in all matters pertaining to living in remote areas of the Northern Territory. They come together on regular occasions and meet regularly with all of us. In fact, they are one of our sources of information on women's affairs around the Northern Territory.

There has been considerable talk about the Women's Advisory Council tonight and the representation on that council is from a broad spectrum of the Northern Territory. They are people whom we meet regularly, people who come to us with advice on a regular basis. They come to the Chief Minister and to all ministers to provide us with information and to offer advice on a whole range of issues and woe betide any minister who rejects them or does not accept an appointment with a member of the Women's Advisory Council or women in any of these organisations, including the ICPA.

The Northern Territory government has a responsive role and a responsive attitude to the issues that concern women right around the Northern Territory. Most of them have been mentioned tonight. The Office of Women's Affairs was one. It is in the Department of the Chief Minister and now has a more direct link to the Chief Minister. The advisory council, of course, and the Women's Information Centres were mentioned, along with the Office of Equal Opportunity in my own department.

On 25 November 1987, in a debate on affirmative action and equal opportunity, the Leader of the Opposition said:

... the big problem with the Northern Territory government, when it talks about the concepts of equal opportunity and affirmative action, is putting some weight, some muscle and some action behind the jargon ... the minister in charge of the public service has given us no indication of any action to be undertaken by his government to promote the concept of equal opportunity.

The corporate plan of my department, of which the opposition has a copy, sets out goals in relation to equal opportunity. These include the improvement of the status of women, Aboriginal people, people with disabilities and people with non-English speaking backgrounds. Chief executive officers have responsibility for equal opportunity management planning throughout the public sector, to facilitate equality and fairness in employment and to provide a model approach to equal opportunity for the private sector to follow, to promote and achieve greater community understanding of equal opportunity, and to accept complaints from individual groups regarding equal opportunity in employment, delivery of service and access to services. All those things are currently happening through the efforts of the Office of Equal Opportunity in my department. Strategies are in place, measures of performance are in place and I am able to indicate exactly what is being achieved by this government in that regard.

Talking about representation of women in government, this is not the only level of government in the Northern Territory. There is another level of government in the Northern Territory. I refer to local government. The

Mayors of Alice Springs and Palmerston are women and have been in office for some considerable time. They are not the first women to head local governments in the Northern Territory. Approximately 33% of municipal members are women, all having access to this government and offering advice. I would not like to answer to anyone who did not listen to those people when they come to us, particularly the Mayors of those communities.

In respect of Aboriginal local government or community government, many of the community governments have written into their schemes equal representation from women and men. The most recent one is at Daguragu where there is no capacity for anything other than 50% representation from women. A number of other community government schemes have that requirement. The 2 major parties have nominated women for election in the past, the latest example being the Flynn by-election. The fact that no woman was elected in that by-election indicates only that democracy is at work and is working extremely well.

I have mentioned the major areas of women's operations within the public service: the Office of Women's Affairs in the Chief Minister's Department, the Office of Equal Opportunity in the Department of Labour and Administrative Services and Women's Information Centres in the Department of Health and Community Services. The Northern Territory government has a very firm commitment to equal opportunity. Of course, equal opportunity has wider implications than simply the status of women. We have programs in place to provide equal opportunity for women as a part of the whole community. We have similar programs in place to assist migrants and to assist Aboriginals. Equal opportunity management plans are in place in a number of departments. The Department of Labour and Administrative Services, the Department of the Chief Minister and the Departments of Law and Education have pilot equal opportunity plans. In fact, we expect that those will spread throughout the public service in the years to come.

There is much that could be said with regard to what is currently occurring in relation to equal opportunity within the public service. It is not much good talking about what we have in mind; we need to talk about what is actually happening. The Office of Equal Opportunity has represented the Northern Territory government on the Department of Labour Advisory Council or DOLAC, which is a working party on women. A major initiative of that working party was a development of the Australian Women's Employment Strategy. Before I read out the Northern Territory strategy which supports the Australian Women's Employment Strategy, I would like to pick up some comments which members opposite have made in relation to the percentage of women in the public service.

In the A1 to A5 levels, we had 1220 women in 1979, 1787 in 1985 and 1832 in 1987. The opposition commented that those numbers were increasing and said that, in some way, that was a problem. I disagree with any suggestion that it is a problem. Obviously, there are many women coming into the work force. That is reflected by the fact that 61% of women aged 15 and over in the Northern Territory are in the work force or are seeking jobs. In fact, many of the jobs they are finding are in the public service. In the levels A6 to A9, numbers of women have risen from 23% in 1979 to 49% in 1987. That is more than a 100% increase and is very significant. If we look at the E1 to E3 levels, I will accept the Leader of the Opposition's figure of 29% because it is slightly better than the figure that I have. In fact, that figure has risen from zero in 1979. The figure in the E4 to E7 level was also zero in 1979 and has now risen to 12%. Nevertheless, the members opposite tell us that we are not doing our job.

If we compare those with figures in the well-known Labor states, we will see that, in the executive levels where 22.7% of our employees are women, the figure in South Australia is 7.7% and in Western Australia it is 9.5%. New South Wales, which was governed by Labor for a considerable period, is now on the improve under a Liberal Party government with a figure of 13%. Those figures clearly refute the allegation that the Northern Territory government is not doing its job in this regard. I do not need to refer to much of the other material which I have, which talks about the numbers of women who report directly to ministers. The acting secretary of my department is a woman and the acting secretaries of 2 other departments at present are women.

I will read from the Northern Territory government's strategies for women in the work force:

The Northern Territory government's goal is that all policies be formulated with an awareness of their impact on women. To this end, the government will undertake the following actions to improve the situation and status of women in the workplace.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I am about run out of time. I seek leave to incorporate the remainder of this document in Hansard.

Leave granted.

Access and Participation:

- ° equal opportunity to acquire marketable skills through employment, education and training projects in rural and urban areas will be given to all seeking employment; NOW (New Opportunity for Women) courses will be introduced in relevant situations;
- ° within the context of a labour market analysis for the Northern Territory, statistics on the participation of women will be compiled;
- ° the government is introducing equal opportunity management planning in the public sector to raise the employment status of women and other groups;
- ° and strategies will be developed to eliminate practices which disadvantage women in the work force within the context of equal opportunity initiatives at both the Territory and national level.

Industrial Planning and Restructuring:

- ° industry policies and mechanisms will be formulated with an awareness of their impact on women.

Decision Making:

- ° the representation of women in decision making fora at government, organisational and divisional levels will continue to be monitored and promoted within industry and the wider community.

Gender Segregation:

- ° women's position in the labour force will be the topic of career awareness courses and of education fora for the general public;
- ° and the government will employ strategies in education and with employers to increase awareness of widening career horizons for women and girls. Strategies will include 'Tradeswomen on the Move' and the publication of booklets about women in the Northern Territory who work in non-traditional occupations.

Workers with Family Responsibilities:

- ° government will make employment and training programs more accessible to women by:
 - continuing the 20% salary subsidy to all Territory child-care centres;
 - and actively supporting the expansion of child care provision through the establishment of centres in new subdivisions.

Occupational Health and Safety:

- ° occupational health and safety provisions in the Work Health Act will be monitored.

Appropriate Awards and Conditions:

- ° reasons why total full-time earnings of females are less than the total full-time earnings of males will be investigated.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I think that I have indicated clearly that the matter of public importance raised by the Leader of the Opposition today is nothing more than a sham and I reject it out of hand.

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH (Koolpinyah): Mr Deputy Speaker, at the outset I would like to thank the Chief Minister and the Leader of the Opposition for their indulgence in letting me speak as an extra speaker in this matter of public importance debate. In a way, their action has not been according to precedent. They did it because I am a woman and, if I am to be consistent, I should have refused the opportunity. But we old-fashioned girls, conservative women, are all supposed to be inconsistent anyway and therefore I accepted the opportunity. Perhaps I am a political opportunist and cannot resist the opportunity to speak.

The previous speakers on this matter, both from the ALP and the CLP, seemed to get themselves tangled up in policies and party platforms with their little 'p' political advice and their big 'P' political advice. In contrast, I deal in reality. Listening to the speakers who have spoken before me, I feel a bit like the bone that the dogs are fighting over as both the CLP and the ALP made reference to my presence in the House. I would like to point out to the honourable male members of this House that, if all you blokes, both ALP and CLP, were doing your jobs, you would be the channels for information to flow through from your women constituents to the Chief Minister.

This subject of the Chief Minister's Women's Advisor is a 'to be or not to be' situation. To continue in the Shakespearean train of thought, it could be 'a rose by any other name'. The Chief Minister declared vacant the contract

position previously held by his Women's Advisor, stating that he would not be renewing the position. That is the 'not to be' aspect. It must be compared with the 'to be' aspect when we realise that the head woman in the Office of Women's Affairs, a permanent public servant, is about to more or less take the place of the previous Women's Advisor. As I understand it, the position of Women's Advisor was at the E3 level, whilst the head of the Office of Women's Affairs is at the E4 level. So much for what all the active feminists are saying about the position at the top of women's affairs being downgraded.

'Women's Advisor' is a very confusing term. Does it mean an advisor appointed by women? Can she advise on anything, not necessarily on women's affairs? 'Women's Advisor' could mean an advisor to women on any matter, not necessarily on women's affairs. Without an explanatory context, 'Women's Advisor', considered in the abstract, could be an advisor appointed by a third person to give advice on women. This discounts the human source of information which is the basis for the advice that the Women's Advisor is able to give to the third person. The context is all-important as, unless there is a definition of the term 'Women's Advisor', it is open to various interpretations, thus allowing confusion to reign.

It might behove the Chief Minister and the feminists to first of all agree on the title and the interpretation for the position the Chief Minister has abolished. My guess is that this Chief Minister wants to appear real macho and as a definite leader who wants to get back to basics etc. You would have to be blind in one eye and not able to see with the other not to recognise that he is an improvement in this context on the previous Chief Minister who, as I said earlier in an interjection, was a little soppy in relation to this issue. He is a nice chap but he is a bit soppy. I would not be at all surprised if the current Chief Minister did not eventually give in and knuckle down to appease the feminists with their pleas and tears. Of course, I would like to think that I am wrong about that.

My comments on this subject are wide-ranging. At the outset, I would say that the title 'Women's Advisor' is sexist. Its very insistence on the use of the female gender shows a disregard for the things it is supposed to stand for, which include equality. I recently attended a meeting at Brown's Mart, at which the Chief Minister spoke. Also present was a gentleman whose name I do not remember. I think he was the secretary or representative of a union with several women members, perhaps a union of office workers or clerical staff ...

Mr Perron: More than several members, hundreds.

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH: If, in that case, a man can represent women's views, as women comprise most of his union's membership, why can a male not fill the position of Women's Advisor to the Chief Minister? We have to be fair about it. If it is necessary to have a Women's Advisor for the Chief Minister, that union representative should also have a women's advisor so that he will have the point of view of women put to him.

At the meeting, the Chief Minister said that there were senior female public servants and that their views, when put forward, would be coloured by their gender. A woman who asked a question on this subject expressed the view that those senior public servants were not paid to put forward the point of view of women. I could say she had something in a knot, but I will not. I think her remarks were a little silly because a woman in any position will put forward her views because of her gender and because of her makeup, not necessarily her views on the job.

It is my belief that these rabid feminists want more than their 50% of equality. They do not want equality because of skill or experience but only because of gender. I wrote recently in one of our local papers that these women say, in effect, that they cannot compete in a man's world - and those are their words not mine - unless they receive special consideration. That point of view makes them appear to want more than equality. In my article, I called them the whingeing, weak sisters. What they should be talking about is quality of representation, not quantity. None of the speakers before me has said that the need is for quality of representation, not quantity. Many of these women cannot take the knocks that life hands out to them. That may genuinely be due to lack of talent. If they are knocked back in a job application or anything else, it may genuinely be because of lack of talent. Their response, however, is to whinge and say that men are not fair and they did not get promotion or whatever simply because they are women.

I do not speak from a favoured position. I have taken a few knocks in my time. I will certainly admit that I have some faults but I do not weep and whinge. In life, you have to get up when you are knocked down and you have to get back and fight. The active feminists virtually want to sit around the table in the party room and have input into party decisions. That is just stiff bickies for them. They want all this direct and important input simply by virtue of an appointment to a committee or council representing women's views. Why should they have it? Let them do what I did and what other women have done. Let them stand for local government, federal government and Territory government. Let them put themselves before the people and see if the people accept them.

At the meeting at Brown's Mart, I said these things to the union representative who said that women were not represented in the government. I said to him that women can put their views forward if they want to. They can stand for election. I was then asked how women can get themselves preselected by political parties. Mr Speaker ...

Mr SPEAKER: Order!

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH: Thank you, Mr Speaker.

Mr McCarthy: Sorry, ma'am.

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH: Thank you for the apology.

I said women can put themselves forward for preselection if they want to but it is better to stand as an independent. It was not until afterwards that I heard about an interjection that somebody made. There were 5 women who hold a certain point of view sitting in front of one of my daughters who relayed the substance of their interjection to me. It was that it was okay to stand as an independent if you have money. I am sorry that I did not hear that interjection from those particular females because I would have responded. Whilst I might have a few dollars, I have worked darned hard for the money I have and the positions I have held. Instead of always talking and putting out their hands for handouts and public positions, these women should get out and do something. They could do the same things that I have done. I am not big-noting myself at all. I have not done it alone. I have been helped by my family and I have been helped by friends, both men and women. They have helped me get elected and re-elected. I have never been a rabid feminist. Why should I try to separate the female and the males, the men and women in my electorate, by mainly representing women's views in their quest to be considered first, last and foremost in everything? I have news for the

feminists. Many men and women like to be considered as people rather than members of a particular sex.

If I may, Mr Speaker, I will include a personal, humorous observation here. I have said to a few blokes that men are good for a couple of things and one of them is changing tyres. The women that I speak of have no sense of humour. Life is so real and earnest for them that they cannot laugh at themselves. Because they cannot, others do.

I may not have time to recount an incident that occurred when I went to the Women's Centre in Shepherd Street some years ago with one of my daughters. From the point of view of the women involved, I thought that it was a very sad occasion. My remarks may be considered by some women to be traitorous to the female cause but I do not believe that I am a traitor. I am just showing the other side of the coin. Not everyone is on the so-called feminist bandwagon and I am not a weak, whingeing sister.

The government does help women in the community and some women do need help. Some poor females are bashed by bully husbands and de factos, and I feel very sorry for those people. When we lived in Brisbane, I employed a lady who had been bashed by her husband and her story was a very sad one. She stayed with me for 5 or 6 months and, in that time, she had enough breathing space to get on her feet again. She was able to get a job somewhere else and was well on the way to recovery. Some unfortunate women are raped and certainly do need help from the government sexual assault centres. Some women have been victims of incest in their youth and they also need help. Instead of looking back, all of these women should look forward and fight back at whatever life has handed out to them. Fight back, do not just stand or sit and feel sorry for yourself.

I believe that women must be treated equally, but on the basis of skill and competence rather than on the basis gender. The government has 2 Women's Information Centres. In a way, I believe this is an admission by the women who wanted these centres set up, that women are not equal to men. They cannot read telephone books to find telephone numbers to obtain information. They cannot speak to their local members even, if they are men, to obtain information and they always need a shoulder to cry on.

Sexual assault referral centres are necessary for the unfortunate female victims who certainly need help to get back on their feet. But they must get back on their feet again. They have to go on living their lives and they have to fight until they get themselves on their feet again. Nobody can help you except yourself.

The Chief Minister's Women's Advisory Council has 14 women on it and they represent views from all around the Territory from women of different ages and different ethnic backgrounds. I feel certain that they will continue to give the Chief Minister a broad range of views on all subjects. I have put the hypothetical question before: how many women do you need in a Cabinet before special consideration for women is no longer necessary? How long will the special women's advisory groups continue - for 5 years, 10 years, 20 years or ad infinitum? I believe that there is a now a push from within the women's movement to do away with any reference to sex. These women want to denigrate men by figuratively emasculating them. They believe that that is the way to equality, by not referring to people as women and men, but as persons.

Are we to see 'men' disappear entirely so that the word 'women' will become 'wo'? Are humans to become 'hus'? When we are all persons, no longer

men and women, the only differentiation will be between persons and animals. Actually, I would prefer to be like some animals rather than some people, but that is by the way. Later on, further claims of discrimination will be made and animals and persons will become 'beings' to distinguish them from 'plants'. Then animal libbers or some other nut cutlets will want us all lumped together with plants as beings. I know it sounds ridiculous, but it is the stupid path we are going down.

In conclusion, I do not support the opposition's viewpoint in this matter of public importance debate. I support the Chief Minister's decision to do away with the contract position of Women's Advisor, and this is in no way an indication that I am thinking of joining the CLP again because I am not. If women think they have the skill or expertise necessary to be listened to or to advance themselves, they should put themselves forward on the basis of their abilities, not ask for special consideration because of their gender.

UNLAWFUL BETTING BILL
(Serial 159)

Bill presented and read a first time.

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

At the outset, I wish to advise honourable members that this is part of a package of bills designed to combat organised crime. Because of the length and complexity of some of the draft legislation, it has been decided to introduce the bills separately rather than to treat them as cognate bills. However, I can foreshadow that, in addition to this bill, I will be introducing the Racing and Betting Amendment Bill and the Listening Devices Bill. These bills are designed to complement the Crimes (Forfeiture of Proceeds) Bill which I introduced into this Assembly during the last sittings.

I will run briefly through the history of this package of legislation. In 1984, the government set up an interdepartmental committee, the IDC, consisting of representatives from the police, the Department of Law and the Racing, Gaming and Liquor Commission to examine, report and make recommendations on legislation covering penalties for illegal betting, tax evasion and the powers of the relevant authorities in this regard. Following consideration of a substantial body of material, the IDC reported to the government in 1985. Relevant legislation in Australia and overseas was studied, as were various reports, including 5 public volumes of the final report of the Royal Commission on the Activities of the Federated Ship Painters and Dockers Union, better known as the Costigan Report. Volume 5 of the Costigan Report noted in paragraph 2.014:

There is little doubt that criminal organisations play a big part in the control of starting price bookmaking. With that control comes the worst aspects of criminal behaviour. Violence is endemic to it. Moreover, the criminal organisations do not hesitate to corrupt. It may be the corruption of a police officer or a bank manager or of anyone occupying a position from which the organisation can derive a profit.

With this in mind, the interdepartmental committee based its recommendations on the premise that, in order to combat such criminal activity, it would be necessary to:

make the laws governing criminal investigation and the admissibility of evidence as complete as possible having regard to democratic rights and freedoms; provide protection or encouragement for persons willing to give evidence against illegal bookmakers; create offences to deal with persons who channel or assist illegal betting, or who assist in illegal betting operations, but are one step removed from the actual placement, receipt or settlement of the bet; provide substantial and enforceable penalties for offences involving illegal betting; limit the ability of persons charged or convicted to dispose of or conceal their assets; and pay special attention to interstate and federal complications in detection, offence coverage and the enforcement of illegal betting laws.

The government adopted the IDC report and this package of draft legislation is the result. The Unlawful Betting Bill consolidates and expands the provisions relating to unlawful betting that are to be found in Territory legislation.

Turning now to the specific provisions of the bill, I wish to highlight the following main features. Under part 2, unlawful betting contracts and dispositions of property as a result of such contracts are void and unenforceable although protection is provided to innocent third parties who unwittingly acquire such properties. Under clause 6, police may arrest or remove an offender from a place where unlawful betting activities occur. The power to remove is not contained in existing Territory legislation although it did exist formerly. Similar legislation exists in Tasmania.

Police are given various powers to enter and search in the investigation of offences under clauses 13 to 15. They are empowered to enter a place without warrant on reasonable suspicion of unlawful betting and to enter without warrant an adjoining place reasonably suspected of being used for access or escape. Where the police lawfully enter a place where it is reasonably suspected that unlawful betting is conducted, broad powers of search and seizure can be exercised. These are taken from the Racing and Betting Act. The legislation provides that an owner may evict the occupier of a house which is being used for unlawful betting activities. This, too, is taken from the Racing and Betting Act. It also provides for special protection to be given to witnesses in court proceedings under the act. This provision is new and follows directly from the recommendations of the Costigan Commission.

Part IV creates offences for illegal betting. The penalty structure is divided into 4 levels, which are set out in clause 34. Level 4 penalties are provided for criminality equal to engaging in the business of unlawful bookmaking. The penalties are: a fine of \$30 000 to \$50 000 for a first offence; a fine of \$50 000 to \$100 000 or 3 years jail for a second offence; and, for subsequent offences, a fine of \$100 000 to \$200 000 or 5 years jail. These penalties, which are indeed substantial, are similar to those recommended by the Costigan Report.

Level 3 penalties are provided for criminality equal to bookmaking. Offences are provided in respect of soliciting bets, acting as betting agent, unlawful bookmaking and loans to bookmakers. The penalties are: a \$15 000 to \$20 000 fine for a first offence; a fine of \$25 000 to \$50 000 for a second offence; and a fine of \$50 000 to \$100 000 or 3 years jail for a subsequent offence. These penalties are less than those recommended by the Costigan Report and are set at approximately half the proposed level for penalties. Queensland presently provides a minimum of \$15 000 and a maximum of \$20 000 for a first offence.

Level 2 penalties are provided for criminality equal to, assisting or facilitating illegal betting. Offences are provided in respect of criminal agreement to bet illegally, transporting persons to bet illegally, advertising illegal betting, possessing illegal betting proceeds, giving warning of approach of police or preventing detection, permitting a place to be used as access to a betting place, managing a betting place, dealing with instruments for betting and loans for unlawful betting. The penalties are: a fine of \$7500 to \$12 000 for the first offence; a fine of \$12 500 to \$25 000 for a second offence; and a fine of \$25 000 to \$50 000 for a subsequent offence. These penalties are approximately half the level 3 penalties.

Level 1 provides for miscellaneous penalties. These are: a fine of \$500 for being in a betting place; a fine of \$200 to \$500 for giving a false name; a fine of \$500 to \$2500 for a first offence of unlawful betting; a fine of \$2500 to \$15 000 for a second offence; and a fine of \$5000 to \$25 000 for a subsequent offence. In relation to betting, the Costigan Report noted: 'A penalty of \$500 is inadequate and it should be more in the range of \$25 000 if serious punting is to be deterred'. However, the Territory government has considered that the penalty for a first offence should be in the nature of a warning and a minimum fine of \$500 is considered to be appropriate. On the other hand, it should be a sufficient deterrent.

These penalties are indeed substantial. The government makes no apology for that. The time has come to show criminal elements in our society that we mean business. The Territory will not be a haven for their activities.

The bill also deals extensively with questions of evidence and procedure and I draw attention to the following features of the bill. A previous betting conviction within 5 years is admissible in proceedings for a betting offence as evidence of a disposition to offend again. Hearsay evidence is admissible in certain circumstances. Certain presumptions made by the bill have the weight of prima facie evidence. These are: an averment in a complaint is true; proof of a bet in a place shows that unlawful bookmaking or betting took place there; a person named in a betting circle is deemed to be the sender; reasonable suspicion of guilt is evidence thereof; it is not necessary to prove betting for money; to possess a betting slip is evidence of guilt; a person found at an unlawful betting place is guilty; the owner or occupier of an unlawful betting place is guilty; the receipt of money is evidence that it was solicited for a fee; to procure money, issue instruments of betting etc is evidence of managing an unlawful betting place; and money paid or received by an accused under suspicious circumstances is evidence of guilt.

In certain circumstances, presumptions are made that a place is used for unlawful betting. That occurs when police are obstructed from entry, doors are barred or have alarms of entry fitted, means of concealment or destruction of evidence are found, a bank that is apparently for the purposes of unlawful betting is found, an instrument of betting is found or when a silent telephone is found. Police are empowered to enter, without warrant, an adjoining place reasonably suspected of being used for escape or access. Where police lawfully enter a place where it is reasonably suspected that unlawful betting is conducted, broad powers of search and seizure can be exercised.

Finally, the bill provides that instruments of betting and moneys related to offences are forfeited to the Territory on conviction of a betting offence. Mr Speaker, I commend the bill to honourable members.

Debate adjourned.

RACING AND BETTING AMENDMENT BILL
(Serial 157)

Bill presented and read a first time.

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

As foreshadowed when I introduced the Unlawful Betting Bill, a package of legislation is required, including amendments to the Racing and Betting Act, as part of the government's drive to combat organised crime. The purpose of this bill is to amend the Racing and Betting Act by repealing certain provisions which are to be transferred to or re-enacted in the Unlawful Betting Bill. In addition, certain penalties in the act are to be substantially increased. The government's decision to provide substantially increased penalties followed consideration of the report of the Interdepartmental Committee on Illegal Betting, the IDC. The IDC based some of its recommendations, particularly with regard to increased penalties, on the Costigan Report - that is, the 5 public volumes of the final report of the Royal Commission on the activities of the Federated Ship Painters and Dockers Union.

Clause 5 repeals the following provisions which are to be re-enacted in the Unlawful Betting Bill: section 84 - betting must be with licensed or registered bookmakers; section 121 - unlawful bookmaking; section 122 - betting in a public place prohibited; section 123 - place for unlawful betting not to be opened; section 125 - land used for access to betting place etc; sections 126 and 127 - owner may evict unlawful bettors and cancellation of notice to quit; section 128 - penalty for receiving money as deposit on bet; section 129 - penalty for exhibiting placards etc as to betting; section 130 - penalty for advertising as to betting; and, section 131 - person named in betting circular deemed the sender.

Subsection 70(1) of the principal act currently makes it an offence for an unlicensed person to act as, or be employed by, a bookmaker. The penalty is presently set at \$2000. Subclause 4(9) of the bill splits this subsection into 2 as follows. The first leg, in what is to be subsection 70(1), is the offence of unlicensed bookmaking. The penalties are: a fine of \$15 000 to \$25 000 for the first offence; a fine of \$25 000 to \$50 000 for a second offence; and a fine of \$50 000 to \$100 000 for subsequent offences. The IDC noted that this offence constitutes criminality equal to bookmaking and, to quote from the report: 'These penalties are less than those recommended by the Costigan Report. Queensland presently provides a minimum of \$15 000 and a maximum of \$20 000 for a first offence'. The second leg is a new subsection 70(1A) which provides an offence for working for a bookmaker without a clerk's licence. The penalties are: a fine of \$7500 to \$12 500 for the first offence; a fine of \$12 500 to \$25 000 for the second offence; and a fine of \$25 000 to \$50 000 for a subsequent offence.

Subsection 70(2) of the principal act makes it an offence for a club to permit unlicensed bookmakers or unlicensed clerks to operate at a racing venue. The penalty is \$5000. Subclause 4(b) of the bill amends the penalty structure for subsection 70(2) as follows: a fine of \$7500 to \$12 500 for the first offence; a fine of \$12 500 to \$25 000 for the second offence; and a fine of \$25 000 to \$50 000 for a subsequent offence. The IDC noted that working as an unlicensed bookmaker's clerk or a club permitting unlicensed bookmakers to operate at a racing venue constitutes criminality equal to assisting or facilitating illegal bookmaking. The recommended penalties are approximately half those for illegal bookmaking.

By the schedule to the bill, penalties under the principal act are increased as follows: section 73, supply etc of betting tickets - from \$1000 to \$5000; section 74, bookmakers to issue betting tickets - from \$2000 to \$5000; section 75, supply and control of betting sheets - from \$2000 to \$5000; section 77, bookmakers to record bets - first offence from \$2000 to \$5000, second offence from \$4000 to \$10 000, subsequent offences from \$6000 to \$15 000; section 78, supervision of bookmakers' production of information on demand - first offence from \$2000 to \$5000, second offence from \$4000 to \$10 000, subsequent offences from \$6000 to \$15 000; section 79, offences by bookmakers - from \$2000 to \$5000; section 81, bookmakers not to do certain things - from \$2000 to \$5000; section 83, offences against rules of commission - from \$2000 to \$5000; section 86(3), offence of betting with 'impoverished person' - from \$500 to \$2000; section 86(4), offence of betting by 'impoverished person' - from \$500 to \$2000; section 88, false statements on applications etc - from \$1000 to \$5000; section 90(6), name to be endorsed on licence of licensed bookmakers - from \$2000 to \$5000; section 93, restrictions on betting by licensed bookmakers - from \$2000 to \$5000; section 94(1), consumption of liquor on licensed premises - from \$1000 to \$5000; section 95, hours of licensed betting premises - from \$2000 to \$5000; section 96, gaming, prohibited on licensed premises - from \$500 to \$2000; section 97(2), power to remove persons from licensed premises - from \$500 to \$2000; section 98(1), bookmaker's agent to be approved - from \$500 to \$2000; section 98(4), permission to be bookmaker's agent to be displayed in notice - from \$500 to \$2000; section 99, licensed premises to be used only for betting - from \$500 to \$2000; section 101, restrictions on betting by registered bookmakers - from \$2000 to \$5000; section 102, name to be endorsed on permit of registered bookmaker - from \$2000 to \$5000; section 103(3), bookmaker employing clerk - from \$500 to \$2000; section 103(4), working as unlicensed clerk - from \$200 to \$2000; section 103(5), clerk to produce licence - from \$100 to \$2000; section 106, turnover tax - from \$2000 to \$5000; and section 107, bookmakers to lodge returns - from \$1000 to \$5000.

Mr Speaker, it will be noted that the increases in penalties are substantial. However, for the reasons that I outlined when introducing this legislative package to fight organised crime, the government make no apologies for these increases. Mr Speaker, I commend the bill to honourable members.

Debate adjourned.

LISTENING DEVICES BILL
(Serial 158)

Bill presented and read a first time.

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

This is the third part of the package that the government is introducing to combat organised crime. The bill relates to the use of listening devices - that is, devices able to be used to listen to or record private conversations. This legislation is completely separate from telephone tapping legislation. Because of the federal division of powers, the Commonwealth has exclusive legislative jurisdiction over a telephone call between mouthpiece and mouthpiece which is defined as a telecommunication. However, once the sound leaves the mouthpiece, a state or the Territory may legislate. Listening device legislation exists in all Australian states except Tasmania. The Territory Interdepartmental Committee on Illegal Betting noted in its report:

Clearly, listening device legislation, in the absence of telephone tapping powers, is crucial to successful control of SP operations. It is the police view, however, that such legislation should not be restricted to betting offences, but should operate as a general provision and have application to other serious offences such as drug trafficking or use, conspiracy and robbery.

The main features of the bill are as follows. Under the bill, a magistrate may issue a warrant to the police to use a listening device if satisfied on reasonable grounds that it is necessary for the purpose of investigating an offence. In considering an application for a warrant, the magistrate shall have regard to the gravity of the offence, the extent to which personal privacy may be interfered with and the extent to which the investigation will be assisted. The warrant may authorise entry for the purpose of installation and retrieval of the device and the warrant may, in urgent cases, be granted by telephone.

The bill also provides a series of offences concerning the unauthorised use of listening devices. The bill makes it an offence for a person to use a listening device in respect of a private conversation if that person is not a party to the conversation. Of course, it would not be an offence if the parties to the conversation consented to the use of a listening device. It is an offence to tell others what has been learnt from the use of a listening device except in the course of legal proceedings. The bill further provides that it is not an offence to tell others of what a party to a private conversation has learnt from the use of a listening device if this is in the public interest, in the course of duty or for the protection of that person's lawful interests. The offences extend to corporations.

A person using a listening device pursuant to a warrant issued under the bill, the Customs Act or an act relating to Commonwealth security, does not commit an offence under the bill. The bill also contains reporting provisions. The Commissioner of Police is required to furnish annually to the minister a report on the number of warrants sought and issued. The report must also contain such other matters concerning the use of listening devices and the administration of the act as the minister directs, and the minister is required to table the report in the Legislative Assembly within 6 sitting days of receiving it. The bill further provides that the minister may require the commissioner to furnish details of particular usage of listening devices.

In closing, I would like to refer briefly to the intention of the Minister for Health and Community Services to formally establish a needle exchange scheme in the Territory. There has already been some media coverage on the issue and no doubt there will be some misguided people in the community who will seek to draw a contrast between the severity of this anti-crime package and the needle exchange program. As the honourable minister will no doubt make very clear, the needle exchange program in no way legitimises or goes easy on drug addicts, nor is this government being in any way inconsistent in introducing this legislative package and the needle exchange program at the same time. The unfortunate fact is that AIDS is an insidious disease which is a great threat to our society. Obviously, one of the easiest ways to spread it is by intravenous drug users sharing needles.

It is not a joke, Mr Speaker. People are dying as a result of AIDS and people are dying as a result of the vile business of peddling drugs. This House has the very onerous responsibility of protecting our community from the cancerous growth of organised crime and its degenerative side effects. The drug trade is probably an example of one of the vilest aspects of organised

crime. I do not think it is a joke, and I hope that the frivolity exhibited by the member for MacDonnell was a lighthearted moment and is not indicative of an attitude that he may have towards crime and the illegal drug trade in general.

Mr Ede: Get on with it!

Mr MANZIE: There is another one, Mr Speaker. The member for Stuart cannot help himself. He has to throw in his 2 bob. He is another one who has problems about giving the police force powers to combat organised crime. Members of this side of the House are not afraid to stand up for what they believe in. We will ensure that the police have powers to combat organised crime. That is what this legislation is all about. As Attorney-General, I am proud to be the minister introducing it. There should not be any misconceptions at all about this government going easy on people involved with illegal drugs. Indeed, this bill is designed to strike straight at the heart of the problem, at the criminals who produce and traffic in illegal drugs. I commend the bill to honourable members.

Debate adjourned.

POISONS AND DANGEROUS DRUGS AMENDMENT BILL
(Serial 86)

Bill presented and read a first time.

Mr DALE (Health and Community Services): Mr Speaker, I move that the bill be now read a second time.

It gives me no pleasure at all to present this bill. It is not something which I believed that I would ever be doing. To understand why this bill is being presented, one must understand the magnitude of the threat of AIDS to the people of the Territory and, for that matter, to the people of the world. In this bill, we are dealing with subjects that, until AIDS, were taboo. We are dealing with matters that were and are illegal and we are saying that these illegal things are not as important as what we have before us now.

The bill deals with matters which are strongly emotional and intensely personal. For me personally, the issues are difficult. As a policeman, for 12 years I enforced the law as it stood, prosecuting homosexuals. I pursued drug suppliers and users just as members of the Northern Territory Drug Squad do today. I saw the horror of drug addiction. I read and acted on the criminal intelligence reports which gave details of the extent to which the profits to suppliers of illegal drugs worked their way through society. I can assure all honourable members that I still experience the same disgust and dismay about the purveyors of illegal drugs which I experienced as a police officer.

The bill before the House will assist the police in their fight against illegal drugs. It will also do something which some will say condones the use of illegal drugs. As minister responsible for health, I am faced with an imperative which cannot be ignored. It is not my style to duck problems, to say: 'Leave it alone, and maybe it will not hit us'. As a footballer, policeman and parent for some 21 years, and now as a politician, I believe that, if you have a problem, then you must deal with it. We must tackle head-on the problem we face now or it will roll right over the top of us. Let there be no misunderstanding about that.

We are dealing today with a bill which contains a very simple clause which removes the legal restrictions on the supply of needles and syringes to illegal drug users. The need for the provision has its genesis in the magnitude of the AIDS problem. To understand the reasons for the introduction of a needle exchange program, it is necessary to have an appreciation of what AIDS is doing and will do to people unless we stop it now. The one essential fact that we must keep in our minds at all times is that now, today, we have the ability to stop AIDS. We will not do it by ignoring it or by pretending that it will not affect us or ours. We will do it by learning and caring and by protecting ourselves. That is what this bill is all about.

The October 1988 issue of one of the most highly respected scientific journals in the world, Scientific American, is devoted to AIDS. I understand that this is the first time in many years that this journal has devoted an entire edition to one subject. Mr Speaker, I table the October edition of Scientific American.

The editorial article starts with a chilling statistic and I quote: 'During the next President's term, the number of Americans dead or dying from AIDS will probably exceed 250 000'. These are all people who might otherwise have led productive lives. Further, and I quote again: 'The National Academy of Sciences and the Institute of Medicines earlier this year (1988) estimated that the direct annual cost of caring for AIDS patients will rise to more than \$10 000m by 1991'.

Mr Speaker, that is America. What of Australia? Australia ranks in the top 10 countries in the world in terms of the incidence of AIDS. This is one occasion when being in the top 10 is certainly not a cause for celebration. We rank along with the USA, Brazil, Mexico and parts of Europe as an important AIDS nation. Part of this is because, as a nation, we have taken the problem seriously. We have studied it, sought methods of stopping it and reported it. The other aspect is that, quite simply, there are many people in Australia who have full-blown AIDS or who are HIV infected. I am advised that there are now 1100 cases of full-blown AIDS in Australia. By 1993, we can confidently expect to have 30 000 people who have AIDS or AIDS-related diseases in Australia. These are conservative estimates. Others double or treble that figure. I remind honourable members that these are not numbers; they are people - mothers, fathers and children.

In the Northern Territory, we are always confronted by the possibility of the spread of infectious diseases in our community. By and large, infectious diseases are not insurmountable problems. We have good defences in the Territory, which I outlined in a statement on the last sitting day. The Scientific American of October carries an article written by the 2 eminent scientists who established the cause of AIDS, Dr Gallo and Professor Montagnier, who state:

As recently as a decade ago, it was widely believed that infectious disease was no longer a threat in the developed world. The remaining challenges to public health, it was thought, stemmed from non-infectious conditions such as cancer, heart disease and degenerative diseases. That confidence was shattered in the early 1980s by the advent of AIDS. Here was a devastating disease caused by a class of infectious agents - retroviruses - that had first been found in human beings only a few years before.

The world's leading scientists know that AIDS is a deadly and insidious disease. However, there are members of this House who are not convinced that

it is a sufficiently important problem to justify such a measure as I now propose. One of the reasons for this disbelief is the statistics. At present, 1100 Australians are suffering from AIDS, but that statistic refers only to the final stage of the disease. These people who are dying are the official statistics, the known victims. They represent the tip of an iceberg. We cannot check beneath the surface. It may take 5 or perhaps 8 years before a person infected with the AIDS virus shows symptoms of AIDS. The figures only take on their true meaning when one realises that the number of cases is doubling every 14 months. It does not take a mathematical genius to calculate the toll which we will have to deal with in 5 or 8 years time, irrespective of what we do now. In just 5 years, 30 000 AIDS patients will be dying at a direct financial cost of over \$1000m. In terms of loss of productive people, family breakdown, anguish and pain, we cannot even begin to comprehend the cost.

Let me quote again from the Scientific American. I refer to an article written by Johnathon Mann, James Chin, Peter Piot and Thomas Quinn. Under a photo of a funeral, the following words appear:

Funerals for AIDS victims are daily occurrences in Kyotera, a town from which most of the merchants have fled and where most of the children are now orphans. HIV, which causes AIDS, infects as many as 15% or 20% of certain segments of the adult urban population of Uganda, as well as that of the Congo, Rwanda, Tanzania, Zaire and Zambia.

The article also makes a point which I believe must be understood:

Ever since the AIDS pandemic was initially recognised in 1981, it has been met by denial and a gross underestimation of its potential magnitude. The pandemic is still in its early stages and its ultimate dimensions are difficult to gauge, but by now it is apparent that AIDS is an unprecedented threat to global health.

In light of facts and analyses such as these, I am frankly dumbfounded that there are those in the community and in this House who do not recognise the problem. But there are! Many rumours and ideas have been put forward, some of them as insidious as the disease itself. Until these are dealt with, it is clear that there will still be those who will disagree with the simple move proposed in the bill before the House today.

The most difficult of these ideas, and the one which has caused the greatest amount of debate, is the assertion that only homosexuals contract AIDS. There are many variations on this theme. These include the notion that homosexuals are the only people who are spreading AIDS and that AIDS can only be transmitted through an unnatural act - that is, anal intercourse. I am no arbiter of public morals, which are not the subject of this debate. In any case, the AIDS virus simply does not care whether a victim is heterosexual or homosexual, male or female, young or old. The fact is that the current statistics of AIDS cases and HIV infection show an overwhelming preponderance of homosexual victims.

There are 3 infection patterns worldwide. In North and South America, western Europe, Scandinavia and New Zealand, about 90% of cases are homosexual males or users of intravenous drugs. In Africa, the Caribbean and some areas of South America, the primary mode of transmission is heterosexual sex and the number of infected males and females is roughly equal. In eastern Europe, north Africa, the Middle East, Asia and parts of the Pacific, most of the

infected people apparently have had contact with people from another area of infection. Epidemiologists will research and study these patterns. They will find reasons for the trends and will find a way to help us. In the meantime, it is very clear that both homosexual men and heterosexuals can spread AIDS. Intravenous drug users assist the spread into the heterosexual community.

It is also important to realise that our statistics, those which some seek to rely on, only tell us about the numbers of people who were infected 5 or perhaps 8 years ago. In 1983, Australia recorded 5 cases of AIDS. Now we have well over 1000. In an article which will be published on World Health Organisation AIDS Day on 1 December, Ita Buttrose, the first head of the National Advisory Committee on AIDS will say: 'Currently women represent about 3% of full AIDS cases in Australia. The majority of these women contracted HIV through infected blood transfusions. Eight women with full AIDS contracted the virus through heterosexual intercourse'. I remind honourable members that, 5 years ago, we had a total of 5 cases and now we have 1100.

Of course, women and heterosexual men can contract AIDS. They contract it by practising unsafe sex and by participating in intravenous drug use with shared needles. On page 108 of the Scientific American, Harvey Fineberg, the Dean of the Harvard School of Public Health, states: 'In 1987, intravenous drug users in the United States represented 16% of new AIDS cases. In the first half of 1988 that number had grown to 21%. Surveys revealed that 50% or more of intravenous drug users in New York City have antibodies to AIDS'. In Australia, a total of 91 intravenous drug users were known to be positive in New South Wales alone in May 1987. By June this year, that number had increased to 176. Those figures come from the 7 November 1988 edition of the Australian Medical Journal.

Another AIDS one-liner which is sometimes used is: 'You can't catch AIDS - you have to let someone give it to you'. Literally, of course, that is sometimes true. However, I took great exception when that statement was made by the then federal shadow minister for health at the Third National AIDS Conference in Hobart this year. Do haemophiliacs let someone give them AIDS? Do the increasing number of babies born with the disease let somebody give them AIDS? Do the people who marry someone that they have known all their lives let that person give them AIDS? Do those who are unaware and uneducated about the risks let someone give it to them? All that that one-liner indicates is a lack of humanity on the part of the persons who put it forward.

Needle exchange programs have been criticised, by those who are concerned about the use of illegal drugs, as being soft on drug users. They are seen by some as condoning illegal drug use. I am well aware of the reasons and the basis for that attitude. There is no answer to those who say we are soft on drugs. We are not comfortable with the fact that, to save the lives of young Territorians from AIDS, we have no choice. Needle exchange is one part of a strategy which we have reason to believe will work, along with a package of other strategies, to stop the spread of AIDS. Are we simply proposing a method which will help addicts to keep their habits going? The public health professionals in my department spend a large amount of time and the taxpayers' money trying to determine why people abuse substances. Neither they nor anyone in a similar field elsewhere has, to the best of our knowledge, found any evidence at all that supplying clean needles and syringes contributes in any way to people starting to use drugs or continuing to use drugs.

By the introduction of a needle exchange program, are we saying that we think drugs are okay? No. What we are saying and will continue to say is

that the reason drugs are illegal is that they are harmful. We are not legalising drugs. However, can we face it if our kids, the people for whom we are still responsible, receive a death sentence through one stupid experiment? We should always be aware that a needle or syringe which carries infected blood in almost any quantity is a very efficient means of transmission of AIDS. I believe that we must always remember that most drug addicts eventually die. Experimenters marry and have kids.

Another question which is sometimes asked is: why give free syringes and needles to drug addicts whilst charging others, such as diabetics, for them? Diabetics are now charged \$5 per 100 needles and syringes when they obtain them through the Diabetic Council. This comes to 5¢ per needle which is hardly an economic imposition. We have no intention of handing out 100 needles at a time to drug addicts. I trust that no one will suggest that we should hand out 100 at a time and charge \$5.

Universal testing is yet another excuse for doing nothing now. Some have suggested, in their wisdom, that by testing the whole population we could establish the size of the problem and develop a database which would allow us to target programs more effectively. Superficially, this would seem to be a reasonable, rational approach to a major public health problem. Let us examine it a little further. Firstly, databases do not save lives. Preventive action saves lives. There is now a mass of epidemiological data which tells us, without any shadow of doubt, about the problems we will face in the future if we do not act.

It is quite true that we do not know how many people in the Northern Territory are infected with the virus. We do not know the numbers of homosexual men, heterosexual men, women, Europeans or Aborigines who will eventually develop full-blown AIDS. If we tested the entire population of the Territory, we could say that we know. But let us consider some essential questions. How would we do it? How would we test everyone and ensure that those tested did not mix with those untested while the program continued? How would we deal with tourists, business operators and politicians who come to the Northern Territory and, indeed, frequently leave it? Would we have tourist testing gates at Kulgera, Timber Creek, Camooweal and, perhaps, Wollongorang Station? Further, what would we do with the results? Would we isolate those infected? Would we isolate their family and friends as well? Would we establish a camp for them, a concentration camp? What if we missed a few?

I will go further still, Mr Speaker. What would we do with the results? At the moment, we know that there are a number of people infected with the virus in the Territory. My officers are aware that at least 5 hard core intravenous drug addicts are infected. We know that there are at least 30 to 40 hard core intravenous drug users and we know that these people are at the end of their time. Our drug abuse and communicable diseases experts and community workers who operate close to the problem are also aware that what we know for certain is only the edge of the shadow. They estimate that between 300 and 500 people in the Territory use illegal drugs and inject them. This number doubles, we believe, during the dry season.

My department already has several canaries down the mine. All prisoners are tested. The test is offered to all pregnant women. All STD clinics strongly recommend the test to all persons suffering from STDs. Testing, and its necessary prerequisite counselling, are clearly available at community health centres and hospitals, as well as general practitioner's surgeries. The most important question for those who advocate testing is what we would do

differently if we had different figures. It is extremely unlikely that the effect of the problem is less than I have indicated. For the moment, however, let us assume that we know it all. Should we do anything differently? We are fighting a war. Let there be no mistake about that. The enemy has powerful weapons and we have only slingshots. We need to use them all while we have the chance. If we educate effectively now, we have a chance. If we cut down the incidence of transmission by intravenous drug users, we have a chance.

There are other fallacies, ideas and theories which also serve to confuse a community which is concerned about AIDS. One honourable member from this House and one from the federal House of Representatives has said that the doctors should be running the fight against AIDS - not the politicians, not the homosexuals. This argument appeals to those who dislike homosexuals or politicians or perhaps both equally. The National Health and Medical Research Council heads the list in Australia of doctors fighting AIDS. These most senior public health administrators, doctors in the universities, research laboratories, hospitals, education programs, are all involved. In my own department, the Chief Medical Officer and doctors throughout the department, including the Communicable Diseases Centre, are leading the fight against the disease. Of course, homosexuals are vocal on the issue. We know that the disease has them very squarely in its sights. If only all politicians could take their responsibilities seriously in this matter.

There are those who say that needle exchange programs do not work and that, when a drug addict needs a fix, he will not hang around waiting for a clean needle. Again, numbers from other places give us an indication of the way to go. In Edinburgh, where there was no needle exchange program, the number of intravenous drug users infected climbed from 0% to 51% in 2 years and, in Milan, from 0.7% to 35% in 4 years. One in every 34 babies born in New York is infected with the AIDS virus and dies within a year of birth. Most have mothers who are intravenous drug users. There is no needle exchange in New York. Again, the Scientific American, in an article on page 111 written by the Dean of the Harvard School of Public Health, tells us that between 10 000 and 20 000 children are expected to have HIV in 1991. A tenfold to twentyfold increase will occur by the end of this year. The most recent Australian figures indicate that 3% to 4% of intravenous drug users in Australia are infected.

I put one simple choice to the House. Do we reject needle exchange and deal with up to 50% of intravenous drug users being infected by the time of the next election or do we try a tactic that has worked well in other places? 70% of people responding to a recent Sydney survey said that they had not shared a needle since the program started. Do we sit on our hands and feel self-righteous or do we have a go? Do we wait until we have to become expert in paediatric AIDS because 60 children a year in the Territory are born with AIDS? AIDS is a problem but so is intravenous drug use. Will we stop AIDS but see more people using drugs because needles are easier to obtain? This has been a real concern. It is therefore something which is being watched very closely. There is not one shred of evidence which shows that needle exchange programs have increased the incidence of illegal drug use anywhere in the world.

I believe that I have dealt with each of the concerns that has actually been expressed to me. There is, however, something which has not been expressed but which may be at the root of many of the concerns which are being articulated by people. Let us face it, in this House we think we are all pretty safe. We believe that the only people who are going to contract AIDS are society's outsiders - drug addicts and homosexuals. We do not have

contact with these people, or at least we do not have contact with them in terms of their image as it is presented on television. The emaciated AIDS victim dying in a hospital bed or the drug addict living in squalor, covered in sores, malnourished and dirty, are a long way from suburban life in Darwin. The fact is that these people are at the end of the line. In the beginning, however, the users of drugs are very normal people - businessmen, teenagers, lawyers, doctors, public servants and housewives. Those whom we see on television are those who tried drugs and could not kick the habit. There are also those who do manage to get off drugs - the experimenters. We may be safe enough if we are careful, but most of us have children. Without needle exchange, we are sentencing the experimenters to a game of Russian roulette without even trying to prevent it. The experimenters are our kids. Again, numbers are important. Very few people use intravenous drugs. The number who have sex is somewhat larger. Figures at STD clinics show that the largest group infected is heterosexual males. These are followed by heterosexual females. Homosexuals come a very poor third.

Mr Speaker, the issue this bill seeks to address is complex and I have gone to great pains to get at the issue and deal with the arguments. The bill itself is relatively simple. Clause 4 removes the restriction on the supply of needles and syringes to intravenous drug users through authorised needle exchange programs and pharmacies.

Clauses 5 to 7 ensure that the police have powers and the tools necessary to more effectively deal with illegal drugs. These clauses attack the suppliers, the couriers and the users. Powers of search are strengthened. Police will now have the power to order persons to remain on premises that are the subject of a search warrant until a search is completed. At present, police have power to detain and search people on premises prior to carrying out a search of the premises. The changes will allow body searches to take place after evidence is found on those premises. The bill will also enable the judicial process to work more smoothly by removing the necessity for all drug offences, other than minor cannabis-related offences, to be heard in the Supreme Court.

Clause 6 relates to an amendment to section 67 of the act. At present, under section 67, a person in possession of more than a specified amount of a prohibited drug in schedule III of the act or cannabis is presumed to have the drug for the purpose of supply unless the contrary is proved. This qualification is easily exploited by defendants and the Crown is rarely, if ever, in a position to rebut the defendant's evidence to the contrary. This works against the intention of such a provision which sets a limit on what a person might reasonably possess for personal use in recognition of the difficulties of obtaining evidence that a person is engaged in selling drugs.

The amendment tightens up this provision by introducing a 2-tiered approach to the presumption that a person possess a drug to sell. A person possessing an amount of a drug greater than the lower threshold specified in the newly-proposed schedule III as set out in clause 12 will be presumed to be a supplier unless the court is satisfied that this is not the case. A person possessing the amount equal to or greater than the upper threshold will have no defence to being guilty of the offence of possession for supply. The quantities presently prescribed are to become the lower threshold and the upper threshold is to be fixed at double this amount, except for cannabis and heroin. The quantities prescribed for these drugs are to be reduced. In the case of cannabis, the present quantity of 50 g is to become the upper threshold, the lower threshold thereby being 25 g. For heroin, the present quantity is 0.5 g. The lower threshold is to be 0.4 g and the upper threshold

0.8 g. The lower thresholds have been calculated on the basis of the quantity consumed by an average user over a period of 14 days on information supplied by the Northern Territory Police Drug Squad. Schedule III has also been revised to include cannabis which is currently referred to separately in section 67(2). Amphetamines, cocaine and their derivatives have also been added.

The Poisons and Dangerous Drugs Act was commenced in 1983 and there has not been a review of fines since its introduction. Clause 13 amends the act to increase fines to reflect the effects of inflation over this period.

I note that the provisions relating to police powers have recently been drafted. I have not previously tabled them for comment. I will be seeking constructive comment on those clauses from the Northern Territory Law Society, the Northern Territory Bar Association and the Police Powers Committee prior to the bill completing its passage and will be ready to accept reasonable amendment.

This bill is not soft on drugs, drug suppliers or drug users. Police powers to combat this evil will be considerably increased, but we cannot allow our quite reasonable fear of illegal drug use to remove a chance to combat the spread of AIDS. A needle exchange program is simply one tactic. The program will be monitored and properly evaluated. If there needs to be a change, then it will be recommended. I have another quote from the October 1988 Scientific American, at page 108: 'Critics oppose any appearance of state-sanctioned drug use and doubt the efficacy of exchange programs. Advocates hold the preservation of life as a higher value and argue in favour of trial programs'.

This bill votes for life and says: 'Let's have a go'. In the debate that will take place, let us cast our minds to the future. Again, I quote from the Dean of the Harvard School of Public Health:

36% of cases in New York are related to intravenous drug use. The majority of infected women in the United States, who constituted more than 10% of the new cases of AIDS in the first half of 1988, are exposed by intravenous drug use, and an estimated 70% of HIV infection in newborns is related to intravenous drugs.

I have said all along that we must save our Territorian children. On few occasions, and certainly never previously on such an important matter, has this parliament been required to stand up and proudly say that it has the ability to show leadership to the people of the Northern Territory. This is such an opportunity. We are duty bound to take the initiative and show our leadership, despite the obvious political pressure on us. If the experts are right, those who would seek to stop such measures as those proposed will have to face the AIDS survivors. These will be children who have lost their parents or parents who have seen their children and grandchildren fade away and die. Will members of this House be able to look them in the eye and say that they tried or will they be among those who will have to try to explain that they did nothing because it was politically expedient or because they had not taken the trouble to educate themselves fully about the disease? Mr Speaker, I commend the bill to the Assembly.

Mr BELL (MacDonnell): Mr Speaker, because of the importance of this matter, the opposition intends to respond forthwith. I would like to preface my remarks by thanking the honourable minister for the briefings on needle exchange that have been made available to the members of the opposition and for his cooperative approach in relation to the issue of needle exchange. In

my comments, I will not reiterate many of the issues and many of the facts and figures that were made available to me during that briefing but I will refer to those which I believe are important in reinforcing the case that the honourable minister has made in terms of the appropriateness of needle exchange. It is particularly important for the opposition to do so in view of the fact that some members of this Assembly have indicated their refusal to offer unanimous support in this House for the needle exchange program. In the course of my comments, the reasons for my support, as well as the consideration given to the matter by myself and this opposition collectively, will become clear to honourable members.

One barrel of the bill is acceptable to the opposition and I will return to that shortly. The other barrel, however, is not acceptable to this side of the House. I will be seeking leave, at the end of my comments, to continue to my remarks during the first sittings of next year when this bill will be further debated. I will do so on the basis of the extraordinary increase in police powers which the minister partially referred to in his second-reading speech. I am flabbergasted to find that, in legislation which relates to what is arguably the most sensitive public policy issue that is confronting this Assembly during these sittings, for some spurious reasons associated with a lack of consensus in the ranks of the government, it has used this bill to inappropriately link 2 supremely important public policy issues.

As I have indicated, whilst the opposition supports the government in terms of its strategy to fight AIDS, we either oppose or have grave reservations about its stance in respect of new legislative provisions relating to the possession of drugs and the increased police powers accompanying them. Having expressed those reservations on the basis of my study of the legislation today, I have to say that the opposition is in no way attempting to slow down the fight against drug pushers or seeking to condone illegal drug use. We are simply saying that those major policy issues should not be linked in a single piece of legislation. I will return to that point.

In his second-reading speech, the minister very eloquently put the arguments in favour of a needle exchange program and the opposition wishes to state quite clearly that it supports that program. The opposition believes that the bill is an important one and we commend the minister and the government for their good intentions in this regard. There are some aspects of the bill which cause us concern but those do not relate to the needle exchange program, and we congratulate the minister for initiating legislation to enable it to proceed legally. We will be adopting a bipartisan approach to that. We will be examining the bill closely, however, to see whether there are further aspects of the legislation, in addition to those already identified, which will cause us concern.

During the briefing that I received, I was impressed by the conscientious approach being taken by departmental officers and their concern at the need to ensure that providing clean syringes and clean needles is not an illegal act under section 12 of the Criminal Code. That concern, of course, is appropriate. I think that there is a misconception in the public mind. There has been some confusion between the provision of needles and syringes under this particular program and some idea that other programs such as methadone treatment might be involved. I understand that, for example, there are programs in the United Kingdom which involve the legal supply of heroin. I believe there has been some confusion in the public mind about those 2 types of program, and I think that a clear distinction needs to be made between them in view of some of the more emotive contributions which may be made to debate on the matter. The honourable minister made that clear in his second-reading speech, and I seek to emphasise the point.

Anybody who has read any material on the subject of the Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome would realise that it is no longer associated entirely with the sexual activity of homosexuals nor is it specifically associated with intravenous drug users. It has gone well and truly beyond that, as the minister explained. It affects heterosexual adults and also children. People who use drugs intravenously, introducing drugs into their bodies with needles and syringes, are found among the non-homosexual community and that group needs to be targeted effectively.

The Minister for Health and Community Services explained what we need to do about this problem. Obviously, he has read the material carefully and has attended conferences and seminars on the subjects to which the legislation relates. It is commendable that he has been able to convince Cabinet of the facts and figures on the incidence of AIDS and measures being adopted throughout the world in an attempt to combat this insidious threat to mankind. To our tremendous relief, the personal opinions of Cabinet ministers have not stood in the way of determining government policy on an issue that may affect them and their families in the long run, as it may affect the families, relations and acquaintances of all members of this Assembly.

People who use intravenous drugs are not always obvious. They do not all weigh 6 stone, have black shadows under their eyes and act as if they are unaware of what is happening around them. Some of them manage to maintain a responsible job and indulge in their drug habit on weekends only. The incidence of intravenous drug use is increasing throughout the world. It is an enormous problem and one that has to be tackled. Already, Darwin has a population of intravenous drug users which numbers 300 to 500 and which increases, as the minister explained, to something like 1000 in the dry season. Other regional centres have stable populations of intravenous drug users. It is anticipated that, within 3 years, Darwin will have an increase of 250 people infected with HIV. The extent of the problem is not as significant in Darwin or the Northern Territory as it is in places like Sydney and Melbourne. However, it is significant enough to warrant serious attention because of the numbers already infected with the virus. We must not be complacent. We need to protect our community.

It has been said by a member of this Assembly that 'the provision of needles and syringes is a means of providing increased opportunities for people to use drugs'. I would be fascinated to see the link between the provision of needles to diabetics and the incidence of drug use among their children. According to the logic of the statement that I quoted, one would expect that, having witnessed their parents injecting insulin, children of diabetics would also become hooked. Of course, it is a nonsensical argument. It contains no logic and it reflects absolutely no understanding of the reasons which lead people to take drugs.

There are a range of reasons why people abuse drugs. Odyssey House, a well-known international drug treatment agency, both in the United States and Australia, has issued statements indicating that 90% of the agency's residents are the victims of child sexual assault. The link between sexual assault and the means to obliterate the pain via the use of drugs has been clearly demonstrated. It is not good enough simply to say that drug takers are the cause of their own demise. The situation is much more complicated than that and I believe that some of the statements which have emanated from members of the crossbenches indicate that a little more compassion and understanding is called for in this regard. People who habitually use drugs tend to have very serious emotional problems which require intensive and appropriate treatment. A well-balanced individual may experiment with drugs but it is less likely that he will become addicted.

The nature of the drug subculture is such that, often, more than 1 person is involved in the ritual and needles are shared. If someone is addicted and is in need of a further hit, he will want his share quickly. He will not want to bother about cleaning the needle. However, if a clean needle is there, he can use it immediately. The needle exchange program is a way of providing a safe supply of needles. They are not handed out, fully loaded with drugs and ready for use. They are exchanged for needles and syringes that have been used.

I will turn to the United States experience which is now regarded as the future scenario for Australia. The statistics relating to AIDS cases in the United States as at July 1988 give us an insightful look at the extent of intravenous drug use. The United States experience has shown that IV users are the second-largest risk group in terms of AIDS and are also the major source of infection of heterosexual partners and children. Of the total adult population of AIDS cases, 19% are heterosexual intravenous drug abusers and 7% are homosexual or bisexual drug abusers. In other words, a total of 26% of adult AIDS cases contracted AIDS through needles.

Now let us consider what is happening to children who, incidentally, are members of the fastest growing group of reported AIDS cases in the United States. Of the total number of children with AIDS, 78% are the children of mothers with AIDS or who are at increased risk of AIDS. The children acquire the disease before, during and after birth. Babies born to mothers with HIV often develop fatal illnesses in infancy and often die within a year. Most of the cases can be traced to intravenous drug use by the child's mother or her sexual partner. Mr Speaker, I am sure you will find information of this sort as disturbing as I do. Women constituted more than 10% of the new cases of AIDS in the US during 1988. There are regional variations in the US as there are in Australia. In New York alone, for example, 35% of all cases relate to intravenous drug abuse. Ignoring the indicators in the US is akin to hiding one's head in the sand like an ostrich.

Let me turn to the Scottish example. Data on the number of HIV antibody positive people reported in Scotland between 1983 and 1986 indicate that IV drug users accounted for 63% of transmission. Intravenous drug use is serious, not only for the users themselves but for the innocent people with whom they happen to have sexual encounters or those who are born to them. They are the ones who have absolutely no say in it at all. To stand by and not give approval to the introduction of appropriate measures is to stand condemned for the rest of one's life.

Mr Speaker, let me turn for a moment to the history of needle exchange programs elsewhere. They have been trialed in a number of American cities. Criticism in those places has been along the lines of that expressed by the member for Barkly. For example, it has been argued that they legally sanction illicit drug use. Those in support of the programs have indicated that anything which saves a life is worth a try. The minister has already provided an overview of what is happening in other states of Australia. It is apparent that the Northern Territory is falling into line in a matter which is consistent with the recommendations of the Ministerial Council on Drug Strategy which was held in October this year.

Needle exchange programs in other states have been successful. In an evaluation of a Sydney-based pilot exchange program, data reveals that the return rate of needles and syringes is not as high as is desirable. The evaluation cites the following reasons: firstly, the limited hours during which the service is open; secondly, the presence of police in the environs;

thirdly, the inadequate supply of syringes and needles; and, fourthly, the availability of drugs on the streets. The most important reason, however, was that 70% of the people using the service had not shared a needle or syringe since beginning to use it. This meant that there was a reduction in the number of needles being shared and an increase in the safe disposal of needles. In the ACT, a pilot program operated with the total support of the police. This contributed to the success of the program which resulted in a 48% return rate. It was argued that the establishment of the program created the need for it.

The return rates for the pilot program in the Territory have not been high to date. Perhaps this is because the program is new and people are still aware of the fact that it does not have full legal status. Given that the Sydney program had similar teething problems, it is highly likely that the Territory's program can develop and become an essential outreach service.

Clearly, the overseas experience has been that, in countries where clean needles and syringes are available, the incidence of HIV amongst intravenous drug users is lower than in countries where they are not available. In Edinburgh, where difficulty in obtaining needles and syringes resulted in increased sharing, 30% of intravenous drug users were infected with HIV within 2 years of the first indication of infection. Amsterdam began one of the first needle exchange programs in the world in 1984. A survey conducted by a municipal health service there found that over 80% of those who used needle exchange programs said that they used the needles only once and then disposed of them. Research undertaken in the United Kingdom and Holland on the impact of needle exchange programs does not indicate any significant increase in the number of people using intravenous drugs. That argument is a furphy, Mr Speaker.

We cannot ignore the results of this research and its implications for public health policy. It points to the fact that intravenous drug users are at great risk. Whilst that in itself might not cause members on the crossbenches much worry, the fact is that such people put at risk their sexual partners, their children and the unwitting children of those sexual partners. We are not treading an untrodden path in relation to needle exchange. Programs have been piloted interstate and overseas and those programs have been associated, quite clearly, with reduced HIV infection. There has been no associated increase in drug use. I see a querulous expression creeping over the face of the member for Sadadeen. I might say that that is not unusual, Mr Speaker.

Mr Collins interjecting.

Mr BELL: Mr Speaker, there is some evidence to suggest that needle exchange programs lead drug abusers to think more seriously about rehabilitation services. My recollection of the briefing which I received is that some pilot programs have had a rehabilitative aspect rather than leading to increased drug abuse because majority society is supposedly seen to condone it.

Let me make it quite clear, as I said this morning, that I do not condone drug abuse. I am no great fan of homosexuality either. I am tolerant of it but I do not encourage it. I believe that people who are homosexual or who use drugs intravenously should not be treated as pariahs but should be treated with a greater degree of compassion than some people in this Assembly seem inclined to extend. I do not believe that they should automatically be considered as architects of their own fate. Even if one is prepared to take

that attitude - as some members of this House are prepared to do - the fact of the matter is that, if they pursue opposition to this bill, they are condemning innocent people to death, as the minister has said. I have dealt with the issue of the needle exchange program and the opposition's support for it. As I have said, we commend this aspect of the bill before the Assembly and I am quite happy to place on record my support for the minister.

There is one aspect of the briefing I attended to which I wish to refer. The member for Koolpinyah also attended the briefing. My recollection of the minister's second-reading speech is that he did not refer to the figures in relation to people who were termed the 'dabblers and experimenters'. It is estimated that, in 1987, 100 000 people between the ages of 15 and 25 experimented with drugs. I ask honourable members to consider the impact, in terms of that figure, of not supporting the needle exchange program. I understand that the figure is a conservative estimate of the National Campaign Against Drug Abuse. I ask honourable members to consider the implication of that figure, given the progress of the AIDS infection from high-risk drug users into the broader community. I think it is appropriate, in this context, to indicate that the opposition is prepared to accept urgency in relation to clause 4 of the bill.

Mr Speaker, having said that, let me turn for a moment to the extraordinary business of the extended police powers which are included in the bill. I have only had a copy of the bill for 24 hours and, until my attention was drawn to those police powers, I had no idea of what they involved. I will begin by referring to clause 6. Proposed section 67 toughens up the law in relation to the use of cannabis and provides a presumption of guilt which simply does not exist in the present act. I am quite unable to understand the process which the government is adopting in this regard. The introduction of legislation in this way is something which beggars understanding.

Mr Perron interjecting.

Mr BELL: I hear mutters from the Chief Minister. I draw his attention to the fact that section 67 of the Poisons and Dangerous Drugs Act does not presume guilt at present. A person can have a room full of marijuana and, at present, he is under an obligation to prove that it is for personal use. In the context of the minister's second-reading speech, to which I will refer ...

Mr Hatton: Give it up.

Mr SPEAKER: Order!

Mr BELL: I will pick up the interjection from the member for Nightcliff simply to indicate that the hour is getting late and that he is being unusually inane. Actually, I am not sure that it is all that unusual. I think that he is suffering withdrawal symptoms of a different sort.

I really wonder what the Supreme Court will think of this. In his second-reading speech, the minister blandly said: 'At present under section 67, a person in possession of more than a specified amount of prohibited drug in schedule III of the act or cannabis is presumed to have the drug for the purpose of supply unless the contrary is proved'. Even if he has a room full of the stuff, the accused has to prove that it is for personal use. The minister went on to say that 'this qualification is easily exploited by defendants'. What a completely unsubstantiated accusation! It is a very poor way for this government to do business.

Similarly, I am alarmed by the body searches which are to be permitted under proposed section 73A. I would very much like to know how this keys in with the investigatory detention powers. My reading of the Police Administration Act is that body searches are permitted only after somebody has been charged. My reading of this bill, however, is that it empowers police officers to carry out body searches on suspicion only. There is no need to charge anybody. Police can wander into premises on the basis of reasonable doubt.

I believe that the minister's comments in his second-reading speech are inaccurate in the sense that they betray a lack of understanding of the amendment being proposed. The honourable minister said that the changes 'will allow body searches to take place after evidence is found on those premises'. I can see nothing in the bill which refers to evidence being found on the premises. The only qualification for proposed sections 72 and 73 to apply is for the officer to have reasonable grounds. Where it appears that there are reasonable grounds for believing that there are quantities of a drug in or on a premises, vehicle or vessel, police do not have to find it before carrying out body searches. They do not have to lay charges.

A member: They must have a warrant.

Mr BELL: Yes, they must have a warrant from a justice to say that they have reasonable grounds for believing that the substances are there. That is not what the minister said in his second-reading speech. He said: 'The changes will allow body searches to take place after evidence is found on those premises'. The minister has misled the Assembly. That is not what is proposed at all. It is not a condition at all that the investigating officer find actual evidence on the premises that are being searched or the person who is being searched. He does not have to do that. The safeguards on body searches that apply in the Police Administration Act do not apply. What can happen is that the officer gets the warrant from the justice. He does not need to have found anything but he can still carry out body searches. That, however, is not what the minister said.

My comments in respect of those sections cannot be exhaustive. I believe that there are a number of other issues which need to be addressed and I will not be able to do so now. Before I close, however, I will make one further reference to the extraordinary way in which the government is conducting its business in this legislation. Apparently, it has spoken to the police force. Certainly, our new Police Commissioner is a smooth talker. I refer honourable members to the comments made by the Minister for Health and Community Services in his second-reading speech. He said: 'I will be seeking constructive comment on these clauses' - these are the increased police powers - 'from the Northern Territory Law Society, the Northern Territory Bar Association and the Police Powers Committee prior to the bill completing its passage'. What an extraordinary process! This government introduces legislation in this Assembly before it has made soundings in the community. Clearly, that is extraordinary.

Let me try to guess what happened. I wish that I had been a fly on the wall in the Cabinet meeting at which the decisions were made. There must have been a heck of a barney. Ministers must have said: 'We do not like this needle exchange business. What can we do to soften the blow? Ah yes, we will give the coppers more powers. We will show that we are tough'. That approach is not quite as cynical as that of members of the crossbenches. As we heard the member for Koolpinyah say this morning, they regard it as a matter purely for political point-scoring. They are not really interested in whether people

contract AIDS or not. It is political point-scoring of a particularly cynical order.

The politics that the government has played with this legislation are quite extraordinary. Obviously, it has sought to balance one measure with another. That is an extraordinary way to do business. I think the needle exchange program and the legislation associated with it are appropriate but the increased police powers certainly are not and I have serious reservations about them. I have already referred to some of the problems and I am quite sure that closer research will reveal further flaws.

In conclusion, with the reasons and with the reservations to which I have referred, I support the legislation relating to the needle exchange program. However, I condemn in the strongest possible terms the increase in police powers in a way that can only obfuscate the public debate and debate in this Assembly on what obviously is an important public issue.

Mr PERRON (Chief Minister): Mr Speaker, I rise in this second-reading debate principally to place on record some comment in respect of the police powers component of the legislation. It is true that all members in the government experienced considerable personal agony in coming to grips with the decisions which were required in order for the government to sponsor this legislation. One would not be human if one did not have considerable difficulty in arriving at the sorts of decisions which are required to pass legislation facilitating needle exchange programs.

In this debate, no doubt, we will hear a great deal about the personal feelings of honourable members, particularly in terms of how government members have come to grips with the issues in their minds in order to proceed with measures which are not likely to be enormously popular in the electorate. There are times when one's responsibilities must override considerations of popularity in the electorate although, to the extent that education programs on the subject can be conducted, I am sure that they will be successful in convincing the majority of the community that the courses proposed in the legislation are worthy of support.

In a nutshell, I first came to grips with this issue by realising that AIDS is well and truly past the stage of being a homosexual disease. It may have started among homosexuals but it is now irrelevant whether it started there or not. The fact is that it is well and truly into the heterosexual community today and that is all that is really important to us. All we can do now is to take action which will affect what happens in the future, and that is what this legislation is intended to do.

The other factor which led me to support the legislation was my consideration of the situation of the children of today. I worry less about adults because, by the time people become adults, they should have been around long enough to come to grips with the fact that they need to educate themselves on matters such as AIDS. If people conduct their lives in an appropriate manner, AIDS should not be a problem to them in any way. It is the kids who worry me, the kids who are learning about life. I refer to the innocent kids, not the ones who are drug addicts or the ones who, on rare occasions or even once, experiment with drugs. Forget all those kids. I am worried about the rest of them - those who do not even experiment with drugs on a single occasion in their entire lives. They are at very serious risk of catching AIDS.

Somebody put it to me, in the course of discussion, that we had not convinced him that the problem was grave enough to justify the course of action we have taken in introducing a needle exchange program. I told him that we have had a couple of deaths in the Northern Territory and asked him what figure he would like to nominate as being serious enough to justify such a program. Would we have to wait until there were 5 deaths from AIDS in the Northern Territory or 10 or 20 or 50? How many do we wait for before, as legislators, we say that the matter is serious enough to justify stronger measures?

Of course, as soon as someone close to you or somebody with whom you are acquainted dies, the impact of AIDS will come home to you and you will realise that it is not simply something that happens to other people. When it happens, perhaps to a child of a person who is in this Chamber at this very minute or to a member of that person's extended family, someone to whom one can put a face, the impact will come home in a rush. At such a time, one might say to oneself as a legislator: 'I might have been able to stop that death, and not just that one but the others I know about. I could have done something about it a little while ago when the opportunity was there'. We must remember that the cases we have heard about today are a result of activity 4 or 5 years ago. That is really frightening. How many cases have been incubating during those 4 or 5 years? Goodness knows!

I move to the areas of the bill that relate to police powers because, obviously, they will become the subject of considerable debate. I precede my remarks by pointing out that it is important to demonstrate to the public that, in adopting needle exchange programs to combat the spread of AIDS, the government is not softening its stand on intravenous drug users and is prepared to get tougher with them.

Mrs Padgham-Purich: You could have fooled me.

Mr PERRON: Listen to the debate.

I must point out that, in the main, the amendments to police powers do not increase police powers to a great extent, but simply clarify the powers presently given to police in the current act. Sections 72 and 73 of the act give police the authority to conduct searches. At present, however, those sections do not make it clear whether the power to search includes the power to have a suspected person undergo a medical examination and whether such examination may include searching of the cavities of the person's body. Legal advice suggests that such power may be implied by the present wording of the 2 sections, but it is proposed that the act should be amended by clause 8 to remove any doubt. The amendment provides a clear process to be followed by police using section 145 of the Police Administration Act when they have reasonable grounds for believing that the examination may provide evidence relating to an offence under the act. Also, it will ensure that the rights of the suspected person and the examining doctor are protected.

At present, it is not clear that police have the power to require people to remain on the scene until a search is completed. It is clear that police have the power to search people on premises which are subject to a search warrant and that they could insist on doing this prior to searching the premises. However, this is not regarded as an acceptable practice and police prefer to conduct body searches where they have found evidence on the premises which leads them to believe that a body search may render evidence of an offence. For this process to be followed, there is a need for police to have authority to require people to remain until the search is completed.

Clause 7 makes it clear that police acting under a search warrant have the power to require a person to remain on the premises, near a vehicle or on a vessel which is the subject of a search warrant for a reasonable period until a search of the premises is completed. This provision will apply to those persons present at the commencement of a search or who enter or arrive at the scene during the conduct of a search. This latter provision will increase police powers but police must have reasonable cause to suspect that persons entering or arriving have committed an offence against the act.

Clause 9 amends section 74 of the principal act by ensuring that the power to use reasonable force when conducting searches is extended to persons in the vicinity of the premises or conveyance being searched or when taking those persons to places where the medical or dental examinations are to be conducted.

Clause 10 concerns improvements to the judicial process to enable cases to be dealt with more expeditiously and at less cost. At present, all drug-related offences, other than minor cases of supplying cannabis, must be heard by the Supreme Court even where the defendant desires to plead guilty. This imposes an unnecessary workload on the Supreme Court and the Court of Summary Jurisdiction, the Crown Prosecutor and the police. It is considered that adequate provisions to decide what are fit and proper cases to be dealt with summarily are contained in the Justices Act. Therefore, the amendment deletes section 83 of the Poisons and Dangerous Drugs Act which imposes conditions on what may be dealt with summarily, thereby allowing the provisions of the Justices Act to apply to drug-related offences.

Clause 11 concerns amendments to section 84(2) of the principal act to permit evidence of the results of scientific analysis of samples to be tendered by way of certificate without the consent of the person charged where the court proceeds to hear the case without the defendant being present. Currently, this can only be done when notice that this is to occur is given to the defendant 7 days prior to the hearing. Often in minor cases, defendants do not appear in court and service of the certificate is not possible. This leads to the situation where the analyst must attend court to give even very brief, uncontested evidence. The amendment removes the need for this to occur.

Clauses 6 and 12 concern amendments to section 67 of the act. At present, under section 67, a person in possession of more than a specified amount of a prohibited drug listed in schedule 3 of the act or cannabis is presumed to have the drug for purposes of supply unless the contrary is proved. Such a provision sets a limit on what a person might reasonably possess for personal use in recognition of the difficulties in obtaining evidence that a person is engaged in selling drugs.

The amendment tightens up this provision by introducing a 2-tiered approach to the presumption that a person possesses a drug to sell. A person possessing an amount of a drug at the lower level specified in the newly-proposed schedule, as set out in clause 12, will be presumed to be a supplier unless the contrary is proved. The proposed lower thresholds are calculated on the basis of the quantity consumed by the average user over a period of 14 days. This information has been provided by the Northern Territory Drug Squad. It is submitted that it is proper that the presumption of possession of a drug to sell begins to operate when the offender has more than a fortnight's supply of the substance. Persons possessing the higher level of the drug will have no defence to being guilty of the offence of possession for supply. Schedule III has also been revised to include

cannabis, which is currently referred to separately in section 67(2) and amphetamines, cocaine and their derivatives have been added.

The Poisons and Dangerous Drugs Act was commenced in 1983 and there has not been a review of fines since its introduction. Clause 13 simply amends the act to increase the fines to reflect inflation over this period. It should be noted that the periods of imprisonment have not been increased and, because anomalies were identified during the review, some terms of imprisonment have been reduced.

When deliberating on this bill, I ask honourable members to consider the fact that all states in Australia, with the exception of Tasmania, have such a program.

Mrs Padgham-Purich: 5 wrongs do not make a right.

Mr PERRON: Agreed, but I ask honourable members to consider the fact that Cabinets of varied political persuasions, including that of Queensland, which might have been expected to have a great deal of trouble in accepting a program of needle exchange, have come to the same conclusion after deliberating on the matter. The conclusion is that such programs are worth proceeding with. In the appropriate forums, all health ministers in Australia and all police ministers - portfolios which, in a sense, view things from the opposite sides of the fence - have stated their support for legislation of the type proposed. Those ministers come from all political persuasions.

By and large, doctors seem to support the needle exchange program. Church leaders support it. I have spoken with most of the church leaders in Darwin on this very subject. The Catholic church leaders support it. I believe that responsible people in the community who have deliberated on the subject and informed themselves on it concur with the course that the government is taking. I support the bill.

Mr TUXWORTH (Barkly): Mr Deputy Speaker, I must accept from the outset that I will be one of the dissenting few in terms of the government's legislation to legalise the exchange of needles. I will make some comments shortly about the amendments to the Poisons and Dangerous Drugs Bill but, in essence, I have always been a firm proponent of strong anti-drug legislation and strong penalties.

The point of view that I will put tonight on a range of issues is one that is pretty consistent with the stance that I have adopted all year. Since February this year, I have made statements to the press, held discussions with people in the medical profession, had the benefit of briefings from public health officials and engaged in regular correspondence with both the local Minister for Health and Community Services, the proponent of this legislation, and the federal Minister for Community Services and Health. I did not just sit down during the last couple of days and come up with a view that appealed to me or which I thought was right. As I said, I have been cogitating on the matter throughout the year.

Tonight, it is my intention to canvass the issues quite unemotionally. In a debate of this nature, there is no point in allowing emotion to transcend logic and common sense. I must say that I am not the least bit interested in the politics of AIDS. The minister said today that AIDS does not care, that it goes for everybody. I must say again that my concern is that we are not treating AIDS as a public health priority but as a social welfare issue. My critics might say that I do not understand AIDS. That is a proposition that

people might like to put forward, but I put this point of view. What I do understand about AIDS is that, if you get it, it kills you. That is the most basic premise that a human being has to come to grips with and it is very simple: you get it and you die.

Mr Dale: Not straight away though.

Mr TUXWORTH: The minister interjects that you do not die straight away. I am interested to hear him starting to interject because it looks as though we may be about to have one of the running discussions which we have from time to time. I must say, however, that I feel the greatest compassion for those people who have been the innocent victims of AIDS by virtue of some unfortunate contact that they have had. Contracting AIDS via a blood transfusion or through contact with infected blood whilst working in a third-world country would be one of the most unfortunate things which could ever happen to a person. The time for the AIDS virus to incubate in the body and eventually to cause death is long and painful and I do not believe that anybody deserves to suffer that fate.

I also hold the view, which might seem extreme to some, that AIDS is probably the greatest threat that mankind has ever faced. In my view, we are treating it rather lightly and we need to treat it a little more seriously. I have said it before and I will say it again tonight that, if we were dealing with some other disease of our age such as smallpox or TB, diseases which kill in a very short time, we would be ...

Mr Dale: Smallpox has been eradicated.

Mr TUXWORTH: It is interesting that the minister continues to interject. He was happy to be listened to quietly but he is not prepared to listen to anybody else's point of view. He had a chance to appear on television to debate this matter tonight ...

Mr Dale: I did not.

Mr TUXWORTH: ... but he did not want to be in it.

Mr Dale: I did not.

Mr TUXWORTH: You did so. You told the ABC that you would not be in it.

Mr Dale: They were going to get back to me.

Mr TUXWORTH: Mr Deputy Speaker, smallpox and TB are diseases which will kill very quickly. When mankind was confronted with them, enormous steps were taken to isolate cases, identify carriers, inoculate people, put educational programs in place and provide special facilities. Hundreds of steps were taken to ensure that those diseases were dealt with because their capacity to kill was so frightening and so quick. AIDS is worse than those diseases because it moves so slowly and is so insidious. Its deathly stalk lulls the community into a false sense of security.

The bottom line is that, if we really want to fight AIDS, we must be prepared to identify the people who have it. When you really get down to tin tacks, that is what we are talking about. I sympathise with that approach. There is an underlying feeling in the community that we need to do something about AIDS but that we should not openly identify AIDS sufferers because of the personal trauma that they will experience. That trauma will be great for

anybody. It could happen to anyone here. It is understandable that people do not want that sort of information made available. The best way to avoid doing it is not to use the medical processes which would normally be pursued with a disease as fearsome as this. The failure to do that is, in my view, slowing down the battle against AIDS.

It is not unreasonable that we do some straight talking. Several speakers have stated tonight that there are 3 major risk groups: homosexuals, intravenous drug users and bisexual drug users. The big question is: who are they and how do we handle them? Most people in those categories know who they are. I do not know who they are, but they know. The question is whether society really needs to know who they are and, if it does, what should be done when it finds out. The minister asked what difference the collection of such information would make. He asked if it would alter the things that we are doing. The fact is that, in the recent history of containing diseases, outbreaks and plagues, basic information about the disease is what gives the capacity to fight it. If that basic information is not established, there will be no effective program in the long term. I am prepared to concede that it would be very difficult to establish a program which compulsorily screened everybody in the community and obtained 100% coverage. However, honourable members would recall that, during the course of the program to eliminate TB, screening went on for 20 years.

Mr Dale: Sure, but we cannot cure AIDS. You can cure TB.

Mr TUXWORTH: Mr Deputy Speaker, the honourable minister says that we can cure TB. Before anybody cured anything, however, they identified the problem. They identified people with the disease and isolated them so that they could be dealt with. There is an argument for the compulsory testing of some people in the community and I do not say that facetiously or merely to encourage debate. There are people in the community, such as prison officers, who ought to have the protection of knowing whether the people they are dealing with have AIDS or not. The minister will say that the prisoners are already being tested. I believe that is proper. There is also a good argument for the testing of patients and staff in hospitals. It is not unreasonable for patients to know that those surrounding them and treating them are free of AIDS. Because hospital staff run the risk of needle cross-infection as a result of treating patients, it is not unreasonable for them to know whether or not the patients with whom they are dealing have AIDS.

There is an argument - and it has been voiced quite loudly in some quarters - that members of the armed services should all be tested for AIDS. If we look closely at the issue, there is also an argument for testing members of the police force.

Mr Dale: What about politicians?

Mr TUXWORTH: Perhaps there is also an argument for that, particularly in terms of setting an example and showing that such testing is necessary. We certainly should consider it.

A comment made to me this week during the course of a discussion I had with health officials is very relevant in this context. One of the senior health officials told me that he was not in favour of compulsory testing. He said that he was happy to work to try to solve the problem of AIDS but did not believe that he should have to subject himself to a test. I would have thought that, if one was in the business of leading the fight against AIDS, one very positive way of doing so would be to set the example of taking the

test. Although that health official is entitled to that personal view, it stunned me that a person who is professionally involved in the fight against AIDS would adopt such a stance.

I turn now to the needle exchange program. I say to the honourable minister that, no matter how logical such a program may appear to him, the community is appalled at the prospect of introducing a program to provide free needles for people to facilitate an illegal habit simply on the basis that it will make it easier for those people to reduce the spread of another disease. Perhaps the honourable minister has not identified that feeling in the community or perhaps he has and does not think that it matters. The reality, however, is that people are shocked and are asking what will come next.

Mr Dale: So we do not do it for that reason. Is that what you are saying?

Mr TUXWORTH: Mr Deputy Speaker, the honourable minister asks whether that is a reason for not proceeding with the program. Let me say that what is looming large in the mind of citizens is the prospect that, if we are prepared to legalise the use of needles today, we may be prepared to legalise the use of the drugs themselves tomorrow.

Mr Dale: That is what you are telling them.

Mr TUXWORTH: No. Mr Deputy Speaker, I will quote from a couple of documents, beginning with page 455 of the November 7 edition of the Medical Journal of Australia. I will be happy to table a copy of the journal so that all members can take it away and comment on it at a later stage. The writer of the article, Dr David Hawks, Director of the National Centre for Research into the Prevention of Drug Abuse, Curtin University of Technology, Perth, says:

The basis for the proposition that some intravenous drug abusers should be provided with heroin in an injectable form has been put forward most persuasively by Drew and Taylor, although it should be emphasised that this proposal is only one of the several that have been made by them. Drew and Taylor's proposal acknowledges that the sharing of needles, which is prevalent among some intravenous drug abusers, is a known route of HIV infection and that such behaviour not only endangers the drug abusers themselves but also their sexual partners who otherwise may not be at risk.

Mr Deputy Speaker, to say that people like myself are putting forward the view that drugs will be next is nonsense.

Mr Dale: You are in this debate.

Mr TUXWORTH: I am quoting from a medical journal which is also putting that view forward. It has to be discussed. I will refer to another paragraph which I am happy to table for honourable members.

Mr Dale: In the context of the debate and in accordance with standing orders.

Mr TUXWORTH: It is a quotation from the editorial of the Courier Mail of Saturday 26 November 1988, which is headed 'AIDS - The Tougher Options'. One sentence says: 'Quite clearly, governments have to make some tough decisions, particularly on such issues as legalisation of some hard drugs,

decriminalisation of homosexual acts and prostitution'. Mr Deputy Speaker, whatever view the minister holds about the propriety of legalising the distribution of needles, there are many people in the community who are appalled by the idea because it is quite obvious that the next step will be the possible legal availability of drugs.

Mr Dale: What do they think about AIDS?

Mr TUXWORTH: And these inane comments that come from the minister ...

Mr Dale: Is that inane?

Mr TUXWORTH: His inane comments make the whole debate just a matter of words. No one can escape the fact, including people in the wider community, that to legally issue needles is to condone the taking of illegal substances.

Mr Dale: Is it?

Mr TUXWORTH: It is. It cannot be argued that, when a government department, the government or the minister hands out free needles, that is not condoning the use of drugs. It is. As the parent of 2 teenage children, I know that it will be very difficult to say to them that they should not take or smoke this or that because it is bad for them. Other honourable members will find themselves in the same position. Our children will be in a position to say: 'Get off your bike, Pa. The Department of Health hands out the needles. What's your problem?' Children at that age, whom we are allegedly protecting, will very quickly rationalise the fact that the government is condoning intravenous drug use by itself handing out the needles.

It also defies rational thinking to ask people in the community to believe that their local, neighbourly drug addict will go down to the nearest needle exchange and exchange his needle before he needs his fix so that he has a clean needle to use. People generally have an understanding that drug addicts are consumed by their habit. They are not totally in control of their situation. Pretending that addicts will behave in that rational fashion is just barking at the moon. We are talking about people who rob, assault and steal. They are capable of doing anything to get hold of drugs.

Mr Dale: Everybody who uses a needle fits into that category, does he?

Mr TUXWORTH: Mr Deputy Speaker, I am putting to the minister a point of view shared by many people, including some in his own Cabinet.

Mr Dale: But we have to overcome that, don't we?

Mr TUXWORTH: Pretending that the view is irrational and is not worthy of being held is no way to overcome the problem. When all of this is done, when we have legalised the needles and allowed people to obtain a new syringe, we still have a situation where it is illegal for that person to use the syringe to take drugs. The police force of the same government that is giving out the needles is still required to prosecute people who are using the needles and taking the drugs. It is no defence for a person to stand up in court and say: 'Your Honour, I do not have a case to answer because the government which is charging me for using the syringe is the same government which gave it to me'.

Mr Dale: There is no offence of using the syringe. It is using the drug.

Mr TUXWORTH: Mr Deputy Speaker, that is absolute nonsense. It makes an ass of the law.

Mr Dale: There is no offence of using the syringe. Get it right.

Mr TUXWORTH: Mr Deputy Speaker, whatever connotation the minister likes to place on it, you cannot get away from the fact that it is totally irrational for one arm of government to be handing out syringes that enable people to take illegal drugs whilst another arm arrests and prosecutes them for the same business. There is no way that anybody can tell that a needle which has been exchanged has been used once, twice or 3 times by a single person or by different people. It does not mean anything. When the drug addict puts his needle on the counter and asks for a new one, he will be asked whether he has been the only person to use it. If he says yes, what does that mean? It does not mean anything. The drug addict can tell people whatever he likes. Hospital staff are working in the dark if they believe they are carrying out tests on a syringe to see whether the person who submitted it may have AIDS.

Mr Dale: Experts throughout the world disagree with you.

Mr TUXWORTH: Mr Deputy Speaker, the world is full of experts and I concede that. This matter is one which the rest of the community feels strongly about and I am putting its point of view.

Another matter in the legislation needs to be addressed and the minister may or may not have touched on it. The fact is that some people in the community have been acting illegally, with the support of the minister, for about 6 months.

Mr Dale: That is not true.

Mr TUXWORTH: It is absolutely true, Mr Deputy Speaker.

Mr Dale: What happens during an amnesty?

Mr TUXWORTH: It is absolutely true.

Mr Deputy Speaker: Order!

Mr TUXWORTH: Mr Deputy Speaker, as the member for Koolpinyah said this morning, those people would have been working at least in contravention of section 12 of the Criminal Code. There are several problems. The first is that it is a pretty lousy situation when the Minister for Health and Community Services, together with the minister responsible for police and the Attorney-General, puts in place an illegal program with a nod and a wink and then asks government staff to carry it out in the full knowledge that they are breaking the law.

Mr Dale: And this entire parliament too.

Mr TUXWORTH: Mr Deputy Speaker, it is not this entire parliament at all because no legislation has been brought before this House to legalise what the minister proposed. In fact, when it was first raised, he denied that there was a program and said the matter was being looked at.

Mr Dale: That is a lie.

Mr TUXWORTH: Mr Deputy Speaker, later in the year, the minister said that the program had been operating since May. In May, however, he said that it was not operating at all and was being looked at because ...

Mr Dale: That is not right.

Mr TUXWORTH: I will table the documents to show that too.

Mr Dale: Please do - table them.

Mr TUXWORTH: I will in a moment. They are in there; I will get them out.

Mr Dale: I won't forget.

Mr TUXWORTH: You cannot excuse the fact that the trial program has been illegal. You cannot reasonably ask your staff to commit an offence and then pretend that it did not happen. As for asking the police to turn a blind eye because you want to trial a particular program, that is not only unfair to everybody else in the community but pretty hard on the police. They do not see their role as turning a blind eye to parts of the law which they could reasonably be expected to enforce.

I believe that this legislation should contain a deeming clause, a clause which deems employees of the government and other people who have been working with the government in this program to have been acting legally. As was said quite accurately earlier tonight, no one knows what will happen down the track with AIDS. It is perfectly possible that some people who have worked in the government program might be sued by people who received needles or by others who used the needles and it is not unreasonable that people who have worked in the program be indemnified against that. The government has had the opportunity, in at least 2 sittings, to enact legislation to protect those people and to make the program legal but nothing has been done until tonight.

The next issue is the dubious benefit to be gained from such a program. Earlier this year, we had an enormous public health program promoting the use of condoms in the Northern Territory and throughout Australia. The minister was going to put pictures of them on the sides of buses, a bubble bath full of them at the Nightcliff Hotel and all the rest of it. We are now being told by public health officials that condoms are helpful in stopping the spread of AIDS but are not entirely safe, and that people should not assume that the use of a condom is in itself a guarantee against AIDS infection. The minister's own staff is giving that advice.

The members for Sadadeen and Flynn were also at the briefing and the staff would be well-known to the minister because he sent them over. If he has any trouble with that sort of advice, he should talk to them rather than harangue other people when he hears something that he does not want to hear. Obviously the minister is not interested in another point of view and he is not prepared to let anybody put it. I would say to him, however, that we will not get support for programs to prevent the spread of AIDS by asking people to abandon long-standing community standards merely because it seems like a good idea at the time.

Mr Dale: We are asking them to do the opposite.

Mr TUXWORTH: Mr Deputy Speaker, as I said earlier, people believe that drugs will become more freely available if a needle exchange program is implemented. That view cannot be dismissed out of of hand; people will not accept that.

I would like to come back to the matter of who supports this measure and who does not. Let us dispose of all this biased pap about myself and other members on the crossbenches being the only objectors. The Deputy Chief Minister was on radio the other day saying exactly what I am saying.

Mr Dale: He did not. You are misleading everybody again.

Mr TUXWORTH: Mr Deputy Speaker, there is absolutely no doubt that the Deputy Chief Minister supported what I am saying. He said that most people in the community agreed with me and then went on to say that he agreed too.

Mr Dale: He did not. You could not lie straight in bed.

Mr TUXWORTH: Mr Deputy Speaker, I believe that comment is offensive and I would ask that the minister withdraw it.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: I think that is a fair request. I ask the minister to withdraw.

Mr DALE: I withdraw unreservedly.

Mr TUXWORTH: The Deputy Chief Minister, other members of the government and members of the opposition have also quietly expressed their concern. They are not fully in support of the legislation. They are worried about it. They do not believe it is the answer and they are simply following the Minister for Health and Community Services. They are entitled to that option but, because other people do not choose to follow it and wish to put a different point of view which is held by many members of the community, that does not make those people heretics and ratbags.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I am running out of time and there are a range of other issues that I would like to touch on. I would, however, just say this. The proposals to amend the Poisonous and Dangerous Drugs Act are a sop. The government is throwing a bone to the conservatives in order to keep them happy. If the act really needs to be changed, let it be thoroughly reviewed and updated. Let us not tack a few provisions relating to possession of drugs on the provisions relating to the needle exchange program simply to make people happy when the government feels the tide of community feeling running against it. This mishmash has been put forward as if it is a well-thought-out series of measures designed to help the police do their job. Anybody who talks to the police will tell you that they want more than that and, probably, it is reasonable for them to have more - indeed, I would be the first to promote that. However, throwing in a few token measures with the free needle exchange program, simply to offer some solace to the conservatives in the community, is not the way to go.

The Chief Minister argued that, rather than being increased, the police powers were simply being clarified. I, for one, am happy for police powers to be increased and for offences relating to the possession of drugs to be reviewed. That, however, is a matter quite separate from this legislation and I will go on record now as saying that I will not be supporting this bill which will introduce a free needle exchange program into the Northern Territory.

Mr DALE: A point of order, Mr Deputy Speaker! The honourable member gave an undertaking to table some documents. I would like him to do so.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Would the honourable member seek leave to table the documents?

Mr TUXWORTH: I did seek leave, Mr Deputy Speaker. I thought it was given.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: No, it was not.

Mr TUXWORTH: Mr Deputy Speaker, I seek leave to table the documents.

Leave granted.

Debate adjourned.

PRISONERS (INTERSTATE TRANSFER) AMENDMENT BILL
(Serial 154)

Bill presented and read a first time.

Mr DALE (Health and Community Services): Mr Deputy Speaker, I move that the bill be now read a second time.

In 1984, all states enacted legislation in terms identical to those of the Prisoners (Interstate Transfer) Act in the Northern Territory and this brought into being a national scheme under which prisoners can transfer between states. In the context of the scheme and its legislative base, the Northern Territory is a state. As the scheme has operated so far, a prisoner may be transferred to a prison in another state in the interests of his or her welfare or to stand trial for an offence committed in the other state. Transfers on welfare grounds are subject to prisons ministers in states concerned agreeing and transfers for trial are negotiated by the Attorneys-General concerned. As well, an Attorney-General in a state can seek to have a prisoner transferred to that state to stand trial for offences against state laws. Commonwealth legislation, the Transfer of Prisoners Act, operates in a parallel way so that the Prisoners Interstate Transfer Scheme embraces Commonwealth offenders held in state prisons.

The Prisoners (Interstate Transfer) Amendment Bill is aimed at overcoming shortcomings of the scheme in 2 areas. The first relates to the transfer of prisoners serving a combination of sentences for offences against both state and Commonwealth laws, referred to in the bill as joint prisoners. The second area concerns the transfer of state prisoners to another state or territory for the purpose of standing trial for Commonwealth offences. In this context, 'territory' does not include the Northern Territory which, as I pointed out, is regarded as a state in terms of the National Prisoner Transfer Scheme.

The bill makes provision for joint prisoners to transfer to other states or territories by amending sections 5, 10 and 18 of the principal act. Since a transfer order under state transfer legislation has effect only to the extent that the prisoner is a state prisoner, a corresponding order under the Commonwealth Transfer of Prisoners Act is also needed to cover joint prisoners. This is dealt with in proposed sections 6, 14A and 19. The difficulty in connection with state prisoners transferring to stand trial for Commonwealth offences will be overcome by the amendments proposed to section 10.

The National Transfer Scheme for Prisoners was originated by the Standing Committee of the Attorneys-General (SCAG) and the Prisoners (Interstate

Transfer) Amendment Bill is also derived from model legislation authorised by SCAG for all jurisdictions participating in the scheme to adopt. Enactment around Australia is well advanced and the Northern Territory is now following suit so that there will soon be in place a Prisoner Interstate Transfer Scheme applying to all prisoners, regardless of whether they are sentenced under state law, federal law or both.

The non-Aboriginal proportion of our present population is made up mostly of people who have no connection with the Territory. They have no family or friends here and generally they see themselves as isolated and without outside support. Frequently, such prisoners never have a visitor throughout their term in prison. In their circumstances, enduring a prison term can be difficult, perhaps more onerous than society ever intended. It has proved to be useful to have the Prisoner Interstate Transfer Scheme available in such situations.

It is not easy for a prisoner in the Northern Territory to gain a transfer interstate. Generally our attitude is that committing the crime in the Territory means doing the time in the Territory. However, genuine cases do receive sympathetic consideration. Out of 38 applicants for transfer on welfare grounds, 8 have been approved and recommended to interstate authorities for acceptance. Of these, 5 have actually transferred while the other 3 transfers were refused by the other jurisdictions. At the same time, the Northern Territory has accepted 2 prisoners from other states, 1 for trial here. Another 2 transfer requests from interstate were refused.

It is on the basis of the Territory's active involvement in the transfer scheme that we are concerned to support moves to improve the scheme and resolve deficiencies identified through practical experience of the scheme in operation. This is the rationale for now seeking to amend the Prisoners (Interstate Transfer) Act. Mr Deputy Speaker, I commend the bill to the House.

Debate adjourned.

EDUCATION AMENDMENT BILL (Serial 161)

Bill presented and read a first time.

Mr HARRIS (Education): Mr Deputy Speaker, I move that the bill be now read a second time.

This significant amendment to the Education Act provides a greater degree of autonomy for the tertiary education colleges of the Department of Education. It vests in college councils greater responsibility for the efficient and effective administration of colleges and the efficient and effective management of college finances and facilities. In some ways, this legislation parallels the 1982 amendment which allowed for the formal incorporation of school councils and which gave these councils control over certain affairs and activities of schools. School councils now determine the purpose for which certain funds can be used, decide how school grounds and buildings may be used when not required for usual purposes and control the maintenance of the school and its grounds. College councils, however, are given much more responsibility.

I would like to highlight some of the features of the legislation. The legislation identifies 4 colleges: the Alice Springs College of TAFE,

Batchelor College, Katherine Rural College and the NT Open College of TAFE. However, there is provision for recognition of others by means of a notice in the NT Government Gazette. This, of course, takes into account possible growth in the tertiary education sector and the development of new colleges in places such as Katherine.

The functions of a college as outlined in the bill are sufficiently broad to allow the provision of a wide range of programs of education, training and research to meet the many and varied needs of the adult population of the Territory. Specifically, the provisions of this bill do nothing to hinder the network of TAFE colleges forming agreements with the Northern Territory University, or other universities for that matter, to offer specific units or courses of study from those universities thereby enhancing the range of educational opportunities for Territorians living in regional centres.

The colleges are charged also with the significant responsibility for keeping the training and employment needs of Territorians under review. They are to submit proposals resulting from such reviews to the Technical and Further Education Advisory Council (TAFEAC) for consideration. That council will then provide the minister with appropriate advice in this regard. I wish to emphasise strongly my wish for colleges to remain responsive to the needs of business and industry.

A wide range of powers is given to the colleges to enable them to carry out their functions in the most effective and efficient way and with a minimum of outside interference. These are set out in the bill but I will mention some of them again: the right to enter into contracts, to acquire and dispose of property, to erect buildings, to determine the use of land and buildings, and to accept gifts, grants and bequests of money or property. These are examples of the greater degree of responsibility to be vested in the colleges.

College affairs will be conducted by a council with the majority of members drawn from the community served by the college and appointed by the minister. Of 17 members on each college council, 10 will be in this category. The minister will also appoint a chairman. Both staff and students will be able to elect their own representatives and the principal will also be a member. The membership of the council will be completed with the Secretary of the Department of Education or his nominee, the departmental head or nominee of the NT department responsible for employment and training and a nominee of the TAFE Advisory Council from the field of higher education. I must stress that, since the colleges must be responsive to the needs of the community they serve, councils must be representative of those communities. This has been the main concern in determining the composition of the councils.

It will be noted that college councils will be required to make the fullest practicable use of services and resources available to them through the Department of Education. A good example of this is the payment of staff salaries. Colleges may also wish to utilise departmental resources for the recruitment of staff and the development of educational facilities. This provision has been included in the bill to ensure that colleges will not have to deploy already limited financial resources for additional administrative staff. The clause is directive rather than mandatory, allowing colleges to negotiate with the department the devolution of various functions based on considerations of efficiency and economy.

Another important responsibility which the councils will have is the appointment of the principal of the college. In order to attract the most suitable person for the position, the council will not be tied to public

service or teaching service conditions. Councils have the flexibility to determine the terms and conditions for the principal. However, because of the vital importance of the position of principal, the minister retains the right to confirm or to refuse to confirm such appointments. It is not expected that this power of veto will ever have to be used.

The legislation also provides for various machinery matters such as terms of office of council members, removal of a member from office, filling vacancies, council meetings and procedures and the establishment of committees by council. Provision is also made for the councils to set fees or charges relating to courses of study or tuition. These funds will be retained by the institution and put to use for purposes decided by the council. It is anticipated that some courses will become self-supporting from charges made. At the same time, the council may exempt the student from the payment of charges if this would cause substantial hardship.

Recognition is also given to the amount of time that council members spend on college matters by empowering colleges to provide remuneration, allowances and reimbursements of expenses incurred. The rates, not applicable to public servants, will be determined by the minister, as is usual in these cases.

Consistent with the policy of establishing colleges as semi-autonomous institutions, they will not be statutory corporations for general purposes within the meaning of the Financial Administration and Audit Act. However, as the Secretary of the Department of Education is the accountable officer within the meaning of the act for all funds for technical and further education in the Northern Territory, it is necessary for some sections of that act to be applicable to colleges to ensure the proper application, control and accountability for the expenditure of such funds.

Another important provision is that permitting a council to delegate to the principal any of its powers or functions, other than the power to make by-laws. This, of course, will enable the principal to run the college with a minimum of interference and bureaucratic procedures. Such delegations, however, do not prevent a council itself exercising its powers or performing its functions if this is found necessary. Councils are also empowered to make by-laws on various matters. These include method of election of council members, matters relating to council meetings, admission of students, examinations, awards, student discipline and matters relating to vehicle driving and parking.

These are some of the features of this bill which provides for greater autonomy of tertiary education institutions of the Department of Education. Before concluding, I wish members to note that Batchelor College is included as one of the designated colleges in this bill. I should point out that a comprehensive investigation into various options for the future development of Batchelor College is currently being undertaken by my department. The provisions of this bill do not preclude special provisions for that college being enacted at a later date if such a consideration is considered desirable. I commend the bill to honourable members.

Debate adjourned.

Mr DALE: A point of order, Mr Deputy Speaker!

In the debate on the Poisons and Dangerous Drugs Amendment Bill a little while ago, the member for Barkly said he would table documents that he alleges contain evidence that I had told this House that a needle exchange program had

been conducted in the Northern Territory some time prior to my making the announcement in the House. I have not seen those documents tabled after the honourable member sought leave and gave a commitment to table them. I seek your guidance.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: The member for Barkly sought leave to table documents. He tabled those documents and it is now entirely up to the member for Barkly as to whether he wishes to seek leave to table the documents that the minister requests.

Mr DALE: Mr Deputy Speaker, the point I am trying to make is that I asked specifically for the honourable member to fulfil the undertaking that he gave. He said he would table documents relating specifically to the allegation that he made regarding the pilot needle exchange program. When seeking leave, he gave an undertaking that that was precisely the document that he would table. I have the documents that he has tabled and there is nothing in any of those that would indicate that the honourable member has complied with the undertaking which he gave.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: I understand there is no compulsion on a private member to table such documents.

STREHLOW RESEARCH CENTRE BILL
(Serial 142)

Continued from 13 October 1988.

Mr BELL (MacDonnell): Mr Deputy Speaker, in rising to speak on the Strehlow Research Centre Bill, it is difficult to know where to start. Perhaps the best way to start is formally to move the amendment to the second-reading which has been circulated.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I move that all words after 'that' be omitted and the following be inserted in their stead: 'the bill be not further considered until the Minister for Conservation lays upon the Table the documents which comprise the agreement and which are listed in the schedule to the bill, excluding the inventories contained in the agreement referred to in section 19(2) of the bill'.

Let me give a little of the history of the Strehlow Collection before I explain to honourable members why the opposition has taken the unusual step of moving a motion to amend the second-reading motion. The work of T.G.H. Strehlow is, I believe, some of the most excellent scholarship that has been carried out in the area of Aboriginal ethnography in this country. I have a deep respect for Strehlow's scholarship. I expect that I have placed that on record previously, but I think it important that that be reiterated. T.G.H. Strehlow had a world-wide reputation as a scholar and his insights into the way of life of the Aranda people, particularly of central Australia, was unparalleled. The work that he left behind him, both published and unpublished, has been a source of great insight to many other Australians. The published work is not in contention. To a large extent, his unpublished work is not in contention. The matter of contention relates to the tjuringa and the objects unknown which form part of the collection and that is the central and difficult problem with this particular bill.

The opposition has given a great deal of consideration to the bill. It has been discussed and I have sought views in various areas. There are 2 matters which are of serious concern to the opposition. The first relates

to the agreement that is the subject of the amendment which I have moved to the second-reading motion. The second relates to the recognition of the continuing, traditional, Aboriginal association with the collection.

I will table a copy of the letter which I forwarded to the Minister for Conservation and Attorney-General on Friday. It expresses the concerns of the opposition. Before I table it, however, I want to reinforce my view that the Northern Territory government has played a very constructive role in the convoluted circumstances which have come to surround the Strehlow Collection. The reason for the opposition's amendment motion has been the subject of considerable discussion with the Minister for Conservation, as will become obvious. I seek leave to table the letter, Mr Deputy Speaker.

Leave granted.

Mr BELL: Mr Deputy Speaker, I wrote to the honourable minister in these terms:

Further to our recent conversation in respect of this bill, there are 2 broad issues that are of concern to the opposition. Firstly, although the long title of the bill makes reference to provision for 'the care, control and management ... of the Strehlow Collection for the benefit of Aboriginal people', there appears to be very little attempt to give effect to this objective. As you will be aware from the protracted public debate about the fate of the collection, there is a widespread concern that Aboriginal interests in some items in the collection will be ignored.

I am relieved that the steering committee referred to in the transitional provision (clause 25) has obtained the services of Mr Gary Stolle with whom I have discussed both the collection and Aboriginal interests in it on several occasions and I am sure that his actions will go a long way towards facilitating the recognition of those interests. However, I believe that there needs to be statutory recognition of this process by way of amendment of the functions of the board (clause 6).

In addition, if it is envisaged that Mr Stolle will be the ministerial appointee to represent the interests of Aboriginals (clause 9), there must be included some process whereby the legislature can be satisfied that the appointee is acceptable to the Aboriginal interests concerned. This may not be at issue now but could be if Mr Stolle were unavailable for any reason now or in the future. This is one aspect of the question of the degree to which the centre will be conducted for the benefit of Aboriginal people. There may be other areas of concern.

The second area of major concern to the opposition is the question of the agreement. There is a serious question about the validity of this bill because it is defined in terms of an agreement, the terms of which are unknown but, regardless of the question of validity, it would be irresponsible for the Assembly to pass any bill under these circumstances. To illustrate this problem, consider clause 8 of the bill: functions and powers subject to agreement. In the performance of its functions and the exercise of its powers the board is bound by the agreement. The legislature is unable to know what that agreement is and what obligations it is incurring on behalf of the people of the Territory. Such references are ubiquitous and, for that reason, it would be irresponsible to accede to its passage.

Finally, I appreciate the opportunity to comment on this bill and hope that these comments can be incorporated in the legislative and administrative arrangements for management of the collection.

Yours sincerely,
Neil Bell MLA
Member for MacDonnell.

Mr Deputy Speaker, the Minister for Conservation informed me today that it would be possible for me to see the agreement on a confidential basis. His reason for insisting on confidentiality in relation to the agreement was that, such confidentiality was, in fact, part of the terms of the agreement. At this stage, I do not intend to take up the minister's offer. The reason is that, obviously, there may be aspects of the agreement which, in all conscience, I may be unable to treat confidentially. It would therefore not be appropriate for me to take up the minister's offer.

The amendment that the opposition is putting forward indicates that the bill is of doubtful validity because the Assembly cannot know what obligations it is undertaking. It is not possible for members of this Assembly to represent their electorates appropriately and pass legislation the implications of which they are unable to know, and that bothers me considerably.

I said in my letter to the Minister for Conservation that references to the agreement are ubiquitous throughout the document. For example, in clause 6, the functions of the board are defined in terms of the agreement. The board is to conduct the centre 'in accordance with the agreement'. It is to secure the collection and keep it intact 'as provided in the agreement'. It is to provide access to the collection for public display, scholarship, education and other purposes, 'not inconsistent with the agreement'. Clause 8 is entitled 'functions and powers subject to agreement'. It says that, in the performance of its functions and the exercise of its powers, the board is 'bound by the agreement'.

I do not pretend to be a constitutional lawyer or, indeed, any sort of lawyer. I would be interested, however, in knowing whether it is valid for this legislature to enact laws whose implications we do not know. It appears to me that there are 2 areas of this agreement that may demand confidentiality. One of those is the inventories of the collection themselves. There may be an argument for saying that the inventories of the tjuringa etc and those particular aspects of the agreement should be confidential. However, if the agreement also spells out the terms and conditions and possibly the exchange of money between the Northern Territory government and Mrs Kathleen Strehlow, I find it very difficult to accept that they be confidential. After all, we are talking about public money being expended for this collection. It is most inappropriate for this Assembly to be contracting an obligation, as it is doing through this legislation, for an amount of money or for terms and conditions the details of which we do not know. The obligations placed on this Assembly and the people of the Territory should be made clear.

For that reason, I believe that the agreement should be laid on the Table. I appreciate the difficulties of the Minister for Conservation. From my conversations with him, I understand that one of the terms of the agreement is that the agreement itself remain confidential. That is a catch 22 situation. The other difficulty is that the government will be seeking the support of the federal government in funding this centre. I know that the minister will be

negotiating exactly that issue with the federal Minister for Aboriginal Affairs. The Minister for Aboriginal Affairs is to be represented on the board and, in fact, he has had a representative on the steering committee which will be the interim board. I would be most surprised if the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs did not express exactly the same reservation about this bill as I have done. For those reasons, we have moved this amendment to the second-reading motion. It is only proper that this Assembly be able to see the agreement and its terms and conditions.

The other difficulty that the current Minister for Conservation and his predecessors have had to deal with is the fact - and I am quite happy to place it on public record - that Mrs Strehlow is a particularly difficult person to work with. In fact, I obtained a briefing on the collection and the ongoing negotiations between the government and Mrs Strehlow more than 12 months ago. At that stage, things were not looking particularly rosy. Kathleen Strehlow has all the people with an interest in the preservation of this collection caught between the devil and the deep blue sea. She has legal possession of the collection. It is interesting to note that, although the collection itself is at the moment in the Northern Territory museum, it is still legally owned by Mrs Strehlow. This bill, as I understand it, does not alter that situation. That is not a problem with the unpublished works of her late husband but honourable members may or may not know that the bequeathing of the collection to Mrs Kathleen Strehlow was contested in the Supreme Court of South Australia. I know that many people have strong feelings about the decision of the Supreme Court to validate the will of the late Professor Strehlow in that regard. I do not propose to address those issues in this context. I do not believe that that would serve any good purpose at this stage. However, I believe that it is appropriate to place it on record in the context of this debate.

To move to the second major area of concern that the opposition has with this bill, I refer honourable members to the question of traditional Aboriginal associations with this collection. This is not the first time that I have placed on record publicly my concerns that, among people in my electorate, there exists an ongoing traditional interest, not in the unpublished works of Professor Strehlow but in the tjuringa that were entrusted to him. There has been much learned debate in anthropological circles about Aboriginal law that would apply in this regard. It is not an area that I intend canvassing in this debate but there are some things that need to be said in that respect.

I was a member of the Strehlow Research Foundation for a considerable time. I am not quite sure what my status is with the foundation but I joined it long before this issue became such a contentious one. I suspect that some of my public statements have not necessarily endeared me to all the powers that be in that organisation. Be that as it may, one of the important issues is the ongoing traditional association with that collection, which is recognised in the way I have described. I also think that it is fair to say that I detect a degree of ambivalence within the traditional association. The tjuringa involved in the collection are very powerful and people are unsure about their status in 1988 and how they would fit in with Aboriginal tradition in 1988. It is not a matter that I would dare to talk about because my understanding of it is incomplete, to say the least.

As I said in my letter to the Minister for Conservation, I believe that we are fortunate to have the services of Mr Gary Stolle who has been associated with the Finke River Mission and the Aranda people there for at least 2 decades. He speaks Aranda fluently and has very close personal

relationships with many of the people who would have a traditional association with items in the collection. I have had a number of discussions with him and I know that we are very fortunate to have his assistance. I believe that he will be able to facilitate a satisfactory resolution of the issues to which I have just referred.

If one were to read the bill without knowing its background, it would appear to relate to a dead culture. It might as well refer to remnants from ancient Rome or ancient Greece being kept for passionate academic study. I am not accusing the government or the people who have worked on this legislation of holding that view. All I am saying is that a reading of the bill gives the impression that it is dealing with a culture which no longer survives. That is not the case and it is a matter of concern to me that the bill does not reflect that.

As I said in my letter to the minister, the long title of the bill refers to the care, control and management of the collection being 'for the benefit of Aboriginal people'. It is very difficult to see anything in the contents of the bill which actually encourages the board to ensure that the care, control and management of the collection is to the benefit of Aboriginal people. There is a great deal in the bill which ensures that the care, control and management of the collection is for the benefit of Kathleen Strehlow. The bill is inadequate in terms of directing the board to ensure that the collection is managed to the benefit of Aboriginal people and that is why I wrote in those terms to the minister.

There are 2 aspects of the matter. At present, we are relying on the good offices of Mr Stolle. If his services become unavailable, for whatever reason, there are no guarantees in this legislation that the views and feelings of the Aboriginal people will be taken into consideration. I appreciate that there are enormous difficulties in doing that. However, I do not believe that this legislature can slough off its responsibilities in that respect and I believe that a much greater effort needs to be made.

I would be very sad indeed if the collection, the board, and the centre became a political football because the appropriate arrangements were not made. At this stage, however, I have serious reservations about this bill. I am deeply concerned about the agreement that is being struck. I am not a Johnny-come-lately in so far as this issue is concerned. I have followed it carefully. I took the trouble, as the honourable minister will be aware, of obtaining a briefing from a former director of the Conservation Commission when negotiations with Mrs Strehlow were not going particularly smoothly. I made certain suggestions at that time as to how the negotiations might be organised in a calmer way to ensure that an appropriate resolution could be reached. It would appear that the comments that I made at that stage were ignored.

Be that as it may, I certainly hope that this collection can be dealt with in a way that is as free as possible of contention and in fact benefits Aboriginal people. I think there is a chance that that can happen but I believe that the functions of the board should be amended to reflect that priority. I point out that the policy of museums elsewhere in the country is to take considerable note of the views of Aboriginal people in relation to collections of this sort but I see little in this legislation to indicate that that is being done in this case.

I have notes of the long and tortuous answer which the member of Wanguri gave in response to a question that I asked him when he was the minister

responsible for this matter. My question, which I asked on 13 November 1986, referred to a press release of the previous month in which he had announced the Cabinet endorsement of an in-principle agreement which must have subsequently fallen through. I asked the minister on what basis he would apprise members of the opposition of the terms of that agreement. In his customary blunt fashion, the then minister replied that the question was timely because final negotiations were to take place in Adelaide on that evening and the following day. He said that he would be incredibly proud to announce the details. It is now 2 years since the minister then responsible said that in the House and that, of course, is an indication of the tortured progress of these negotiations.

My notes indicate that my subsequent briefing occurred on 23 April 1987. My recollection is that the sticking points in the negotiations at that stage were the membership of the board, the basis on which Kathleen Strehlow would be employed and the cost of the collection. While I am on the issue of the employment of Mrs Strehlow, I note that her position is in fact enshrined in this bill. As somebody who is reasonably well-informed about intellectual processes in this country and has a certain amount of experience in academic appointments, I find it extraordinary that a research director is appointed in this way. I appreciate, as I said before, that Mrs Strehlow had us between the devil and the deep blue sea: 'If you want my collection, you will make me research director or else'. Nevertheless, that position should have been open for competition. If we want the centre to have integrity and respect in the academic community, such positions should be open to competition. I know that Mrs Strehlow has obtained a postgraduate qualification in anthropology and that she would therefore be in a position to apply for the job. It is my belief, however, that the job should have been advertised. If she was to be appointed as research director, it should have been done on the basis that she was the most suitable applicant.

Mr Deputy Speaker, to step away from the broader principles for a minute, I have a question about the detail of the bill. I refer the honourable minister to subclause 13(5) which is headed 'disclosure of interest'. It says: 'A contravention of or non-compliance with this section does not invalidate a decision of the board or the exercise of a power or performance of a function under this act'. I am a little puzzled by that. I would have thought that such a qualification of the obligation to disclose an interest would be a matter for serious concern. The board comprises 7 persons. If a decision is taken by the board with a vote of 4 to 3 and, a month later, the fourth person says, 'Oops, I had an interest in that decision', the 3 people who voted against that proposal are not able to recommit that decision or an interest ...

Mr Perron: Semantics.

Mr BELL: That is what the legislation says. Why is subclause 13(5) included if the Chief Minister can think of circumstances where it would not apply, or thinks that it would not apply in the circumstances that I have described? They are hardly unusual. Let us bear in mind that undisclosed amounts of money are involved in this. There are the functions of the board that we do not really know about, because we do not know what the agreement says. That makes specific criticisms of this nature quite material to the legislation.

I want to emphasise the issue of the Aboriginal people who might be thought, through tradition, to have an interest in the collection. I will ask a number of questions and, although I do not necessarily expect the minister

to answer them, I think they need to be asked and need to be considered. First of all, to what extent are the arrangements set up under this legislation acceptable to Aboriginal people who might have an interest in the collection or who might be thought to have an interest in the collection? I have had representations in this respect. What of non-traditionally-oriented Aboriginal people who might feel that they have a legitimate interest in the collection, in spite of the fact they are no longer strongly in touch with that tradition? There is a strong feeling in some quarters that those interests should be ignored. I know that this question is extremely difficult to answer and I can hardly expect the minister to answer it if I am not prepared to do so.

The issues involved with this collection and its relationship to the Aboriginal community in the Northern Territory are highly complex. I make no pretence that the situation is otherwise but I think the questions need to be posed, particularly because the legislation contains no requirement to consult. The bill is entirely silent in that regard although it may be part of the agreement that we do not know about. I strongly suspect, however, that the agreement says absolutely nothing about the interests of traditionally-oriented Aboriginal people nor the interests of Aboriginal people generally.

Mr Manzie: Stretch it out a little bit longer. You can go for your full time, Neil, and be really proud of yourself. Just hang in there, hesitate and look pensive.

Mr BELL: Mr Deputy Speaker, I will pick up that interjection. I have 4 pages of matters here. I have a wad of notes and a file back in Alice Springs that is about 3 inches thick. If it takes me a little time to cull my comments from that material, I ask the minister to bear with me.

In fact, that is all that I have time for. There are other issues that I would have liked to have addressed. There have been representations in respect of this bill from Mark de Graaf of the Darwin Institute of Technology and from the Aboriginal Sacred Sites Protection Authority. They have raised issues which I have not been able to address in the time available to me. To sum up, Mr Deputy Speaker, let me say that I believe that the amendment moved by the opposition is a sine qua non as far as this legislation is concerned. It bothers me that ...

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

Mr COLLINS (Sadadeen): Mr Deputy Speaker, some honourable members who have been in this Assembly for several years would recall the occasion when the former Chief Minister, Paul Everingham, recovered a tjuringa which had been taken out of the Territory. I think the government paid some money to bring the tjuringa back. According to stories that I have heard, the tjuringa was placed in a garage in Alice Springs and locked up. Paul Everingham made quite a deal of what he considered to be a decent gesture on the part of the government towards Aboriginal people. The net result was that our tjuringa was locked away. I have not heard that anything else was done with it. The member for Stuart may know more about the matter, but I understand that the tjuringa was locked away in a garage for a considerable period - and may in fact still be there today - because it was regarded as very powerful medicine.

On occasion, I have said that I would welcome the display of and research into parts of the Strehlow Collection with the agreement of Aboriginal people. However, having listened to the member for MacDonnell, I wonder whether we may

not have a tiger by the tail. From our point of view, we might be delighted with the display of parts of the collection and I am sure that there is a tremendous amount of interest in the collection in the wider Australian community. If it were displayed, I would certainly like to find time to look at the papers that Ted Strehlow produced because I am led to believe that his scholarship was really top quality, and that a great deal can be learned about the Aboriginal way of life from the records that he has produced, which practically constitute a history of a people who did not have a written language and whose traditions could be passed down only by word of mouth. When traditions are passed down in that way, there is a real possibility that changes could occur because people might forget certain aspects and, on occasion, the imagination could take over.

The whole matter of the Strehlow Research Centre is of considerable interest to the Australian people. Certainly, it is of interest to me. I hope that the centre will work in practice, that it will not be offensive to Aboriginal people and that the whole nation will be enriched by the work carried out there. However, I think we should be cautious and temper our actions. I cited the simple example of a tjuringa that was brought back in good faith by a former Chief Minister. It ended up being locked away. I am sure that is not what we want. I therefore hope that the people involved with the Strehlow Research Centre will tread very warily and with extreme sensitivity.

I turn to the point made by the member for MacDonnell in respect of the agreement. I am not often persuaded to his point of view but I would ask the minister to be more open or even to defer the passage of the legislation until all members have received a briefing on the matter. I am prepared to accept a confidential briefing. I would give a commitment that I would say no more than that I had been briefed and that I supported or did not support the government. At the moment, the passing of this legislation is somewhat like buying a pig in a poke. I do not think our constituents would be very proud of us if we agreed to this legislation without some further explanation by the minister. Possibly, he can offer us a confidential briefing so that we can make a more informed judgment on the matter. I think that is the key point and I look forward to what the minister has to say in that regard. I well appreciate the sensitivity of some of the material but I would like to be able to inform my constituents that I voted on it after having received a briefing.

Mr PERRON (Chief Minister): Mr Deputy Speaker, I do not have much to say in the second-reading debate except that honourable members should have regard to what we have achieved in this matter rather than determine their positions on the basis of what it would have been nice to have achieved. I do not know much about the collection except that it has been hailed by virtually everyone who has commented on it as a remarkably complete collection of Aboriginal culture in world terms. I accept that. It appears that it was nearly lost to Australia. I am not sure of all the ins and outs of the matter but, reading between the lines, it seems that, had relationships become any worse - and the federal government was making a few threats at the time - there was a possibility that the collection could have been split up or sold to another buyer. There are people in the world today who are prepared to pay incredible sums for very rare works of art and this is an exceedingly rare work of art. We know that there are European private collectors of Aboriginal artifacts. I believe some of the best collections of Australian Aboriginal artifacts are in private hands in Europe and the United States, as well as in public institutions. Overseas collectors would certainly love to get their hands on the Strehlow Collection.

Obviously, the ministers who negotiated on behalf of the Northern Territory government did so in the knowledge that we wanted desperately to keep the collection not only in Australia but in the Northern Territory where it really belongs. It has been admitted by the member for MacDonnell that those negotiations were most difficult, and I am sure they were. If you do not have all the aces up your sleeve in such negotiations, you do not always achieve all that you want.

In this case, the situation is not ideal but let us look at what we have. We have the Strehlow Collection, supposedly complete, in the government's possession today. That is a tremendous plus for us. Part of the agreement for us to have the collection in our possession is that legislation be passed establishing a research centre and that the government builds or buys a facility which would be suitable for research, display, storage etc. All of that is included in this bill.

The bill establishes a statutory authority and determines the composition of its board. Members may argue about who should or should not be on the board but its members will be responsible people from the Conservation Commission, universities, the museum etc. Such people could not be described as fly-by-nighters in any way. Mrs Strehlow herself is also on the board. The legislation gives the board powers to care for the collection, undertake research on it and display some parts of it if appropriate. Importantly, it gives the minister the power of direction - and honourable members should bear that in mind. The minister has the final say if he seeks to become involved. I am sure that the minister will become involved if he believes that community concern is sufficient to warrant his taking a direct interest.

The member for MacDonnell wanted the agreement tabled in this House and obviously, there are difficulties with that. The minister has agreed to let him view the agreement documents and he has declined. I am not sure really why he has declined. He said that he is not sure whether he should look at them or not. I urge him to consider the minister's offer if that is what is stuck in his craw.

The member for MacDonnell mentioned that there are enormously complex issues surrounding this collection as far as Aboriginal people in central Australia are concerned. I am sure he is right. However, the solutions would seem to lie in establishing the centre and the board so that the collection can be researched and properly documented and decisions taken as to what can and cannot be displayed or what may be accessible to limited numbers of people for various reasons. Surely that is the answer to the dilemma rather than to leave the collection forever in the vault of some museum because the issues are so massively complex for us poor mortals. I am sure that the board would not publicly display material which is likely to cause a furore. The aim of the board will be to attempt to consider the interests of various parties before it acts. The last thing that board members would want is to be ridiculed severely by sections of the Aboriginal community for doing the wrong thing in respect of traditional ideas.

The matter is sensitive and I urge honourable members to consider the legislation in that light. We have made giant strides forward. The legislation may not be perfect but this parliament always reserves the right to amend any legislation that it passes. I suggest that we pass this legislation as the government proposes. That is the way to deal with the issues which are of concern to honourable members.

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH (Koolpinyah): Mr Deputy Speaker, I really appreciate the Chief Minister's attempt to sweet-talk us into agreeing with this legislation. He tried to use sweet reason to still all our fears. I believe, however, that this is second-rate legislation which has great deficiencies. Whilst I can see the general reasoning behind it, I believe one could drive a horse and cart through some of the holes in it. To vote for it in its present form would be to vote for a number of things which we know nothing about. There is too much secrecy surrounding it.

The Chief Minister said that this legislation is better than nothing, that we have come a long way, and that we can always amend the legislation later if we vote for it now. That is what I call sweet-talk. It is not good legislation. None of us has the benefit of the Chief Minister's knowledge. He says that we have come a long way in putting this legislation forward. I will take him at his word because he usually tells the truth, but we do not know anything about it because he will not tell us where he is coming from.

The preamble to the bill begins by saying that it is to establish a research centre and sets out the reasons for the legislation, which include the 'control and management (including storage, preservation and display) of the Strehlow Collection for the benefit of Aboriginal people ...'. That immediately creates a division in the community. Is it to be of benefit to Aboriginal people only or will it ...

Mr Perron: Read further down.

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH: I have read further down and I did not see anything about white people seeing it or benefiting from it.

Mr Perron: In the last line of the preamble.

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH: '... and for related purposes'. Well, that could mean anything, and you know it.

Mr Perron: No. It says 'to promote and benefit the contribution of the collection to the Northern Territory'.

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH: That is too vague. I am not joking. If the government wants to stop division between black and white, this legislation should be for the benefit of all people in the Northern Territory. I am sure that many white people of non-Aboriginal descent would be as interested in the collection as Aboriginal people. Perhaps they may not be quite as interested, but they would certainly be very interested in seeing the Strehlow Collection. I would certainly be interested in seeing it. I think it would be extremely enlightening in many ways.

It is not often that I agree with the member for MacDonnell but I am forced to agree with many of the comments that he made. He certainly had sweet reason on his side. He talked about the agreement, which is mentioned in paragraphs (c) and (d) of clause 6, which refers to functions of the board. We do not know what the agreement comprises because it is secret. The schedule has 4 clauses which mention papers, but it does not tell us what the agreement is.

The board of the Strehlow Research Centre can be nominated. We do not know how much it will cost to set up the board, to employ people or to house the collection. The Chief Minister has not raised the ugly matter of money. This board will operate under the terms of a secret agreement. How

confidential will the agreement be? If it is so secret that, in spite of being asked to vote on legislation referring to it, members of this Assembly cannot be told what it contains, how can the board be expected to operate properly in ignorance of the agreement's contents? Or are board members to be informed of the conditions of the agreement? I would like the minister to inform the House how far the limits of confidentiality extend.

Clause 9(1)(c) provides for a member to be appointed to the board 'to represent the interests of Aboriginals'. I do not ask this facetiously but, in the context of comments made in a debate in this House earlier today, if the board member happens to be an Aboriginal man, will the services of a women's advisor be made available to him so that he can represent the interests of Aboriginal women? I think that is a very valid point.

I come now to clause 13 which refers to disclosure of interest. In my opinion, this clause is tied up with clause 24. The way this legislation is written, the board will operate under Rafferty's rules. Clause 13 says that board members have to disclose their direct or indirect pecuniary interests, as is the case with other boards and statutory authorities in the Northern Territory. I have no argument with that at all. However, subclause 13(4) reads as follows:

After a member has, or shall be deemed to have, disclosed the nature of an interest in a matter or thing pursuant to this section, he or she shall not, unless the board (in the absence of that member) otherwise determines -

- (a) be present during any deliberation of the board, or take part in a decision of the board, in relation to that matter; or
- (b) exercise a function under this act in relation to that thing.

That subclause, however, is completely cancelled out by subclause 13(5) which states: 'A contravention of or non-compliance with this section does not invalidate a decision of the board ...'. As the member for MacDonnell said, a person can have a pecuniary interest in something and vote on it, and then throw this legislation in the face of the board saying: 'Look, the act says that the decision we have reached is quite valid despite the fact that I have a pecuniary interest in the matter'. That is stupid. Nevertheless, the Chief Minister had the gall to say that we have come a long way. He may have come a long way but he has not gone far enough yet.

Clause 16 provides for the appointment of a research director. Subclause 16(1) says: 'The board shall appoint a research director on the terms and conditions set out in the agreement and such other staff as are necessary for the purposes of the centre'. Perhaps I may be dumb but I do not think I am that dumb. I think that the fault lies with the minister. He has not adequately described the functions of the board or of the Strehlow Research Centre. In my naivety, I thought that the late Professor Strehlow and his father had done all of the work in documenting the contents of the Strehlow Collection, but I see now that it is to have a research director. I cannot understand what the functions of that position will be because I thought that the professor had done it all.

I believe that this legislation is pretty third rate and I will not be voting for it. I am not in favour of the legislation as it is now presented. I believe in the spirit of the legislation but it is written too vaguely and that is not good enough.

Clause 19 speaks of the agreement, the secret agreement which nobody knows anything about. Subclause 19(1) says: 'The agreement consists of the documents listed in the schedule'. Having read the schedule, I know which documents are listed in it. Subclause 19(2) says: 'The inventories consist of the inventories contained in the agreement'. We do not know what those inventories contain. It is probable that, because of Aboriginal law, some matters should not be made public. However, the important thing is that, if things are lost or stolen, who will know about it? The way this legislation is written, things could vanish from the collection and nobody would know where or when they had gone. If, as the Chief Minister says, this Strehlow Collection has immeasurable value in other parts of the world, the terms of this legislation leave the way open, somewhere along the line, for people to take advantage of the situation and knock off some valuable items. I do not think that we should allow that, and we should not create that loophole with this sloppy legislation.

Clause 24 covers the validity of proceedings. It seems to me that this board will really operate under Rafferty's rules. The legislation seems to give the board permission to operate any way it wants to because 'no act done by the board shall be invalidated by reason only of ... a defect in the nomination or appointment of, or of a disqualification of a member; ... a defect in the convening or conduct of a meeting of the board ...' and so on. Such provisions make a nonsense of the entire bill. Members of the board can behave as they like. They can say: 'We are on the board. It is okay because clause 24 says that it is okay'.

I now turn to the transitional clause, clause 25, which mentions an organisation which is completely different from that mentioned in paragraph 4 of the agreement set out in the schedule. Clause 25 refers to the 'persons who, immediately before the commencement of this act, constituted the Strehlow Centre Steering Committee as approved by the minister'. Paragraph 4 of the agreement set out in the schedule refers, however, to an organisation called 'The Strehlow Research Foundation Incorporated, a body incorporated under the Associations Incorporation of South Australia of the third part'. That foundation was party to a deed made on 11 September 1987. How does that Strehlow Research Foundation Incorporated tie in with the Strehlow Centre Steering Committee? The honourable minister did not explain that in his second-reading speech. The Chief Minister ignored it and I am wondering whether the honourable minister will refer to it in his summing up on this debate. The sloppiness of this legislation forces me to say that I cannot, in all conscience, vote for it. If it were written and presented in a better way, I would vote for it.

Mr EDE (Stuart): Mr Deputy Speaker, nearly 5 years ago, I stood in this House and made affirmation: 'I, Brian Richard Ede, do solemnly and sincerely promise and declare that I will render true and faithful service as a member of the Legislative Assembly of the Northern Territory of Australia'. I could not be true to that affirmation if I voted for this legislation. The fact of the matter is that legislation whose interpretation is governed by a secret document, which members are unable to see and therefore unable to evaluate in terms of its impact on the lives of their constituents, cannot in all conscience be supported. That is the situation in relation to this bill.

Subclauses 6(a), 6(c), 6(d), 7(2)(e), 7(2)(f) and clause 8(a) are all subject to the agreement and that is as far as I got. What is the agreement? We do not know. We can make occasional surmises about its possible contents. For example, subclause 7(2)(e) states that the board may 'subject to agreement, act in association with any organisation, society or other body

having similar functions or objectives in relation to Aboriginal studies as those of the board'. Does that mean that the agreement specifies a hit list of organisations which the Strehlow Research Centre is to have nothing to do with? That is the only interpretation which makes any sense.

What is the agreement? Does it contain the flights of Kathleen Strehlow's more bizarre fantasies or her fears in relation to various Aboriginal organisations and the land councils? Clause 8 states clearly in its heading that the powers and functions of the board are subject to the agreement. We are not allowed to see the agreement. As the member for Koolpinyah asked, who will be able to see it? Will the board be able to see it? Obviously, Kathleen Strehlow knows what is in it. What about the rest of the board? Are they to be made aware of the contents of the agreement or are they to rely on Kathleen Strehlow's instructions as to what it contains? If, on the other hand, the board can know what is in the agreement, why are members of the Legislative Assembly not permitted to know? This board is a statutory authority, a body set up by statute. It is to be empowered with information and with rights to act in certain ways, the limitations of which we have no knowledge. We have no knowledge whatsoever of the limitations on the powers and the functions of this body.

The composition of the board is such that it contains no individual who is directly responsible to Aboriginal people or to the people who originally held the articles. In fact, my reading of the functions of the board is that they are paternalistic and voyeuristic and reek of the attitudes of the 1950s. I have no doubt that history will judge this legislation as the last expression of 1950s attitudes, which did not allow Aboriginal people any say in their own affairs. I say that in full knowledge of some of the difficulties which Aboriginal people have expressed in relation to the dispersal of the objects in the collection.

I have been advised by a very senior Aboriginal person, who took part in the discussions on this matter through an organisation he was involved with, that he proposed that the information relating to the actual locations where particular items were collected should be put on the outside of individually wrapped boxes and that a meeting of senior custodians from around Central Australia should come together and, without opening the boxes, determine what areas the items should go to on the basis of the information provided. Once the items were in those areas, this person argued, there should be further meetings of local custodians to determine whether anybody in the area would be entitled to custody of the items. His view was that only those items which could not be distributed through that process should be returned and housed in the Strehlow Collection. I am aware that some people have a different view about what should happen. I am surprised, however, that the functions of the board do not make any provision at all for distribution. The distribution of any single item is not countenanced as a function of the board.

In fact, subclause 6(d) describes one of the board's functions as being 'to secure the collection and keep it intact as provided in the agreement'. It looks as though there are 2 locks on this box - 1 in the act and 1 in the agreement - both of which will prevent any item being returned to Aboriginal people, no matter how strong the continuation of the stories, songs or traditions which surround it and no matter how strong the representations made by the people who are custodians of those traditions. Those people are prevented from taking back tjuringas into their own country and into the central positions they may occupy in particular traditions. Part of their own culture is locked away from them, firstly by the agreement and secondly by the act.

Mr Perron: Would you prefer us to auction the collection to some Dutch museum?

Mr EDE: To take up that interjection, thanks to the federal government, we now have Commonwealth legislation which enables the federal minister to nominate certain items which cannot be removed from Australia for sale. Unfortunately, legislation was not in place at the time when a member of the Strehlow circle purportedly attempted to spirit the collection overseas. That legislation, however, is now in place and, unless there is a gross abuse, the items cannot be spirited away overseas. Indeed, I would hope that the Territory government has already cooperated with the federal government by giving an assurance that it will assist in the operation of that act and so ensure that no individual associated with the centre can attempt to do anything of that nature again.

There is only one course available to this Assembly and that is to support the amendment proposed by the member for MacDonnell and defer this legislation until such time as the agreement is laid before this House so that members can see its contents and evaluate its likely effects. We would not be prepared to legislate to establish any other body which would be governed by an agreement over which we had no control. We would not be prepared, for example, to set up the University of the Northern Territory with a whole range of powers and functions which were overridden by an agreement with the University of Queensland which members of this Assembly were not allowed to see. That is an analogous situation, and I could come up with others. If members thought about it a little more, they would realise that it is completely impossible for us to pass this legislation.

If the minister is not prepared to agree to the opposition's amendment at this stage, I ask him at the very least to adjourn debate on the legislation so that members on the backbench can discuss it with him in terms of the precedent which is being established. This legislation is governed by a secret agreement. It does not govern a secret agreement; it is governed by such an agreement. That, I believe, is a first. I do not think that any member on the other side of the House will be happy to have their names associated with this bill and I ask them to think about that before they proceed to vote.

I do not know whether the terms of the bill are such that the Administrator, the Governor-General or whoever, might withhold assent or disallow it. That is a matter for later and, presumably, the Attorney-General has taken advice on it and I would be surprised if that is not the case. I urge the Attorney-General to have this debate adjourned so that his backbenchers can discuss it further in the light of what has been said by the member for MacDonnell and by members on the crossbenches and so that the minister can be convinced that the bill cannot proceed in its present form. The bill should either be redrafted or the agreement should be tabled so that we can see exactly what we are getting involved in.

Mr MANZIE (Conservation): Mr Deputy Speaker, the government will oppose the amendment. The reason for that is very simple and the member for MacDonnell was fully aware of it before he prepared the amendment as, I believe, were other members of the opposition. If they were not, I would ask them to chastise the member for MacDonnell. Quite simply, part of the agreement between the Northern Territory government and the Strehlows is that the passage of legislation must occur before 31 December 1988. If that does not occur, we will have no legal right to hold the collection. That is pretty straightforward. If the legislation is not passed during these sittings, the agreement disappears or turns into a pumpkin.

Mr Ede: Well, table it now and we will debate it on Thursday.

Mr MANZIE: Will you be quiet?

Mr Ede: How can I be quiet when you push through legislation like this?

Mr MANZIE: Mr Deputy Speaker, he has had his turn and he cannot even sit there quietly and listen to a few facts. He has always had a problem with facts and, when he does not agree with them, he cannot control himself.

Mr Ede: Secret facts.

Mr MANZIE: He is the most irrational person this House has seen in a long time. Mr Deputy Speaker, he will have to sit there and listen after he has had his say because that is part and parcel of his job. He wants the collection to disappear and go back because his mates on the CLC have said to him: 'Whatever you do, this thing has to be got rid of because it might cause some problems for us'. That is rubbish.

Mr Ede: It is rubbish.

Mr MANZIE: That is the line he is following, Mr Deputy Speaker, and I ask all honourable members to keep that in mind. The man is speaking with a forked tongue in relation to the Strehlow Collection.

I will just get back to what we are talking about. We are talking about a unique collection of Aboriginal artifacts, of genealogies, of records, of films and of detailed research that was carried out over a number of years in central Australia. It is unique, not only in Australia but in the world. The collection passed to Professor Strehlow's wife after his death. It was kept under the control of a foundation, of which the member for MacDonnell was a member at one stage, and a number of strange things happened during that period. No one could get their hands on the collection. Threats were made to move it out of the country. The federal government was concerned, as was the Territory government. There were threats that the collection would be broken up, put in tea chests and sent to New Zealand. The situation was deplorable and a great deal of hard work went into trying to obtain the collection and bring it back to the Northern Territory.

The member for Stuart is leaving now. He does not want to listen to the true story. He does not want to find out about it. That is typical of him. However, I will keep going. I think it is important that the facts be placed on record.

After a great deal of hard work by a number of members of this Assembly, the collection was brought back to the Northern Territory. It had to be done through agreement with Dr Strehlow, the widow of the late Professor Strehlow. That agreement was entered into after considerable negotiation and one of the requirements of the agreement is that it be kept confidential. There is a great deal in the agreement, particularly in terms of the list of items, which is totally confidential. The list identifies some 1500 to 2000 items which comprise the Strehlow Collection. There is a mix of artifacts, recordings of oral traditions, genealogy, films and documents. The genealogy, in particular, contains matters of cultural sensitivity. It identifies relationships which should not be made public without the approval of the families involved. There is difficulty in publicly identifying sacred objects, which are still of considerable importance to families in the Centre. Work is continuing on the cataloguing and sorting of the collection and, at

this stage, that is still only one-third complete. It is very intricate work. The agreement cannot be made public because, to put it succinctly, it contains the genealogy and the list of sacred objects, and the work still has not been completed.

Mr Deputy Speaker, as I said, the collection is unique and we had to deal with a unique situation in a unique way. As the Chief Minister said, the legislation is not perfect but at least we have the collection and it is in our control. We are setting up a centre where it can be stored and where professional research can be carried out. We are putting it together in such a way that there will be public control by representative interests. The collection will remain in central Australia; it will not be broken up and dispersed. It will be properly cared for and managed and preserved for posterity. It will be kept securely. Access to it will be strictly controlled and that control will be depoliticised, regardless of the efforts of members opposite. There will be provision for sensitive management with Aboriginal input and for the public display of non-sensitive material only. The focus on scholarship and research into appropriate materials will promote understanding of and respect for the oldest extant human culture and it will enhance the Aboriginal sense of identity and worth.

Those are some of the benefits that will arise from this legislation. It is important that all members recognise the need to make a decision. This government has made a decision to preserve the collection, to ensure that it is recorded, to ensure that proper research is carried out on it and to ensure that it is preserved for posterity and for the benefit of all Territorians. We are doing that. We have some difficulties in relation to the set of circumstances. The important aspect is that we have the collection and that we will lose it if we do not pass this legislation.

I will go through a few of the background facts. The agreement was originally made on 20 February 1987. It was subsequently confirmed and ratified by a deed signed on 11 September 1987. The agreement was properly made and is binding on the Territory. The brief for the drafting of the legislation was provided by the agreement of 20 February 1987 and its scheduled attachments as amended by the deed of 11 September. Under the terms of the agreement, the Strehlow Collection passed to the Northern Territory to provide for the care, control and preservation of the collection for the benefit of Aboriginal people and as a national heritage asset.

The legislation will provide for a 7-member board to manage the collection and for the provision of a facility in Alice Springs to house it. Research and education will be important functions of the centre. A few things have been said. The members for MacDonnell and Koolpinyah mentioned clause 13 which relates to the disclosure of interests by members of the Board of the Strehlow Research Centre. Provisions relating to disclosure of interests are normal where boards are involved. Clause 13 is put together in such a way as to ensure that any member of the board is entitled to assume that the board is acting within its power. That is quite a normal provision and there is nothing sinister about it whatsoever. I ask honourable members to make themselves aware of such provisions in relation to the operation of other boards before they try to impute that there is something sinister about them in this case.

It is also important to remember that the federal government has been involved with this process ever since it started. Actually, a copy of the entire agreement is available to the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs. The federal government has had a member on the steering committee.

Mr Collins interjecting.

Mr MANZIE: The member for Sadadeen is certainly trying my patience. However, I will continue to try to explain some of the problems that have been raised tonight. They are legitimate problems and I think it is important to ...

Mr Collins interjecting.

Mr MANZIE: The member for Sadadeen is certainly displaying his ability to treat matters of this importance with frivolity. It is important that the Hansard record his frivolous attitude to something which I consider to be extremely important.

Mr Deputy Speaker, the steering committee has been put together. It is really an interim board which has been established so that this legislation can proceed and so that arrangements for the housing and management of the collection can be put in place. The Commonwealth has always been involved through the participation of a staff member of the Department of Aboriginal Affairs. The Commonwealth has been involved since the early days, when the then Minister for Aboriginal Affairs, Mr Holding, played a part. There has always been a commitment from the Commonwealth to contribute some finance towards the building of a centre at Alice Springs and we will certainly be holding the Commonwealth to that commitment.

I am certainly quite happy for members of this parliament to be able to peruse this agreement in my office because there is nothing secret in terms of the ability of members to see it. The problems arise regarding the ...

Mrs Padgham-Purich: Money.

Mr MANZIE: No, they do not. Actually, nobody asked the question as to how much it cost or how much people are being paid.

Mrs Padgham-Purich: I did.

Mr MANZIE: I thought that was an absolutely appalling failure. When the member for Koolpinyah reads through the Hansard, she will find that she did not ask about that. In fact, I was waiting for her to ask. No one asked how much the collection cost or how much the people have been paid. I thought that indicated an appalling lack of interest, although we can discuss it in the committee stages if members wish.

I reiterate that I am quite happy for members to see the agreement on a confidential basis although I am a bit concerned about the bona fides of the member for Sadadeen. I give a commitment that we will make approaches to Dr Kath Strehlow regarding the ability to release copies of certain parts of the agreement. Obviously, matters relating to the geneologies cannot be released. Suggestions by members opposite that Aboriginal people be involved in sorting out who should see what are preposterous. The Aboriginal people have said that the matters are so important that they cannot become involved in looking at or discussing them in case they look at or discuss the wrong ones. This matter is unique and this approach has never been taken before. There are many problems involved but the bottom line is that we either act now or give the whole thing a miss. We would be derelict in our duty if we gave it a miss and I certainly do not intend to do that.

The member for Stuart said that the board will never see the agreement. Obviously, he has not read the bill. If he looks at clause 19(3), he will understand that the board actually keeps the agreement. He also referred to the employment of Dr Strehlow as the research director. She will occupy that position for 7 years after which time it will be declared open. In referring to the agreement, the member for Stuart also mentioned the University of the Northern Territory. I cannot remember him making any contribution to the university except in trying to prevent its establishment.

It is beyond my power to make the agreement public because of its very nature and because of the sensitivity of its contents in terms of the collection. I am quite willing to make approaches to see if we can release some aspects of the agreement that do not relate to the geneologies. I again advise the member for MacDonnell that, if he contacts my office, I will make arrangements for him to view the agreement and the same offer applies to any other member. I would have to think carefully about the bona fides of the member for Sadadeen but, under the circumstances, I would even extend that courtesy to him. If we do not pass this legislation during these sittings, we can kiss the whole matter goodbye. I believe that the collection is too important for us to allow that to occur. The government opposes the amendment.

The Assembly divided:

Ayes 5

Noes 14

Mr Bell
Mr Collins
Mr Ede
Mrs Padgham-Purich
Mr Smith

Mr Dale
Mr Dondas
Mr Finch
Mr Firmin
Mr Harris
Mr Hatton
Mr McCarthy
Mr Manzie
Mr Palmer
Mr Perron
Mr Poole
Mr Reed
Mr Setter
Mr Vale

Amendment negatived.

Motion agreed to; bill read a second time.

Mr MANZIE (Attorney-General): Mr Deputy Speaker, I seek leave to move a motion that the bill be now read a third time forthwith.

Leave denied.

In committee:

Mr CHAIRMAN: Is it the wish of the committee that the bill be taken as a whole?

Mr BELL: Nice try, Mr Chairman. I would like the bill to be taken clause by clause.

Clauses 1 and 2 agreed to.

Clause 3:

Mr BELL: Mr Chairman, clause 3 embodies the key problem that the opposition has with this bill. I hasten to point out to the Minister for Conservation that I am not being bloody-minded in debating this bill clause by clause. It is 1.15 am and I would much rather be in bed. However, I would not be doing my job ...

Mr Manzie: Have the intestinal fortitude to say why you are doing it instead of fumbling around.

Mr BELL: Mr Chairman, I will pick up that unfortunate ...

Mr Manzie: Have the guts to say what you are doing or sit down and be quiet.

Mr BELL: I will pick up those unfortunate interjections from the Minister for Conservation because, when he reads through the Hansard, he will accept that my comments throughout this debate have been objective, measured and reasoned. I intend making contributions in the committee stage in exactly the same tenor.

I rise against clause 3 to point out that it embodies the central problem with this bill. I point out to honourable members who are taking the trouble to follow the committee stage of this debate - and I see that there are not too many - that the problem is with the definition of the agreement. The 'agreement' is defined as 'the agreement comprising the documents listed in the schedule'. The schedule lists 4 documents but does not detail their contents. This is a serious lacuna in the bill and, for that reason, we oppose this clause.

We will not be dividing on these clauses but it is appropriate in the committee stage to indicate that the opposition has carried out detailed research into the provisions of this bill. I intend placing on record matters which, quite clearly, are shortcomings in this legislation. Unfortunately, the hour of the night seems to have got to the minister because, in his reply to the second-reading debate, he was not at all even-tempered. He did not pick up the question that I raised about the validity of legislation which enacts an agreement, the substance of which we know nothing about. I do not expect him to do so now. I expect him to stay seated and to ignore these concerns.

Mr SMITH: Mr Chairman, I rise to support my colleague. I know the matter has been explored rather comprehensively. The word 'agreement' appears in this bill about 21 times. It appears in almost every clause and certainly in all the important clauses. What the government is asking us to do is to buy a pig in a poke. It is asking us to approve a bill but denies us access to the very documents on which it is based.

Mr Perron: This was all said in the second reading.

Mr SMITH: It was said very comprehensively. It will be said again in the third reading. It is an essential point. I would like someone opposite to explain - and we have given them ample opportunity to do so - how the government can expect us to vote for a bill when there is secrecy surrounding the elements on which it is based. If members opposite could explain that to us, we might adopt a more sympathetic attitude to their ...

Mr Perron: We don't expect you to vote for it. Vote against it.

Mr Manzie: You have been carrying on like this all night. You have known about this since August and you decided to make an issue of it at midnight tonight.

Mr SMITH: Have you finished? Why don't you get to your feet and have a go?

That is the key point, Mr Chairman, and we would appreciate an answer. How does the minister expect us to vote for this bill when he will not give us the details of the agreement which underlies it?

Mr EDE: Mr Chairman, this is ridiculous. The honourable minister has twice had the chance to get to his feet and tell us why this whole charade is necessary.

Mr Manzie: You should know. You were the only opposition member in the House when I was explaining it.

Mr EDE: That is not correct, Mr Chairman. The minister has the opportunity now to rise and to clearly state his reasons for insisting that the details of the agreement be kept secret. He could also give us a couple of other examples of legislation passed by this House which is governed by secret agreements.

Mr COLLINS: Mr Chairman, in my speech in the second-reading debate, I asked the minister to provide me with a briefing on the contents of the agreements. I gave my word that, if he agreed to that, I would say no more than that I supported or opposed the legislation. I gave my word that I would not divulge any of the contents of the agreement. The minister apparently offered the member for MacDonnell a briefing on the confidential agreement which he chose not to accept because he felt that it might contain matters on which he could not remain silent. I also heard the minister say that he has given a copy of the agreement to the federal Minister for Aboriginal Affairs, a left-wing member of the Labor Party. In saying that he would show the agreement to all members of the House but that he had his doubts about the member for Sadadeen, the minister indicates that he has taken leave of his marbles.

I want to see the Strehlow Collection in the community. I want to see it retained for the Territory. My request was pretty straightforward and the minister treated it in a manner which can only be described as totally disgusting. Indeed, the minister's behaviour belittles him. Perhaps his comment was due to the lateness of the hour or perhaps he did not listen to what I said. I believe, however, that he has done himself no credit whatsoever in this matter.

I have the honour of representing an electorate of several thousand people and I believe that they have the right to ask me why I opposed this legislation. My answer will be pretty straightforward: 'I did not know what it was about'. I have asked the minister to give me the opportunity to see the agreement and have given him my word of honour that I would not divulge its contents. Had he permitted that, I would have been able to say to people in my electorate: 'I have seen the agreement. I am sworn to secrecy on it'. I would be able to say, 'I do not believe you would support it', or, hopefully, 'I can appreciate the reasons for the secrecy; the government has a good case'. At this stage of the game, however, I do not have that information.

If I am called on to make a judgment on behalf of the people of the electorate of Sadadeen, I want to be in possession of the relevant information so that I can support or oppose the legislation. I hope that I would be able to support it because I believe that the entire Strehlow Collection should be kept in the Territory. I have given my word of honour in relation to viewing the agreement and I would like the minister to delay the passage of the legislation until later in the morning so that we will have an opportunity to be briefed on the agreement before voting. I believe that would be a far more rational and sensible approach. Each member can then decide whether or not to take up the offer of a briefing or not to do so, as the member for MacDonnell has chosen in the past.

Mr BELL: Mr Chairman, does the agreement stipulate the terms and conditions of the employment of Mrs Strehlow as research director of the centre?

Mr MANZIE: Yes, Mr Chairman.

Mr BELL: Is the honourable minister able to advise the House of any details of those terms and conditions?

Mr MANZIE: Yes, Mr Chairman. The term of employment is 7 years. Is there any other information which the honourable member would like to know?

Mr BELL: There is a great deal more. Is the salary level of that position subject to the agreement?

Mr MANZIE: Yes, Mr Chairman. For the information of honourable members, Dr Strehlow is employed under section 27(2) of the Public Service Act at the science 4 level for a period of 7 years.

Mr Chairman, I will repeat my offer, which is recorded in Hansard, that if honourable members contact me, I can provide them with a briefing on the agreement. I extended that offer to the member for Sadadeen who apparently was not listening.

Mr Collins: Can we have it before the final vote?

Mr MANZIE: Mr Chairman, it will not be before the final vote. Tomorrow is General Business day and, unfortunately, on Thursday afternoon I have a ministerial council commitment which I cannot break. This is our only chance to pass this legislation.

Mr Chairman, I move that so much of standing orders be suspended as would prevent the remainder of the bill being taken as a whole. I further move that the question be now put.

The committee divided:

Ayes 14

Noes 5

Mr Dale

Mr Bell

Mr Dondas

Mr Collins

Mr Finch

Mr Ede

Mr Firmin

Mrs Padgham-Purich

Mr Harris

Mr Smith

Mr Hatton

Mr McCarthy

Mr Manzie
Mr Palmer
Mr Perron
Mr Poole
Mr Reed
Mr Setter
Mr Vale

Motion agreed to.

Mr CHAIRMAN: The question now is that so much of standing orders be suspended as would prevent the remainder of the bill being taken as a whole.

The committee divided:

Ayes 14

Noes 5

Mr Dale
Mr Dondas
Mr Finch
Mr Firmin
Mr Harris
Mr Hatton
Mr McCarthy
Mr Manzie
Mr Palmer
Mr Perron
Mr Poole
Mr Reed
Mr Setter
Mr Vale

Mr Bell
Mr Collins
Mr Ede
Mrs Padgham-Purich
Mr Smith

Motion agreed to.

Mr EDE: Mr Chairman, there are a number of questions that I would like to ask. The minister signalled earlier that he would answer this question. How much was paid to Kath Strehlow or to any other member of the Strehlow Research Foundation, which preceded the Strehlow Research Centre, by way of an inducement for her or for any other person to agree to sign the agreement or for any other purposes?

The second question is: what is the dollar amount of the moneys to be paid to Kath Strehlow, firstly as the research director and secondly as a board member? I would also ask what other inducements ...

Mr PERRON: Mr Chairman, I move that the question be now put.

Mr Ede: I have not finished talking.

The committee divided:

Ayes 14

Noes 5

Mr Dale
Mr Dondas
Mr Finch
Mr Firmin
Mr Harris

Mr Bell
Mr Collins
Mr Ede
Mrs Padgham-Purich
Mr Smith

Mr Hatton
Mr McCarthy
Mr Manzie
Mr Palmer
Mr Perron
Mr Poole
Mr Reed
Mr Setter
Mr Vale

Motion agreed to.

Mr CHAIRMAN: The question is now that the remainder of the bill stand as printed.

Motion agreed to.

Bill reported; report adopted.

Mr MANZIE (Conservation): Mr Speaker, I move the bill be now read a third time.

Mr BELL (MacDonnell): Mr Speaker, the lack of information provided to the House has been unfortunate. I do not intend introducing any new material in my contribution to the third-reading debate. I think it is worth placing on record the fact that I accept the good faith of the government in respect of this bill. I also accept the good faith of those members who have previously occupied portfolios with responsibility for the carriage of this matter: the member for Sanderson, the former member for Flynn, the member for Wanguri and the member for Palmerston. I believe, in fact, that the matter began when the member for Sanderson was Minister for Community Development and that the wheel has come full circle. A total of 5 members of the government frontbench, 1 of them late and unlamented, have had carriage of the matter and I accept the good faith of each in their dealings in relation to it. I think the recent tetchiness of this debate owes much to the lateness of the hour.

It is also worth placing on record the fact that the agreement with Mrs Strehlow does more than simply protect objects of Aboriginal tradition from the public gaze which is something we all agree on. The agreement goes further than that in seeking to protect the commercial, and some would say venal, relationship which has characterised dealings in relation to this collection. I believe that, in terms of public policy, that protection is wrong and unacceptable. The opposition, quite appropriately, has placed on the public record its concerns in that regard. I suspect that the government acted on the basis of what it believes to be its obligations under this agreement when it closed off debate in the committee stage. I believe that that is both wrong and unacceptable.

I want to make one point clear before I close. I said it during the second-reading debate but I will say it one more time to make sure that the minister understands me, because he has suggested that I did not listen to his summing-up speech. In fact, there are loudspeakers throughout the Assembly precincts, as he is well aware, and I was listening very closely to his summing-up speech in the second-reading debate. I am not prepared to be apprised on a confidential basis of an agreement that, in all conscience, I might not be able to accept as confidential. The terms of the agreement may be such that I would be placed in an untenable position in terms of respecting its confidentiality on the one hand and, on the other, fulfilling my

obligations to constituents or protecting the public purse, or whatever. Indeed, those obligations and duties are the basis of the opposition's approach to the legislation.

Mr COLLINS (Sadadeen): Mr Speaker, I want to place on record that I have been offered, although the offer may have been subsequently withdrawn, a confidential briefing on matters which are very relevant to my decision as to whether I vote for or against this particular bill. Mr Speaker, democracy is dead. The situation is ludicrous.

I indicated in my second-reading speech that I am very keen to support this bill. It is of great interest to Australians, to Territorians and, in particular, to people in Alice Springs. It is important, however, that I am briefed on the agreement so that I can make an informed decision. In a parallel situation, which related to the question of AIDS, I attended 2 briefings arranged by the Minister for Health and Community Services. In this case, however, in which I would like to be able to support the legislation, I have been placed in the untenable position of being asked to vote on it when, although information is available, it is not to be made available to myself and other honourable members on this side of the House until after the vote. Mr Speaker, with great regret, I cannot support that.

Mr EDE: (Stuart): Mr Speaker, I noted a comment from the benches opposite. It came from the member for Jingili who said that he had not seen the agreement which governs this act. In this case, it is not the act which governs the agreement but the agreement which governs the act. I would be interested to know just how many other members opposite also are quite happy to fly blind, to blithely put their hands up and blindly cross the floor to vote when ...

Mr Collins: They are voting at their party's call.

Mr EDE: Exactly. Apparently, that is the only way to gain promotion on that side of the House. On this side, however, we are not prepared simply to close our eyes when the minister decides to close his mouth. We are not prepared to have the Westminster system abused in that manner. We are not prepared simply to sit here and have very real questions of public importance left unanswered and to vote for legislation which is governed by an agreement which we are unable to see.

We are not prepared to sit here and accept that it is appropriate for the Chief Minister to gag debate in the committee stage, telling us that we have to get used to that, before I even had a chance to finish putting a question to the minister. I suppose that is an indication of what lies ahead for the duration of this particular government. Thank goodness that will not be long.

Mr Speaker, it is a sad and sorry day for this House when we have to go to such lengths in our endeavours to make the government provide some information to this House, information which all members have a right - and indeed an obligation - to be apprised of before deciding how to exercise their vote. It is a sad and sorry day when the government has to gag and gag again in order to pass a piece of legislation because it is in the invidious position of finding it impossible to justify its own actions. That is the situation that we are in tonight.

Mr MANZIE (Conservation): Mr Speaker, I repeat that I am rather disappointed that there has been deliberate action tonight to prevent the Strehlow Collection remaining in the Northern Territory. The member for

MacDonnell was fully aware of the implications of passing the legislation during these sittings. It is important to realise that the Strehlow Research Centre is to be set up in order that the Strehlow Collection can be researched in the Northern Territory, catalogued and utilised for the benefit of all Territorians. All members should be aware of the great difficulties that were involved in obtaining this collection for the Territory. The whole process has been unique and there have been no precedents for us to follow.

The suggestion has been made that we are trying to hide the costs involved in this matter. I am quite pleased to again advise honourable members that Dr Strehlow is employed as a Science Level 4, under section 27(2) of the Public Service Act, and that the Northern Territory government has paid Dr Strehlow an amount of \$201 132 in respect of the acquisition of the whole collection. I think honourable members should be aware that the figures that have been quoted in respect of the possible value of the collection show that all Territorians will benefit greatly.

The centre itself will cost somewhere between \$2m and \$3m and hopefully we will obtain as much as a 50% contribution from the Commonwealth. That has to be discussed and confirmed but I am sure that we will come to a satisfactory resolution and the Territory will be the only beneficiary. Again, I repeat that, at all times, all members of this government have acted in good faith with one objective only - to acquire the collection under the best possible circumstances for all Territorians. I believe we have done it. We have been restricted in our approaches to the matter. Finally, I repeat my offer to the member for MacDonnell that the agreement is open to him to view if he feels that he can do so. If he cannot, I understand his position.

Motion agreed to; bill read a third time.

ADJOURNMENT

Mr PERRON (Chief Minister): Mr Speaker, I move that the Assembly do now adjourn.

Mr COLLINS (Sadadeen): Mr Speaker, earlier in the day, the Minister for Transport and Works saw fit to table a letter to the editor of the Sunday Territorian and I take great pleasure now in replying to it. The writer appears to be Mr G. Martin of Telegraph Terrace. However, I have some doubt as to whether that particular gentleman wrote it. I think the letter's very first sentence gives the real gist of what the writer wanted to write about but could not say. He wrote: 'Sir, in recent weeks I have watched your part-time letter writer, part-time columnist and part-time politician, Denis Collins, at part-time work in your newspapers - the Centralian Advocate and Sunday Territorian'. He then went on to mention the new Supreme Court and Parliament House. What he did not mention is my most recent writings in the media which relate to the matter of conveyancing, a subject which has been dear to my heart for the last 8 years.

Mr HATTON: A point of order, Mr Speaker! This is a matter that is before the House at the moment. A bill which relates to conveyancing is to be dealt with on General Business day.

Mr COLLINS: I am not referring to the bill at all.

Mr SPEAKER: There is no point of order.

Mr COLLINS: Thank you, Mr Speaker. It was a good try but the honourable member is wasting his time.

The point of the matter is that the public are becoming very well informed about conveyancing issues and know that they are getting a pretty poor deal. I believe a recent letter that I sent to the paper on the subject has stung 1 or 2 who may stand to lose something which they treasure - a monopoly on conveyancing. Who would not treasure a monopoly if he could get away with it? I believe that the letter to the editor of the Sunday Territorian has come about because of my remarks on conveyancing but, because its writer could not raise the real subject of his concern, he had to pick on the furphy of the State Square project.

I am more than happy to inform all members of the government that, if they think they can frighten me out of condemning the government over its actions in relation to the State Square project, they have another think coming. Initially, my attitude to the State Square project was that, politically, it was a foolish thing for the government to do. It is a stupidity. It puts in jeopardy the conservative side of politics in the Territory, the side which is in government, the anti-Labor side. I believe that very strongly. In the Flynn by-election, I urged the people of Flynn to give the government a very clear message. I have some very good friends in the CLP who did not believe that there was any way that the CLP could lose the Flynn electorate. On paper, that looks pretty right. The people of Flynn, on behalf of the people of Alice Springs and, I believe, the whole Territory, tried to give the government a message, and the government would not listen. It just dug its heels in.

It has come up with a project that will provide a few jobs to people in Darwin, over 2 or 3 years, and will leave a legacy which I estimate to be in the order of \$400m for Territorians to pay off over the next 30 years. I base my figures on the scant information with which we have been provided. We have a minister who proudly signs an agreement but, when asked how much it will cost, says: 'Oh, we do not know'. No normal, sensible person in this Territory would enter into an agreement to pay out his own money for something if he did not know what the final price would be or at least its upper limit. I base my calculation of \$400m on the following: a reasonable interest rate of 13.5%, with the interest and the capital paid off over 30 years of annual rather than monthly repayments. A simple calculation will show that the total amount paid will be something like \$420m. That is the legacy which this government will leave around the necks of Territorians.

I have always made the point that Darwin needs an injection of funds. People are leaving in droves and our economy could well collapse. That is why I have supported the government's moves in relation to housing. The member for Stuart queried my bona fides, as an Adam Smith man, in supporting the government on such a matter. Adam Smith himself well realised that, when government has interfered in matters, it cannot bail out wholesale. The government has interfered in the housing situation in the Northern Territory. It has offered incentives to people to buy houses and, when people have found themselves in great difficulty, it has acted to try to keep them here.

To return to the subject of the letter, I smell Crusher Dust all over it. That is a variety of stone that has been crushed. I believe that the whole thing is a set-up. The government has been involved and keenly sought to get the letter into the public record. As a regular reader of Hansard, I am happy for it to be there. I do not believe there are too many regular readers of Hansard except possibly His Honour the Administrator whose capacity for

masochism in that respect is only to be admired. It has been claimed that I always vote with the ALP. I can only respond that it is to the shame of the government that it behaves as stupidly as it has behaved here tonight. If it had shown a little finesse, the Strehlow Research Centre Bill would have been supported by every member of the House. I would have liked to support the bill but I am damned if I will support something when I do not have the necessary information on which to base my judgment, and neither does my electorate expect me to do that.

The letter to the editor goes on to say that I visit Darwin every now and then. Crusher Dust comes to Darwin every so often. He has not visited the House very often - as one might expect the president of a political party to do - since he lost to me in the Sadadeen electorate. He says that we operate in appalling conditions. He is talking about 25 people on 30 days a year and, although I have some sympathy for the staff of the Assembly and realise that our accommodation is not palatial, it is a darn sight better than my little donga at Ti Tree. We could be a lot worse off, but the writer of the letter says that the conditions here are 'deplorable'. I will take him on at any time - or any of his colleagues - in the seat of Sadadeen. People down there are hurting as much as people here in relation to a whole range of matters. As they struggle to find the money to pay their bills, they believe that the government has taken leave of its senses.

Darwin does need an injection of funds. Any government with a little imagination would find plenty of projects which would help the building industry survive until the arrival of better times, which we hope are around the corner. A new university building is one such project. It is said that the old hospital building, where the university is now housed, is only good for about 3 years. Why not put the money in there? Many more Territorians would benefit and those people, as graduates, will make a contribution to future wealth creation in the Territory which we need. The university is an investment in our future. Why, then, has the government chosen the new Parliament House project? Does it want to commit suicide? It seems to be hell-bent on driving me into a situation where I oppose it on almost every issue. If that is the game it wants to play, I will play the game. I will speak up in my electorate and the people there will know what is happening.

The gentleman who wrote the letter went on to say that, at a recent function in Alice Springs, I was more keen to put forward my own views than to hear anybody else's views. I will always listen to anybody's point of view. I will certainly put my own view. I believe that I am a strong character but I will always listen. Certainly, Mr G. Martin never made himself known to me or tried to raise a point. I have had no complaints from people in Alice Springs, many of whom are stout CLP supporters who have backed the party to the tune of many thousands of dollars. They are now scratching their heads and saying that the government is a mob of clots. My greatest worry is that the government is prepared, for lord knows what lemming-like reason, to pursue its choice to the point of political suicide. Although my politics certainly do not agree with those of my friend the member for Stuart, I am prepared to be seen to be voting with him in relation to the government's decision to build a new Parliament House.

The writer of the letter goes on to say: 'No longer will Mr Collins receive my or my friend's support'. Isn't that easy to say! He might have 1 friend or he might have 2 - him and himself. He might be schizophrenic. He says that, when he calls my office, he is always told that I am away. My secretary is very loyal and very efficient. If somebody calls my office and I am not there, she seeks to obtain the phone number of the caller so that I can

get in touch later. I would suggest that all members follow the same practice as a matter of course and I can tell you, Mr Speaker, that no person by the name of G. Martin has ever called my office or left that name on the answering machine while my secretary has been at lunch when I have been in Darwin. Never has a person of that name called my office. Occasionally, somebody rings and does not leave a name. That happens once a month at the most and I generally find out who the caller was when somebody meets me in the street and says: 'I called your office the other day'. I say: 'You are the one who did not leave your name'. The reply is: 'Yes, that was me'. I deny and refute the nonsense that this person has called my office on many occasions and has been told that I was unavailable.

The letter says that if we cannot afford a new Parliament House, we cannot afford a part-time politician who also grows grapes. I have never tried to hide my interest in the grape industry and my work at TI Tree from people in my electorate. The vast majority of people are extremely interested in it and see it as an advancement for the Territory. They are quite supportive and are pleased to see a politician who is prepared to roll up his sleeves, get his hands dirty and battle the elements in a largely unknown and new industry which has many problems which the 4 growers are hoping to solve.

I refute the contents of the letter. I believe that it is nothing more than a set-up. I will be more than happy to talk to Mr G. Martin and have the matter out with him because the vast majority of what he has said is nonsense which cannot be supported by the facts. I am more than happy to go and eyeball the gentleman. I believe, however, that whole matter smells of Crusher Dust and is a set-up by my former colleague in the CLP. If the CLP wants to do anything more to assist me in my decision as to whether I stand at the next election as an independent or a member of the Territory Nationals, it is moving in the right direction. However, I have reserved my decision on that matter until the appropriate time when I have discussed it with my electorate.

Mr EDE (Stuart): Mr Deputy Speaker, I would like the House to bear with me for a few minutes while I discuss, in relation to only 2 specific schools, the sorts of problems which are occurring in staffing schools in rural areas. I will refer first of all to the Woolaning School in the Litchfield area. I made representations to the Minister for Education quite some time ago in relation to this school. The local community did an enormous amount of work in getting it operational. The Townsends of Stapleton Station donated 16 acres of land and, 12 months ago, after refusing to do anything for quite some time, the government provided \$60 000. That was after representations made by myself and, I believe, by FEPI. Mr Deputy Speaker, 12 months after that \$60 000 was made available, 30 children are still waiting for teachers. An amount of \$16 000 was spent in bringing 2 demountables to the site but, in spite of all the efforts which have been made, the school is still waiting for teachers.

The second school that I wish to mention is at Willowra in my electorate where the community has been trying for many years to establish post-primary education via a community education centre. At the end of my speech, I will be seeking leave to table 2 letters. The first was written to the minister by 9 of the teachers and assistant teachers at Willowra and is dated 24 November. It refers the minister to the speech which he made at Willowra on 10 November at the opening of the community education centre and points out that he stated on that occasion that, if a community has sufficient numbers and has shown its involvement in and support of education, the Northern Territory government would support it.

The letter points out quite clearly that evidence of the need and the level of support in the community was first given on 17 August 1981 when the then regional TAFE Coordinator, Mr Tom Marling, wrote to the Willowra School stating that he had reiterated to the Director of the Southern Region that an adult educator was needed at Willowra. He said he had advised the director that the Willowra community had been more involved than any other community in which adult educators were located.

The letter goes on to detail a series of meetings - held in June 1986, March 1987, May 1987, June 1987, September 1987 and so on - between the community and staff of the Willowra School and refers to the letters which were sent to the Department of Education advising it of the need, as the community went through the process of developing the proposal for an education centre. Discussions were held with an education consultant from Deakin University and curricula were designed for men and for women.

The facts bear out the letter's statement that there has been consistent community support for the concept of a CEC, that there has been a demonstrable need from as early as 1981, and that the numbers have been sufficient to warrant action. The community has been involved in negotiating all aspects of the community education centre and the school has repeatedly referred to the community to ensure ongoing community involvement and guidance. The federal government recognised the need and demand for a CEC by paying for the construction of the building and the equipment therein at a cost of \$200 000. The letter goes on to say that the only party which has not fulfilled its commitment to the CEC at Willowra is the Northern Territory government and the final step needed to bring the CEC project to fruition is for the Territory government to honour its commitment by providing staffing and housing for those staff. Mr Deputy Speaker, I seek leave to table the document.

Leave granted.

Mr EDE: The next document that I have is a copy of a letter to the Minister for Education by Lisa Watts, who is an ex-principal of the Willowra School. She was involved in the development of the centre during 1986-87. I will not go through all the details because I will be tabling the document.

Lisa Watts points out that, in traditional terms, the content of the ceremony accompanying the minister's opening of the school indicated the reciprocal nature of the transaction in which the people acknowledged the minister and indicated their ongoing commitment to the community education centre. She states that the traditional bosses of the Ngatijirri or budgerigar dreaming paid great attention to the planning of the ceremony, which included dances involving representatives from each of the facets of the Walpiri kingship system - Japaljarri and Jungarrayi, Napangardi and Napanangka, Napaljarri and Nungarrayi, Nampijinpa and Nangala, and Nakamarra and Napurrula. There were also gifts of boomerangs and a number of paintings were exhibited. Ms Watts details the traditional significance of these events in terms of the people's commitment to the education centre.

The letter also refers to the non-traditional forms of commitment which the Willowra community has made to post-primary education. The first recorded request for assistance in this area was in 1976 when the community began its ongoing demands for some form of post-primary education in its locality because it did not want to experience the continuing dislocation caused by post-primary students having to leave the community to study at Yirara.

Ms Watts refers to the strong involvement of the Willowra community in the design of the community education centre facilities and in the decision-making in respect of the use of the facilities. She points out that all of the Aboriginal teachers are students of the Remote Area Teacher Education Program and indicates that, in 1987, unanimous support was given to that program at Willowra, which has been recognised as having the most successful RATE program in the Northern Territory.

The minister spoke as if the community education centre was simply plonked down at Willowra without his knowing anything about it. Given that, it was interesting that, when he spoke at Willowra, he claimed that the funding of the project was 50:50. That belies his claim that he could not be expected to staff the centre because he did not know of its existence. The situation illustrates the problems which are caused by changes in ministers. Willowra School was selected out of all Aboriginal schools in the southern region to undertake a new Aboriginal education initiative. This directive was given by the previous Minister for Education, now the Attorney-General. He said that the pilot project was to be called the 'Willowra Movement'. In line with the policy of FEPI, the main aim was to hand over the control of education to the Aboriginal people of Willowra. The letter states that Willowra School was chosen for the following reasons:

- (1) The Aboriginal teachers had clearly demonstrated a commitment to education. They held the highest attendance record and were perceived to be excellent role models in attitude and performance.
- (2) The community demonstrated strength both in their traditional form and in their adaptations to the European way of life. There is little indication of abuse of alcohol, petrol and other substances. The community portrayed a stronger sense of control than other communities.
- (3) Similar to the RATE program, the community went through a series of consultative processes before the commitment was made to the Willowra Movement Pilot Project, the final decision being that the ultimate direction is to achieve control over the education of their children.

The letter goes on to say:

The implementation of the Willowra Movement Pilot Project caused the Attorney-General, the then Minister for Education, to speed up the planning of the community education centre. If Willowra was to be the model Aboriginal school in the Northern Territory, it was accepted that a complete community education program was essential.

The centre building was completed in about the middle of this year. Without so much as a blush, the Minister for Education opened the centre the other day even though he had originally denied any knowledge of its existence or any government input to its funding. He was quite happy to open it. He was not prepared to make any commitment to staffing this year and still has made no commitment for staffing for next year. As it stands at the moment, the community has a possibility of obtaining education in 1990. That is simply not good enough.

Lisa Watts concludes: 'I am requesting that 2 things are acknowledged in the light of your decision of providing the staff necessary to commence the

community's education program for 1989'. In fact, the decision so far has only been in relation to 1990. The 2 things are:

1. That the Northern Territory Department of Education recognises Willowra traditional forms of entry to a commitment as clearly expressed on the day of the opening.
2. That the Northern Territory Department of Education researches the developmental processes involved in the establishment of the community education centre.

Lisa Watts is now working with the Healthy Aboriginal Life Team in Alice Springs. She has left Willowra but she retains, like myself, a very close empathy with that community and its desires to educate its children at post-primary levels. The community has always wanted very strong traditional control over its life. It is second to none in its rejection of alcohol and its ravages. The women are extremely strong in the community. Their ability to ensure that some of the problems that affect other communities do not affect their community is to be admired. They have also had some very strong male leaders in the past. I will not mention names because one of the persons to whom I am referring is deceased.

The people of the Willowra community have always been very upset about their children going away to Alice Springs because they see it as a place where people get into trouble. They have wanted some form of post-primary education in their own community. I believe that we should all have a word in the minister's ear to see if we can have him acknowledge the work that they have done there. We would like him to acknowledge how long the people have been battling for this centre and we would like him to provide funding for staff positions so that the centre can begin to operate at the beginning of next year.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I seek leave to table a copy of the letter from Lisa Watts to the minister.

Leave granted.

Motion agreed to; the Assembly adjourned.

Mr Speaker Vale took the Chair at 10 am.

PETITIONS

'Last Temptation of Christ'

Mr COULTER (Palmerston): Mr Speaker, I present a petition from 42 citizens of the Northern Territory praying that the Assembly request the responsible government to ban the showing of the film 'The Last Temptation of Christ'. The petition bears the Clerk's certificate that it conforms with the requirements of standing orders. I move that the petition be read.

Motion agreed to; petition read:

To the honourable the Speaker and members of the Legislative Assembly of the Northern Territory, the humble petition of the undersigned citizens of the Northern Territory respectfully sheweth that we find the film 'The Last Temptation of Christ' to be offensive in every sense and an attempt to erode the strong Christian beliefs held dear by the majority of the community. Your petitioners therefore humbly pray that you request the responsible government to ban the showing of this film in the Northern Territory.

Appointment of Women's Advisor

Mr SMITH (Millner): Mr Speaker, I present a petition from 81 citizens of the Northern Territory, particularly Nhulunbuy, requesting the Assembly to give due consideration to continuing the appointment of a Women's Advisor. The petition bears the Clerk's certificate that it conforms with the requirements of standing orders. I move that the petition be read.

Motion agreed to; petition read:

To the Speaker of the Legislative Assembly, the humble petition of the undersigned citizens of the Northern Territory respectfully urges the Speaker and members of the Northern Territory Legislative Assembly to address the failure of the Northern Territory government to continue the appointment of a Women's Advisor. Women's interests cannot be politically represented by bureaucrats nor can the Women's Advisory Council be expected to play a political role. The Women's Advisor position is crucial in ensuring that women have real access to government. The undersigned citizens believe that the interests of 50% of the Territory's population have been ignored by this decision. Your petitioners therefore humbly pray that the honourable Speaker and the members of the Legislative Assembly of the Northern Territory give due consideration to the above, and your petitioners, as in duty bound, will ever pray.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

Mr TUXWORTH (Barkly)(by leave): Mr Speaker, during the course of the debate last night on the needle exchange legislation, I was asked by the honourable minister to table newspaper articles that I was referring to in the course of the debate.

Mr Coulter: 'Documents' I think was the word he used.

Mr TUXWORTH: Documents, Mr Speaker, which I eventually tabled. During the course of the debate, I said: 'The minister denied that there was a

program and said that it was being looked at'. The minister interjected: 'That is a lie'. I went on to say: 'Later in the year, the minister said it had been operating since May but, in May, he said it was not operating at all. I will table the documents to show that'.

Mr Speaker, the minister later went on to complain that, in fact, the documents that I tabled did not state that. I would like to draw to the attention of the House the documents that I tabled last night and, in particular, the article labelled 'Heroin Plan Still in Early Stages'. I quote one sentence from the article: 'A spokesman for Health Minister, Don Dale, said the proposal to supply registered heroin addicts with the drug and syringes in a bid to counter AIDS was at a very early stage'. A proposal was at a very early stage.

I refer to the next document, which is an article from the NT News of 24 November. That was tabled on 29 November. That article states quite categorically, in a statement attributed to Mr Dale, that 'the program has been operating on a trial basis since May'. Quite clearly, one article said that a trial program was being considered in June and, in November, there was another statement saying that the program has been in operation since May.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

Mr DALE (Health and Community Services)(by leave): Mr Speaker, I refer to far more reliable documents than those the member for Barkly referred to in making yet another of his sleight-of-hand comments. I refer members to the Parliamentary Record of Thursday 26 May. In the first instance, I quote from a question in relation to the spread of AIDS that the member for MacDonnell asked of me. At that stage, I said that I was tabling a bill to amend the Poisons and Dangerous Drugs Act and that I was sure that all the points that the honourable member asked about would be covered by that. Later on that same day, the record shows that I tabled that bill and mentioned the syringe program that started from that day.

Any allegation that the honourable member for Barkly makes as to whether or not I had in place a program before informing this House is about as accurate as other comments he makes. The tabling of 2 documents allegedly proving that I had a needle exchange program in place before informing this House is the usual tactic of misleading the people of the Northern Territory that the member for Barkly has been using frequently since he contracted that rather infamous Indonesian virus which no other person seems ever to have suffered from.

TABLED PAPER

Subordinate Legislation and Tabled Papers Committee
Eighth Report

Mr SETTER (Jingili): Mr Speaker, I table the Eighth Report of the Subordinate Legislation and Tabled Papers Committee.

TABLED PAPER

Menzies School of Health Research
Annual Report 1987-88

Mr HARRIS (Education): Mr Speaker, I table the Menzies School of Health Research Annual Report for 1987-88, and move that the Assembly take note of the report.

It is my pleasure to present this annual report which summarises the operations of the school and presents the school accounts which have been audited by the Auditor-General of the Northern Territory. In the past financial year, the school received just over \$1m from the Territory government and approximately \$800 000 from other sources, including \$100 000 from the Menzies Foundation. The funds provided for more than 50 different health research projects, and their results are summarised in the annual report.

The research projects were directed towards the better treatment or prevention of trachoma, chlamydial disease, diabetes and heart disease, kava and alcohol abuse, low birth weight and other health problems relevant to the Northern Territory. Much of the work of the Menzies school is relevant to the health of Aboriginal people in the Northern Territory. This focus is not exclusive. It is justified by death and illness rates among Aborigines which are still 4 times worse than among other Territorians. As an academic institution, the school has considerable freedom to set its own research agenda, subject to the availability of funds. It has a corresponding responsibility to conduct research of high scientific quality which is of relevance to the Territory community. To achieve relevance, the school has consulted widely in the community and with government.

It has demonstrated its scientific excellence by exposing its research program to external review by scientific peers. Through the peer review process, the Menzies School of Health Research attracted more than \$400 000 in competitive research grants during the financial year. This external income is expected to grow to perhaps \$700 000 in the current financial year. At the same time, the school budget is expected to grow to \$2.2m, of which half is provided by the Territory government.

In line with the requirements of its governing legislation, the school was subjected to its first quinquennial review by an expert scientific review committee. The major conclusion of the review committee was that the school had made excellent progress in fulfilling its statutory functions. It had achieved this progress in a remarkably short period of time. A summary of the review committee report has been received by the government. The committee fully supported new initiatives proposed by the school in the areas of health service evaluation, occupational health, clinical and educational research and health education.

The Menzies School of Health Research is an important asset of the Northern Territory. It employs 40 staff and will bring to the Northern Territory about \$1m in funds in the current financial year. Already, the school has made substantial contributions towards improving the health of the Territory population. Plans have been laid for the construction of a combined health laboratory and other health facilities which will greatly improve the effectiveness of the institution.

The Menzies School of Health Research has had a successful year as is evidenced by this report. There is every prospect that, with continuing support from this government, the school will go on to even better things in the new year.

Debate adjourned.

STATEMENT
Visit to East Timor by Northern Territory Delegation

Mr PERRON (Chief Minister): Mr Speaker, I wish to report on a visit by a Northern Territory delegation that I led to the Indonesian province of East Timor between 9 November and 11 November. The principal aim of the trip to Timor was to facilitate family visits among relatives living in East Timor and the Northern Territory, many of them from families split by the civil war and the subsequent Indonesian invasion of East Timor in 1975. About 2000 Timorese people came to Darwin as a result of the events of 1975, some directly as refugees from Dili as various factions gained ascendancy in the civil war, and some via Portugal in the years which followed. The great majority of these people have been unable to visit family members left behind in East Timor during the 13 years since 1975. This month's visit was planned for about the best humanitarian reason you can get: to pave the way for a significant number of Darwin families freely to visit relatives and friends from whom they have been separated by war.

It did not happen overnight and I must pay tribute to my predecessors in this job who have each raised the issue of family visits for the East Timorese with the highest levels of government in Jakarta. In fact, those emotional family reunion scenes we saw on television happened only after 6 years of planning and persistence on the part of the CLP government. Those reunions were tangible benefits to Territorians resulting from the stock of goodwill this government has built up with Jakarta. The issue was first raised with President Suharto by a former Chief Minister, Paul Everingham, in December 1982. Having witnessed some of those family reunions at first hand, I can assure honourable members it was well worth the effort.

The next reason was to follow up the close cultural and commercial ties the CLP government in the Territory has been developing with South-east Asia in general and Indonesia in particular since 1982. I hope to build further on those links with a visit to senior government ministers in Jakarta early next month. The third reason was to allow the Darwin-based media free access to the reality of life in East Timor as opposed to the anti-Indonesian views of various propagandists who have latched on to the Fretilin cause, many of whom I am advised have never been near East Timor in their lives.

I was accompanied on the trip by Mr Rick Setter, the member for Jingili, who has been active for some years in looking after the welfare of Darwin families of Timorese descent, a total of 16 former residents of East Timor or their family members, and 11 members of the media representing the NT News, ABC radio and television, NTD Channel 8 and Radio 8DN. The Timorese who made the journey represented all the races which make up the population of East Timor, from Portuguese immigrants to people of Chinese and Timorese descent. The oldest was a man of 75 who had gone to Dili from Portugal in 1937 and then settled in Darwin after 1975. The youngest was a 10-year-old lad from Palmerston who had never seen his grandparents or other members of his extended family in East Timor. Most of the Timorese opted to stay on in East Timor to holiday with relatives after we left. Thus, in no way were they under our protection or control. Anybody who wants seriously to dispute my report should talk to these people when they return to Darwin. Some of them are back already.

The Northern Territory party travelled on the regular Merpati flight from Darwin to Kupang, where we were greeted by Governor Fernandes and his staff. During the 4-hour stop-over in Kupang, I received a briefing from the management of the Portland Cement Company which is keen to supply raw material

to the Territory cement industry at what sounds to be an attractive price. It is an issue that I intend to follow up with local industry representatives. We then took the regular industry airline flight to Dili, where we were greeted by the Governor, His Excellency Mario Viegas Carrascalao. Over the next 48 hours, the Northern Territory party travelled hundreds of kilometres in the area around Dili, talked with literally hundreds of people and visited hotels, shops, local markets, churches and a coffee plantation. The official NT delegation and the media toured Dili Hospital and the media went into Dili Prison to talk to the inmates.

We did not find the East Timor portrayed over the years by the Fretilin spokesman I mentioned earlier. Of course, there is only so much that can be done in 2 days, but it was very difficult to find the repression, the starvation, the restrictions on freedom of speech and religion that we have heard so much about. There are problems - there are plenty of them, as Governor Carrascalao freely admits. The first and lasting impression of Dili is of a clean and rather pleasant city of 104 000 people who live a long way down the socioeconomic scale compared to most Australians but who are by no means starving in the streets.

In the weeks preceding our visit to East Timor, the story had been peddled to the Australian media by a leftwing MP from Victoria, Mr Lamb, and our own Territory leftwinger, Mr Warren Snowdon MP, that 200 children had been poisoned in Dili Hospital by Indonesian authorities. I will return to that subject in a moment. However, first I will give the Assembly a quick account of economic and social development in East Timor since its integration as the 27th Province of Indonesia, as presented to the media and myself by Governor Carrascalao.

In 1975, in the dying days of Portugal's empire in South-east Asia, Dili had a population of 17 000 out of a total East Timor population of 640 000. The total Timor population is now 649 000 and Dili's population is 104 000, an incredible 60% of whom are students ranging from primary school to university level. At the time Portugal unceremoniously abandoned its colony of 450 years, there were 70 primary schools, 4 junior high schools and 1 high school in the whole of East Timor. There was no university and precious little tertiary education of any kind. Today, there are 560 primary schools, 80 junior high schools, 28 high schools, 3 teachers' colleges, 3 agricultural schools and a university. This time next year, East Timor will have its first polytechnic and engineering school. In 450 years of colonial rule, Timor produced a total of 10 university graduates. In the past 10 years, since new educational facilities began coming on stream, 124 Timorese have gained university degrees and another 1000 are attending university studies, 600 at the University of Dili and another 400 at other Indonesian universities.

Improvements in health care are equally impressive. In 1975, there were 15 doctors in the province. Their first duty was to the Portuguese military and their second duty was to the Portuguese civil and commercial administration. Any time left over could be devoted to the local Timorese population if the doctors felt so inclined. There are now 100 doctors working in 5 hospitals in East Timor, which gives East Timor the most favourable ratio of doctors to population in Indonesia. There is an urgent need for specialists in the province and diseases, caused by poor water supply, inadequate sewerage facilities outside of the main centres and the malaria-carrying mosquito, all pose serious public health problems.

In answer to the allegations bandied about by Mr Snowdon and his friends about 200 babies being poisoned in Dili Hospital, Governor Carrascalao threw

open all the hospital facilities for public inspection. He invited the media to make their own judgments on whether the hospital staff they saw at work would have any part in allowing a single child to die, let alone deliberately causing the death of hundreds of children. I invite any member of this Assembly who gives any credence at all to the radical ravings of the federal member to ask the 11 media representatives for their impressions of the staff and facilities at Dili Hospital, keeping in mind that East Timor is very much a third world country and keeping in mind also that the Snowdon-Lamb allegations were about the murder of children, not about public health.

Whilst visiting the East Timor Parliament House, I met with the Speaker and 2 members of parliament and discussed with them the likely ramifications of any incident, accidental or otherwise, which caused the deaths of 200 children. The suggestion was met with the same incredulous disbelief that such an allegation would invoke if someone claimed that it had happened at the Royal Darwin Hospital. I was told that members of parliament have continuous close contact with their constituents and that members are free to bring grievances to the attention of parliament in much the same way as happens in this Assembly. I point out that the parliament has 2 political parties represented and members take their roles very seriously.

Agriculture in the province seems to have boomed as a result of increased education, better facilities and government initiatives. Between 1975 and today, corn production has increased from 16 000 t to 57 000 t per year. Corn is the staple diet of the Timorese and rice rates second on the dinner table. Rice production has increased from 25 000 t to 39 000 t and the major export, coffee, is up from 8000 t to 10 000 t. Much of this increase in production can be attributed to better transportation facilities such as the 700 km of sealed roads which now link all 13 district capitals of East Timor. Without labouring the point, in 1975, there were 20 km of sealed road outside the Dili city area.

The final figure I would like to give from Governor Carrascalao's briefing is an indicator of rising living standards in the province. In 1974, per capita income in East Timor was \$US40 per annum. Last financial year, it was \$US198, and Governor Carrascalao admitted that inflation had played a role in that increase. Even so, it is only one-third of the Indonesian average per capita income of \$US600 or so per year.

I make it clear that I am not here as a mouthpiece for the Indonesian government or for anybody else. Neither do I wish to denigrate the views of those who genuinely believe that an independent Timor under Fretilin control would be a good thing. They live in an economic and political wonderland, but I do not dispute their right to do so. I only wish that they would spend less time writing meaningless slogans on walls around Darwin. Neither do I deny that terrible things happened in East Timor in 1975 and for some time after. Six of the thousands of victims of those times were Australian journalists doing their jobs as they saw fit.

I report to the House on East Timor as we saw it. We witnessed no signs of oppression. In fact, any traveller sees more offensive weaponry at any international airport in Europe and Asia today than we saw in the streets of Dili. Neither did we see any sign of Fretilin either posing a threat to Indonesian sovereignty or attracting overt support from the general community of today, irrespective of how they may have felt before the massive improvements occurred in health, education and community facilities over the past decade.

In fact, I talked to an ex-Fretilin representative called Arsenio Horta who is the brother of Fretilin spokesman Jose Ramos Horta. The gentleman spent 3 years in the mountains after the Indonesian invasion in 1975. Arsenio used to live and work in Darwin at the time of Cyclone Tracy and, because of his knowledge of English, he was the voice of Radio Fretilin in the early years of the occupation. He told me the story of how, one day, his group walked into an Indonesian ambush which was too big to handle, so they all surrendered. He spent 5 months in a Dili prison after which the military authorities took his word that he had reformed his ways and wanted to get back to living a normal life. I spoke to Arsenio Horta at the Turismo Hotel which he now manages. I met his wife and 1 of his 2 small children. I think that he is fairly typical of East Timorese today, although he is possibly luckier than most in terms of education and employment opportunities. He is simply getting on with his ordinary life.

While I am talking about Mr Horta, I would like honourable members to note that he was expecting us in Dili. The reason he was expecting us is because a friend in Darwin telephoned him that morning and told him that we were coming. That illustrates that it is hard to take seriously suggestions of recent atrocities in East Timor such as the one about the 200 poisoned children. People in Darwin and, in fact, people all over the world, communicate routinely with relatives and friends in East Timor by mail and telephone. The telephone service is not the most efficient but calls get through if you have the patience. Such patience was certainly needed by the journalists who were trying to ring back their stories to Australia.

Although East Timor has been technically a closed province, thousands of people fly to and from Dili every year on the regular daily air service from Kupang. They are mostly Indonesians but foreign diplomats and businessmen also visit the province as a matter of routine. We saw their names and addresses in the visitors' book at the marketplace in Likisa and they came from Australia, Japan, North America and Europe. It is hard to believe that any major outrage could occur without becoming common knowledge fairly quickly, particularly among the thousands of foreign diplomatic personnel stationed in Jakarta. To suggest that Timorese parents would sit on their hands while hundreds of their children were put to death in the local hospital is an outrageous slur on the Timorese race in general. I believe that they would die in the streets before they allowed such a thing to happen, as would parents anywhere. Moreover, the rest of the world would know about such an event through the simple expedient of a phone call, telegram or letter.

In conclusion, I can recommend the Turismo Hotel to honourable members planning a holiday in East Timor when it is opened officially as Indonesia's 27th province, hopefully by the end of this year. Mr Speaker, I move that the Assembly take note of the statement.

Debate adjourned.

STATEMENT Crocodile Industry

Mr MANZIE (Conservation): Mr Speaker, I rise to make a statement about future operations in the Territory's expanding crocodile industry.

Mr Ede interjecting.

Mr MANZIE: In response to the interjection from the member for Stuart, I advise that I did provide a copy of this statement to the opposition yesterday and I presume that it would have been circulated among its ranks.

Honourable members would be aware that the Territory has laid the foundations of what has the potential to become a hugely profitable and dynamic industry. This potential is now beginning to be realised. The industry's development so far has been achieved by a combination of government support and the drive and initiative which characterise private enterprise in the Territory. In this statement, I will summarise briefly the development of the industry to date.

The industry had its beginnings in tourism. People from all over the world were anxious to view man-eating crocodiles. However, while tourism continues to be an important aspect of the industry, it soon diversified. The Department of Industries and Development, with support from the Conservation Commission, produced a plan of management for the crocodile resource. Firstly, the potential of crocodile flesh as a gourmet food was pursued, culminating in an official launch at the Darwin Sheraton Hotel. The flesh is now accepted Australia-wide as a prestige gourmet product targeted at the high quality restaurant trade. Indeed, farmers cannot provide sufficient stock to satisfy the current demand. In order to allow crocodile flesh to be produced for human consumption in the Territory, amendments are being made to the Territory Parks and Wildlife Conservation Act to put into place procedures for handling crocodile flesh. Regulations are also being prepared under the Food Act through the Uniform Food Standards Code for processing and handling of wildlife flesh for human consumption.

As the next step in the diversification process, in late 1987, crocodile farms began turning off crocodile skins for export. In the last financial year, the farmers have exported some 550 saltwater crocodile skins and 890 freshwater crocodile skins. In the short period that skins have been exported from the Territory, it has been demonstrated that our skins, in their salted form, are of the finest quality in the world. As with crocodile flesh, farmers are unable to produce sufficient skins to satisfy current market demands.

Further development of the industry lies in 2 directions. Firstly, the industry can diversify further by producing finished crocodile-skin products for distribution and sale. Secondly, it can increase the level of exports. The introduction of the next tier of the industry is inhibited by Commonwealth and international restrictions. Regulations under the Wildlife Protection (Regulation of Exports and Imports) Act of the Commonwealth and international agreements control trade in crocodile products. Because of the crocodile industry's rapid growth in the Territory and the high regard in which it is held by Territorians, our crocodile management programs - which originally extended over 3 years - are being reviewed in conjunction with the Commonwealth with the aim of accelerating the removal of some impediments. In addition, submissions are being put to the relevant international bodies which cannot fail to take away the remaining obstacles to the further growth and diversification of the industry.

In the past, various Territory industries have been restricted by their inability to add value to our primary resources. For example, most of our mining product is processed elsewhere. The Territory government is adamant that this will not be the case with our crocodile industry. In April this year, preliminary investigation began into the feasibility of tanning skins in the Territory and, although the export of salted skins overseas will continue, some skins will be tanned in the Territory. In September, an offer of land at Berrimah was made to Exotic Leather Northern Territory for the establishment of a tannery in the Territory. It is expected that this tannery, in addition to tanning crocodile skins and by-products, will also tan fish skins and

sea-snake skins, if they become available. The tannery is intended to be fully operational by February of next year. Other companies are displaying similar interest and it is not impossible that Darwin will become the processing centre for product grown in Queensland and even Papua New Guinea.

As would be expected, the obvious success of the crocodile industry, particularly in regard to the export of skins, has resulted in other people wishing to participate in the industry and contribute to its growth. In any other industry, such interest would be welcomed enthusiastically. However, crocodiles are a finite resource. At present, the viability of the industry is very much dependent on the availability of eggs in the wild which are harvested and hatched by the Conservation Commission. Obviously, the gathering of eggs in the wild cannot be expected to satisfy any large increase in demand for stock for the industry because inevitably major increases in harvesting would impact on overall crocodile numbers. This means that, if the crocodile industry is to expand rapidly, the future lies in breeding crocodiles in captivity.

Until now, the Conservation Commission's research has concentrated on the availability of eggs in the wild. This has been carried out under an experimental research program within a plan of management which has enabled it to operate in 3 river systems. In the 1987-88 nesting season, 2896 viable eggs were collected from these management areas and 444 viable eggs were collected from other areas. Of the hatchlings produced, 2505 went to farms and the others were used for research. We are at the razor's edge of research regarding incubating and hatching crocodiles and we are not jeopardising the resources in the wild. Figures show that the number of crocodiles in the management areas where the Conservation Commission has been operating - that is, in the Adelaide River and the Finniss River systems - has either risen steadily or not changed at all. For example, spotlight counts undertaken from 1977 to 1988 show that the number of crocodiles in the Adelaide River system has doubled to about 1500, regardless of the harvesting of 8520 eggs from the area during that time.

It must be realised that the government has been providing hatchlings to the industry at a fraction of their cost to taxpayers. If we continue to do that, we are making farmers unnecessarily dependent on this source of product. The time has come for the Conservation Commission to begin to withdraw from the role of providing all wild hatchlings and for its research to turn to areas which are now more critical to the growth and consolidation of the industry. We will continue to investigate new areas from which eggs can be collected without diminishing the number of crocodiles in the wild. However, our major thrust must be in the vital area of captive breeding research. If the industry is to realise its full potential, it is essential that results in this area improve dramatically.

It is clear that the time has come for the crocodile industry to become more self-sufficient. Indeed, it is essential that this should happen. It has been proven that the industry is viable. Farms have been exporting skins and selling crocodile flesh for human consumption for a year now, and they are in a position where they can assess their costs and their profit margins. They no longer need the existing level of subsidisation from the government and the onus for the development of the industry must be transferred progressively to where it now belongs - with the industry itself. With this in mind, I propose to introduce a 3-year program which, in time, will result in the full recovery of the real cost to the government of the harvest of eggs and hatchlings provided to the crocodile farms. The government has recognised that charges cannot be raised immediately to recover costs fully. Current

operators would be hurt by a sudden large impost, and operators wishing to join the industry would be placed at an immediate disadvantage because they would not be able to reap the benefits of assistance provided previously to farms already in existence.

In recognition of this situation, the government will review the charges over a 3-year period until we are in a position to recover costs. This will give ample time for a private entrepreneur to set up a commercial incubator and hatchling facility to replace the government facility. This means that farmers who do not wish to breed on their own farms or hatch their own eggs will still have a service which provides hatchlings. As a first step in the program, charges for the coming season will be set at the modest level of \$25 per hatchling when the eggs are harvested and incubated by the government and \$5 per hatchling when the eggs are collected by the farmer and incubated by the government.

In addition, we will introduce a system of charging for grown crocodiles. Saltwater crocodiles larger than 1.5 m will cost farmers \$250, 1 m to 1.5 m crocodiles will cost \$100, and crocodiles smaller than 1 m will cost \$25. I believe this system will foster greater activity on the crocodile farms in terms of encouraging captive breeding and more careful animal husbandry practices.

Although the government has a major role to play in this program, the best results will be achieved only through a partnership with private enterprise and, if this partnership is to be truly effective, a reduction in the industry's reliance on the government is necessary. An essential element in putting the industry on a rational economic footing is to phase out government subsidisation, particularly in regard to the real cost of obtaining stock from the wild.

While the government appreciates the huge efforts and contributions that present operators have made already to the industry, in the interests of the Territory as a whole, we are looking for growth and wider participation in the crocodile industry. In order to achieve that development, the main task before us is the ability to breed crocodiles in captivity. As a result, government research, which concentrated previously on the availability of eggs, will now focus on captive breeding, and it has to be remembered that farming crocodiles is a fledgling animal husbandry industry which has not had the benefit of hundreds of years of experience as has, for example, the cattle industry.

I am pleased to be able to inform honourable members of the promising developments within this unique Territory industry. The change in emphasis in government assistance to the crocodile industry will serve to strengthen the industry and stand us and future Territorians in good stead by contributing to the industry's development and growth. The Territory's flourishing crocodile industry is another typical, success story achieved by timely and effective support from this government, coupled with the energy and imagination of Territory private enterprise and I am sure honourable members opposite will recognise the excellent work which has been carried out and concede that the Territory government, in partnership with private enterprise, is and always has been on the right path to develop this vital industry. Mr Deputy Speaker, I move that the Assembly take note of the statement.

Debate adjourned.

MOTION
Order of Business

Mr COULTER (Leader of Government Business): Mr Speaker, I move that intervening business be postponed until after the consideration of Order of the Day Government Business relating to the motion relating to the statement of the Chief Minister in respect of his recent visit to East Timor.

Mr LEO (Nhulunbuy): Mr Speaker, I oppose this motion because the opposition has only a scant few days in a year on which to pursue its business in this House. Indeed, there are also members on the crossbenches who now have business to pursue on General Business Day. If members of the government want to become involved in a filibuster in order to rearrange those few days that we have per annum, then they should inform the House that that is what they intend to do.

It does no credit to the government and it does no credit to the Leader of Government Business for him to move that the consideration of our business be delayed. Mr Speaker, the government would have ample opportunity to debate this matter, should it wish to do so, at the end of General Business, at 3 o'clock tomorrow morning if it wants to, or whenever. To put off General Business in order to satisfy its own political whim is a disgrace to this House and it is a disgrace to the Leader of Government Business.

Mr SETTER (Jingili): Mr Deputy Speaker, I would like to speak to this motion. This is a very important issue to the 2000-plus East Timorese citizens of the Northern Territory, most of whom live in Darwin. It is a very emotive issue for them and I am sure that they would like to hear what members of this House have to say about it. Too often, we hear from members opposite how, on the very rare occasion that this government might care to gag debate on an issue, the sky will fall in. Yet today, when a number of us want to speak on this issue, the first thing opposition members seek to do is gag the debate.

Members interjecting.

Mr SETTER: It is not good enough, Mr Deputy Speaker.

Mr SMITH (Opposition Leader): Mr Deputy Speaker, members opposite sat until 2 o'clock this morning and you did not hear us complain once about that although, in retrospect, we should have. No one is denying that we have had 2 important statements today which deserve to be debated. The key point is that there is nothing to prevent the House debating those issues tomorrow. If they are so important, particularly the statement on East Timor, it is strange that the government has waited until the fifth day of these parliamentary sittings before delivering them ...

Mr Coulter: You do not think it is important. Is that what you are saying?

Mr SMITH: I do think it is important.

What we are witnessing is a deliberate attempt to subvert the General Business Day that, on this side of the House, we have once every 12 sitting days. Mr Deputy Speaker, as you can see, it is a busy program. There are 4 pieces of legislation and 2 major motions and, as I said, this is a deliberate effort by the government to subvert that. Members on this side of the House are not prepared to put up with that. I wish to advise this House

that, if this motion is passed and this particular business is brought on, the opposition will withdraw from the House and will not come back in until the opposition and the crossbench business comes on today, as it should because it is a General Business day.

Mr TUXWORTH (Barkly): Mr Speaker, I rise to say that I think what we witnessing is really a miscarriage of the conduct of the House. I would like to put the matter into a reasonable perspective before we all start to jump up and down on each other's coffins.

The statement made by the Chief Minister this morning is an important one and, at an appropriate time, I would like to speak to it. A moment ago, the Deputy Speaker put the question as to whether debate on the motion to take note of the statement should be adjourned and it was carried on the voices. No one was concerned about it. 10 minutes later, we are bringing it back on as though it is to be force-fed to the members of the opposition and the crossbenches whether they like it or not.

The government, in its generosity, gives us 1 day in 12 to talk about those things that are important to us, and we do not argue with the way the business of the House is run when we work late into the night. We are quite happy to do that. But, when the twelfth day comes, it is not unreasonable that the members on the crossbenches and the opposition have a chance to have their business debated at a reasonable hour.

Mr Speaker, what we have been presented with is a proposition that a statement about a trip that was undertaken over a month ago, that could have been debated during the last 4 days of sitting and could be debated tomorrow, now has to be debated at this hour at the expense of members on this side of the House. There is no reason for this to occur other than that the government wishes to be difficult about it.

Mr Palmer: What is the relevance of the hour?

Mr TUXWORTH: Mr Speaker, the relevance of the hour is the very simple concept that people on this side of the House should be able to conduct their business at a reasonable time of the day. If the government wants to bring papers on for debate, it should table them and we will come back to them later tonight. What is wrong with that? That is perfectly reasonable.

The fact that debate on this statement was adjourned a few minutes ago on the voices makes it perfectly reasonable for that debate to be adjourned to a later hour of this day and to be brought back later this evening, if that is the government's wish, when the members of the crossbenches and the opposition have had a chance to conduct their business.

Members interjecting.

Mr Speaker: Order!

Mr EDE (Stuart): Mr Speaker, this move by the opposition has nothing to do with East Timor. We saw this paper for the first time at 9.40 this morning, and members on the crossbenches have yet to see it. It has nothing to do with crocodiles but it has everything to do with the General Business day and the operation of this parliament. The government benches have absolute control of this parliament for 11 of every 12 sitting days. It is by convention of this House that it has been decided that, on the twelfth day, we on this side and the backbench of the government side will have the ability to

propose business and for that to have precedence over the business of the government. That is the system that has been followed in this House and that is now being run over roughshod by the government. It has been using this tactic of bringing on ministerial statements to push matters of public importance back into the middle of the night. The Leader of Government Business can laugh and say that it is a good tactic, but it is a different point when it does it on General Business Day. The 2 statements could have been brought on yesterday. They can be brought on later tonight. They can be brought on tomorrow. There is no reason whatsoever why the government should use its numbers in this House to breach the convention of our having priority on General Business Day.

Mr COULTER (Leader of Government Business): Mr Speaker, I intend to be quite reasonable about this. I do not intend to raise the issue of the frivolous MPIs that have been raised on every sitting day this year in order to waste time. Let us go back over the year. We are talking about wasting the time of the House and who is in control.

Members interjecting.

Mr COULTER: I said I would be reasonable so do not get me upset.

The fact is that MPIs have been raised on every sitting day this year. Some of the MPIs were of no consequence whatsoever. I will guarantee to the opposition and the crossbenchers that General Business will be debated today and that we will stay here until it is completed. That is not a problem with this side of the House. We will abide by the convention of the House and we will stay here until that General Business has been discussed thoroughly in this forum. It is not a problem. We intend to deal with General Business, Mr Speaker, and that is all there is about it. Honourable members have wasted the time of the House debating this motion. We could have been into General Business by now. This could have been all over and done with 15 minutes ago.

The Assembly divided:

Ayes 14	Noes 10
Mr Coulter	Mr Bell
Mr Dale	Mr Collins
Mr Dondas	Mr Ede
Mr Finch	Mr Floreani
Mr Firmin	Mr Lanhupuy
Mr Harris	Mr Leo
Mr Hatton	Mrs Padgham-Purich
Mr McCarthy	Mr Smith
Mr Manzie	Mr Tipiloura
Mr Palmer	Mr Tuxworth
Mr Perron	
Mr Poole	
Mr Reed	
Mr Setter	

Motion agreed to.

Mr Coulter: This is how much you care about the Timorese population in the Territory.

Mr Bell: You have no respect for the forms of the House, comrade.

Mr FINCH: A point of order, Mr Speaker. The honourable member for MacDonnell is making interjections from a place other than his own seat.

Mr SETTER (Jingili): Mr Speaker, once again, I have to speak to an empty opposition bench.

Mr Dondas: Maybe they knew you were going to speak and that is why they left.

Mr SETTER: That is not the reason at all. It is quite common for them to be out of this Chamber. Mr Speaker, you can see the dummies lying all over the floor.

I rise to support the Chief Minister's statement on East Timor. I believe it was an extremely successful visit for a whole range of reasons, and I will move on to those in a few moments. The purpose of the visit was, first of all, to sponsor a visit by a group of East Timorese who have not been back to East Timor since the troubles which occurred 13 years ago and, hopefully, to create a precedent which would make future visits by East Timorese living in Darwin much easier.

Let me quote from a press release of 3 November by James Delami, the AAP representative in Jakarta. He was referring to the opening up of East Timor and to the visit by the Chief Minister's party:

They will be the first to visit the province, annexed by Indonesia in 1976, since government sources indicated earlier this week that 8 of East Timor's 13 districts would be opened up to allow greater freedom of movement between East Timor and the rest of Indonesia by January.

Of course, he was referring there to the press party that would accompany the Chief Minister.

The other thing that we wanted to do was to brief ourselves on the current situation in East Timor because one hears so many stories. Despite the fact that 2 previous Chief Ministers have visited East Timor, it is important to return on a regular basis to bring ourselves up to date with the situation there. The last purpose was to facilitate access to East Timor by a group of Darwin journalists. Those people represented virtually all of the media or media interests in the Northern Territory.

There are approximately 2000 East Timorese living in the Northern Territory and most of them live in Darwin. Many of them live in the northern suburbs and they would be constituents of most of the government members on this side of the House who have electorates there. Most are Australian citizens, most wish to continue living in Australia and most still have relatives residing in East Timor. Quite naturally, they want to be able to visit those people from time to time. The government was using its good offices to facilitate this hopefully ongoing family visitation program. I think the Northern Territory government has a responsibility to work towards developing that ongoing program.

There were 16 East Timorese from Darwin who accompanied the Chief Minister's party. We all know that, in the several weeks prior to the departure of that group, the Fretilin activists around this country, and indeed Darwin, really stepped up their propaganda machine. Only a week or so before, we saw that fellow Rocky Rodriguez - a professional activist from Angola or somewhere like that - a Marxist, who came to the Northern Territory

to try to stir up some emotion and support for the Fretilin cause and to try to reduce the positive media which hopefully was to flow from the Chief Minister's visit. Indeed, it did flow, Mr Speaker.

Mr Speaker, I thought that members of the group of East Timorese who came with us were quite apprehensive. I can understand that because so much misinformation has been fed to the community. Naturally, they were unsure of what to expect. However, when they arrived in East Timor and saw the situation with their own eyes, they realised that the situation was quite different from what they had been told. I witnessed emotional reunions between a number of those people and their relatives - the hugging, the kissing, the crying and all the things that went with that. I thought to myself that all the effort had been well worth while. Mr Speaker, 24 hours after they arrived, those people were on top of the world. They were as happy as they could be and, of course, so were their relatives. Within half an hour of our arriving at the old governor's residence, where the Chief Minister and I stayed, word had spread around Dili and relatives were arriving in cars and taxis. The news had spread like wildfire and the relatives turned up in quite large numbers.

Whilst in East Timor, we visited several other locations including Maubara, which is about 50 km west of Dili, and Likisa. From Likisa, we went up into the mountains, to a height of about 1000 m. The drive, on a narrow road up the side of the mountain range, was quite traumatic and I think a few of the folk who undertook the journey were more than a little concerned as to whether we would ever make it back. However, the visit was well worth the effort and I think that the media representatives relished the opportunity to get off the beaten track on an unscheduled journey. They talked to the ordinary people, farmers and workers on the coffee plantation, to get their views on the situation and to hear the stories which they related. Honourable members will have seen reports in the NT News that 80 farm labourers were stood up against a wall and shot by Fretilin in 1975. Media representatives also visited the hospital, the jail, the parliament and the markets.

The Chief Minister and I had the opportunity to drive up into the mountains behind Dili to visit the Australian war memorial. I am sure that most people do not realise that that memorial is there. It overlooks Dili and the view is magnificent. In spite of what people like Rob Wesley-Smith have said since our return, the journalists were given complete freedom. They were able to hire vehicles and do their own thing.

Mr Perron: Which they did.

Mr SETTER: They did indeed. At very short notice, they made a request to visit the jail and, within half an hour, that was arranged. Wherever they wanted to go, the journalists had complete freedom. Whilst quite a number of them went there with some misgivings and perhaps preconceived ideas of what they would find there, they all came away with a completely changed attitude.

The reports that those independent journalists provided via the newspaper, the television and the radio confirmed what I have believed for a long time and have said on previous occasions - that the Fretilin who remain in East Timor are few in number and are in the mountains causing almost no concern to anybody. The majority of East Timor is quite free and open. People are able to travel around, conduct their business freely, farm, educate themselves, attend church, visit hospitals and generally live normal lives, which is quite contrary to the rubbish that has been promulgated by Fretilin supporters for far too long. Regrettably, because the media has been either unable to

confirm or deny those Fretilin reports, it has often repeated them. I am quite sure that, in future, these Fretilin activists will find it much more difficult to have their allegations reported by the media. Certainly, that will be the case in Darwin.

I have been fortunate because this is the third occasion on which I have visited East Timor. I was there in August last year, accompanying the member for Nightcliff when he was Chief Minister. I returned on a private visit in December 1987 accompanied by my daughter. On that occasion, we travelled to Manatuto which is about 60 km to the east of Dili. We travelled in a single vehicle with a driver, without any problems at all. When we arrived at Manatuto, we saw about half a dozen military personnel. We had complete freedom to travel with no difficulty whatsoever. I came away convinced that the stories I had heard in Darwin, promoted by Fretilin, were totally inaccurate.

Apart from discussions outlined by the Chief Minister - and he gave quite a comprehensive report of the situation - it was agreed that, when East Timor does open up, we should undertake organised cultural and sporting exchanges. I am quite sure that, early in the new year, we will be able to commence to organise those.

There is no doubt that the issue of East Timor is a very emotional one, not only in the Northern Territory but around the world. It is emotional because, for a start, many people were displaced in 1975. The province has been closed off, not only to outsiders but also to the majority of other Indonesian citizens since that time. Because of this, it has been a festering ground for the propaganda that has been issued by Marxist groups worldwide. Of course, we have a number of those people living in Darwin. Fortunately, they are very few in number.

Mr Speaker, let me give you some facts. East Timor was incorporated into Indonesia in about 1976, a year or 2 after the civil war, and it became the 27th Province of Indonesia. Another fact is that Australia's Hawke government recognised Indonesian sovereignty over East Timor in the mid-1980s. Nothing will change that situation and I think it is very important to understand what really happened there. In 1975, the East Timorese themselves fought a bloody and bitter civil war. That was when genocide occurred. Tens of thousands of those people were killed by their own kind. There is no doubt about that. Subsequently, the Indonesians intervened. I detailed the scenario of what led up to that civil war in this House on a previous occasion.

There is one thing that I would like to draw to the attention of this House. Fretilin was defeated a long time ago and it will never again be a force in East Timor. The best thing that it and its supporters can do is to realise that the Indonesians control East Timor and work towards gaining access for their people to East Timor so that they can visit their relatives. Something that has concerned me is that, in times past, leftwingers and members of the Labor Party, such as the honourable Warren Snowdon and the honourable Tony Lamb and leftwing supporters such as Mr Rob Wesley-Smith, have promoted a whole range of misinformation. I will not go into detail about that. However, I can quote, for example, from the NT News of 26 September 1988: 'Priest Under Arrest in Dili. Allegations of Brutal Dealings, according to MHR Mr Warren Snowdon'. A press release was issued on 26 October 1988.

Well, he is asserting that about 200 children died between a period of 7 to 10 days and there has been an allegation made after he has

cross-examined a witness about mistaken dosages or deaths through endemic diseases such as amoebic dysentery. The way to rebuff these allegations, in my view, is for the Indonesian government to firstly allow appropriate international relief and humanitarian agencies to have access to East Timor, which they currently do not have. And, secondly, to immediately act to open up the borders of East Timor to allow free flow of people and information without fear and intimidation or incrimination.

I certainly agree with the last part, Mr Speaker, but he is wrong in his comment about humanitarian agencies not having access to East Timor. That is totally incorrect. I have seen them there. In fact, when we were in East Timor several weeks ago, a group of about a dozen members of the US State Department was visiting East Timor. On the day we left, the First Secretary of the Swedish Embassy arrived, and so it goes on. Many humanitarian organisations visit East Timor. In fact, I would suggest that more diplomats and humanitarian organisations visit East Timor than any other country in the world. Mr Snowdon's remarks were absolute nonsense.

Recently, Territory Extra carried a report concerning the comments of Mr Tony Lamb. I quote: 'Tony Lamb, who is the convenor of the Parliamentary East Timor Forum, says he will be presenting evidence to Foreign Affairs Minister, Gareth Evans'. The report was referring to allegations about the poisoning of children in East Timor. Mr Lamb, responding to a question about his sources, said that they were 'in a nutshell, from all around the world'. Is that hard evidence, Mr Speaker? It is absolute nonsense. Those are the sorts of allegations which have been made for quite some time. They cannot be substantiated and they are absolute nonsense.

We heard the other day the hysterical ravings of Mr Rob Wesley-Smith who, from time to time, goes on talk-back radio and other forums and plies his radical, leftwing rubbish. These people have no credibility. Senator Gareth Evans rebuked these people. On 27 October, in a Singapore newspaper, he said: 'MPs told to back up Timor claims'. In a Canberra newspaper, 'Evans condemns MPs over Timor'. In another newspaper, 'Evans Genocide Blast'. Here is a doozey:

'Outrage stories regular feature', Mr Gough Whitlam. Mr Gough Whitlam told students at the University of Indonesia that one of the problems in relations between Australia and Indonesia was that the Fretilin Party produced new and unsubstantiated propaganda every year which impresses a few people, including some Labor MPs. Mr Whitlam's comments followed the recent allegations by 2 Labor backbenchers, Mr Tony Lamb and Mr Warren Snowdon, that Indonesian doctors were responsible for the mysterious deaths of 200 children in East Timor.

Mr Speaker, those comments were made by Mr Gough Whitlam. Need I say more. I support the Chief Minister.

Debate adjourned.

MOTION

Brucellosis and Tuberculosis Eradication Campaign

Mr EDE (Stuart): Mr Speaker, I move that this Assembly:

- (1) draw the attention of the government to the plight of the buffalo and cattle industries consequent upon the Brucellosis and Tuberculosis Eradication Campaign;

- (2) advise the Minister for Primary Industry and Fisheries of the widespread concern and anger over mismanagement and inequities within the Brucellosis and Tuberculosis Eradication Campaign; and
- (3) call upon the government to take urgent steps, including changes to the fundamental aims of BTEC, to save the remnants of the buffalo industry and the livelihood of pastoralists.

Mr Speaker, it will be very difficult to cover all the information that we have in this regard in half an hour. Obviously, if the Leader of Government Business gives an indication now that he is prepared to grant an extension of time, I will be able to move through it more slowly. Mr Speaker, I have not received that indication and therefore I will have to proceed at a rather rapid pace.

Let us look at the current realities. The buffalo industry is being destroyed. There are not enough domesticated cows to produce the numbers that are required for the current markets. The previous minister said he would have 20 000 breeder cows behind wire by 1992. AD 2000 Springboard Conference in Katherine has indicated that 30 000 cows are required to maintain the market levels. Information given by the producers at a meeting they held in March at the Travelodge indicated that currently some 6000 breeder cows are behind wire. It might be possible to build these numbers up over some time to 20 000 or 30 000 if we did not export for a period but, obviously, that would mean that the vast majority of the current operators would go bankrupt and leave the business during that period. We would have lost all the expertise that has been built up, not only among the producers but among the downstream operators, the catchers, the pet meaters etc.

The pastoral industry is suffering as many operators are brought to their knees. Later in this debate, I will give a number of examples to demonstrate that. The point that should be made is that, in the eyes of more and more people, not only here but around Australia and around the world, BTEC will not work. South Australia and New South Wales are experiencing continual breakdowns even after they believed that they were free of brucellosis and tuberculosis. New Zealand, the second largest exporter to the United States after Australia, has found that possums are not an end-host but are in fact a vector. It has moved from a policy of eradication to a policy of control. England has also moved from a policy of eradication to a policy of control because it has found that the badgers are vectors.

We have our feral pigs. It is a fact that no one can give a categorical assurance that pigs are not a vector. If pigs are a vector, there is no way that we can wipe out TB until such time as we wipe out all the pigs. Why then are we killing an industry which has brought us large sums of money over the years? It has brought us large sums from tourism, from the pet meat industry, from live export and from human consumption. We are shooting them to waste and we are killing off that industry even though we are unable to say whether any of that will be successful because of the problems with feral pigs. We do not know what other animals will turn out to be vectors in Australia. It is quite possible that vectors in New South Wales caused the break-out of disease there.

What are the reasons for continuing with the BTEC program? We are told that the United States market is a factor, but the United States has never threatened to embargo Australian beef. The fact is that Australia supplies 46% of United States meat imports, New Zealand 30% and Canada 14%. Canada has made no move to eliminate brucellosis among wild bison. New Zealand has

already changed from an eradication program to a control program. Australia's status in relation to brucellosis is superior to that of the next 2 largest exporters to the United States. In terms of TB, we are at least on a par with New Zealand. Smaller exporters are way behind us in the control of both brucellosis and TB.

Buffalo are part of our image in the Northern Territory. We use them on our trademarks and in tourism advertising. They are part and parcel of selling in the Northern Territory. Tourist visitors want to see buffalo and crocodiles. In that respect, they are comparable to the bison of North America. The United States has stated that it will do nothing to eliminate brucellosis among bison because they are part of the nation's heritage and a considerable tourist drawcard.

Another aspect that has been raised is the matter of health and the danger of brucellosis and bovine TB infecting people. Let us have a look at the size of that problem. In 1983, the latest year for which we can obtain figures, there were 16 cases of brucellosis in Australia. On average throughout Australia, there have been some 10 cases per year of bovine tuberculosis. Compare that with the total number of notifiable diseases each year in Australia. There were 33 284 cases of notifiable diseases in Australia in 1983, of which 16 were brucellosis and 10 were TB. Nevertheless, we talk in terms of wiping out one industry and bringing another to its knees. These problems must be seen in perspective.

The policy objective is the eradication of brucellosis and TB from all cattle in Australia. Eradication can be justified if the benefits of that eradication exceed the costs. I refer the honourable minister to Occasional Paper No 97, 'The Australian Brucellosis and Tuberculosis Eradication Campaign', issued by the Bureau of Agricultural Economics. It shows that, if there is no threat of exclusion from the United States, 45% of herds in the northern region will find it is economically in their interest to eradicate.

Mr Coulter: What region?

Mr EDE: The northern pastoral region of Australia.

If the United States were to take punitive action against Australia - on the basis of the small amount of brucellosis and TB that they say they still have in America - because of the continuation of brucellosis and TB here, it is most likely that it would impose a partial ban directed at properties. That is also in compliance with the guidelines of the International Office of Disease Control. Therefore, it is most likely that, even if we do reach the horrible scenario where action is taken against Australian beef, it will be on a property-by-property basis, not through a total, overall move against Australia. If that is the case, it would be economic for some 85% of the properties in the northern pastoral region to eradicate brucellosis and TB. The other 15% would have to continue to supply straight to slaughter for local consumption or shipment only to other dirty properties for fattening and stores.

Let us look at the costs involved in this. We all know how bad the current tests are. However, even with the new test for TB, to get rid of 90%, it will cost \$40m. To get rid of 100%, the cost climbs to \$120m. Those figures are rather dated but I am told that they are proportionately the same. It costs something like 3 times the amount to get rid of 100% as it takes to get rid of 90%. Even if it were absolutely certain that those properties that continued to have brucellosis and TB would be excluded from export, 15% would find it better to concentrate on local kill from an economic point of view.

The minister talks about the support that he has for this program. He is continually getting his friends in the Cattlemen's Association and the Buffalo Industry Council to make public statements in this regard. He spoke about a meeting that he had with people in the buffalo industry on Monday, and he stated that he believed that most people were satisfied. Mr Speaker, that is absolute rubbish. I have spoken to people who were involved in that meeting and they say that they most certainly are not happy. At the meeting that was held at the Travelodge a few weeks ago, it is a fact that no one was satisfied with anything that the minister said.

I have a copy of the minutes of a meeting held in March at the Travelodge from which I can quote. People went to pains to point out that the numbers of domesticated buffalo were not there and it would not be possible to achieve that target. I have also the minutes of a meeting between the Chief Minister who, at that stage, was Minister for Industries and Development and responsible for this area in 1987. That was taped. He went along with Mr Sykes and it is quite clear from the minutes of that meeting as well. I am happy to provide a copy to the minister. I do not know whether he realised that the minutes were taped and transcribed, but the transcript shows that the people were extremely unhappy.

At its own meetings, the Business Industry Council has been highly critical of the government over matters such as the Wagait shoot-out etc. We have seen on the television the Groves and other producers from that huge number of people who, either directly or indirectly, rely on the buffalo industry. So much for the buffalo industry. Let us have a look at the cattle industry.

The Chief Minister knows the situation I brought to his attention concerning Terry Lee at Murray Downs and his problems, and the very rude and abusive letter that we received in relation to that. If that was not enough, look at Mt Swan, Mr Speaker. Mt Swan has no history at all of brucellosis but recently, when they mustered, 3 heifers reacted. What happened? It took 4 weeks for him to receive the results and, of course, they were completely negative. Mr Lee thought that was fair enough. He had done his bit, and put it down as part of the game. Then he was told that, in spite of the fact that it had been shown that he had no brucellosis in his herd, he had to go to the great expense of running another complete muster and complete brucellosis testing of his property. He had to do it in the middle of the hot weather. He lost some 50 to 60 calves that he is aware of and heaven knows what loss of condition in beasts resulted creating the possibility that more cattle will die subsequently as a result of the stress to which they were subjected. In addition, of course, there was the cost of wages etc.

Let us have a look at this case. I have full details here. This concerns Wally Kline and the situation at Banka Banka and at Neutral Junction. Wally Kline bought Banka Banka on an assurance from the Department of Primary Production that it was free of brucellosis and TB. They wanted it as part of their drought-proofing program as they had another property further up. If one of the properties went dry, hopefully there would be some rain at the other one. When the drought came, it turned out that Banka Banka was hit very hard and it was running out of grass. They decided to move the cattle out of Banka Banka. Neither Banka Banka nor Neutral Junction had had any history of brucellosis and TB for at least 10 or 12 years.

A reactor showed up among a consignment of 200 heifers on the day it was scheduled to go to market. The Department of Primary Production told the Klins that they could expect the results of the test quickly. Independently,

the Klins sent samples to the Institute of Medical and Veterinary Science in Adelaide. In the meantime, the Klins' property was placed in total quarantine and all movement was barred. One week later, the test results were returned by the institute in Adelaide. They were negative. The Klins asked the department whether it wanted the test results and whether it could confirm them. The department said that it would pursue its own tests and that the results would be known soon. After 4 weeks, the department confirmed that its tests also proved negative but, because a reactor had been found, further tests would have to be conducted. 10 weeks later, the department lifted the quarantine, having finally acknowledged that there was no brucellosis or TB on the Klins' property.

The Klins estimate that they lost close to \$400 000 because it took the department 10 weeks to establish what the professionals at the institute in Adelaide took 1 week to establish. I will run quickly through a rough estimate of some of those costs and I will request permission to table the paper which sets them out in detail. Some of the costs were as follows: test costs for a 3000-head herd - \$90 000; stock losses of about 10 head per day for 20 days because cattle could not be moved to the bores - \$80 000; direct loss of sales through forced shipment to Queensland of 400 head - \$100 000; and stock losses of about 60 head while holding 500 head in a holding pen - \$40 000. The list continues and the total is \$400 000. Mr Speaker, I seek leave to table that paper.

Leave granted.

Mr EDE: Mr Speaker, I could tell the story of Max Lyons who is currently drawing up the extent of his losses. On his first estimate, they total \$1m in a continued history of the mismanagement which has been associated with this program. I could refer to the saga of the 10 000 head at Brunette Downs and Balbirini. The previous ministers know about that. I could refer to others but that is enough to get him started.

Mr Speaker, you may say that that is a problem of inefficient management within the department. What are we to do? The first thing to do is to change the basic objectives of what we are trying to establish with this campaign so that we can regain resources that are currently being used in this headlong drive to 1992 to abolish the buffalo industry and bring the pastoral industry to its knees. We must recover those resources and ensure better management of the current herd.

The National Agricultural Council is crucial in this regard. That body has not conducted a major review in recent times and it will be meeting in a matter of months. It is at that meeting that the honourable minister must take a stand. If he wants me to come down with him and give him a hand, I am perfectly willing to volunteer my services provided that he makes a commitment that he will not go there mealy-mouthed and weak-kneed and be run over again, as the previous minister has been in this regard. He must stand up for pastoralists and the buffalo industry and talk some sense at last.

We must acknowledge that we cannot eradicate brucellosis and TB without destroying the industry and, even then, it is very doubtful. We must decide to move to a control rather than an eradication program in the Top End. Once again, we need to draw circles around properties that have problems with brucellosis and TB in the southern area of the Territory rather than these lines that have been drawn and which have had the effect of forcing properties which have had 10 or 12 years of perfect history in testing. Obviously, we must rectify management practices to avoid a repeat of what has happened with

the Klins and others. In the northern pastoral region, we must have no more shooting to waste except in national parks and where the landowners request it. Some will move on to eradication if it is economically feasible and others will go direct to slaughter.

So that the honourable minister has no doubts as to what our proposal is, I will read it. The Labor Party proposal would see us changing from a policy of eradication of brucellosis and TB to one of control. This takes into account the following factors: (1) it is now obvious we cannot eradicate BTB without wiping out the buffalo industry and sending many pastoralists to the wall; (2) it is very doubtful whether it is practicable to eradicate brucellosis and TB given feral pigs etc; and (3) there is no market pressure currently or in the foreseeable future which could lead to all Australian beef being denied access to the United States market. The immediate effect would be an end to compulsory shooting to waste of buffalo, where property owners oppose that action, and an end to the 1992 deadline.

In the south, we would remove the Alice Springs line and return to drawing circles around properties with brucellosis and TB, and these would be encouraged to continue eradication. In the northern pastoral region, we would pursue a policy of control of brucellosis and TB. This would result in the properties, in whose economic interests it is, pursuing total eradication to enable them to continue to ship stores. Properties which opt for control rather than eradication will require continued testing before shipment and ultimately will be restricted to shipment to other dirty properties only or direct to slaughter. Properties or groups of properties which opt for control rather than eradication will be required to cooperate with their clean neighbours to ensure fencing and stocking practices do not put their neighbours' herds at risk.

Resources now expended within the department on pursuing the 1992 deadline would be diverted to improving testing programs for properties in the process of achieving voluntary eradication and testing stock coming off dirty properties.

Mr Reed: What is the revised deadline?

Mr EDE: Mr Speaker, this proposal does not contain a deadline as such. We would have a continuing movement towards eradication on those properties in whose interests it is. Current knowledge of world markets indicates that, in 45% of properties in the northern pastoral region, it is worth while to move towards eradication.

Mr Speaker, if the United States government decides, for its own reasons, to pump up the brucellosis and TB issue and to declare that it will prohibit the import of cattle or meat from properties which are not clean, 85% of properties in the northern pastoral region will find that it is in their economic interests to achieve clean status.

Mr Perron: In other words, they will go broke if they do not comply.

Mr EDE: Mr Speaker, I am surprised at the interjection from the Chief Minister. He was the responsible minister for a period of time and I would have thought that he, at least, would have read this Occasional Paper No 97.

Mr Perron: I do not have occasional time for occasional papers.

Mr EDE: He does not have the time! That is probably as good a reason as any for divesting himself of the primary industry portfolio. It was quite obvious, when he was Minister for Industries and Development, that the Chief Minister did not have time to administer his portfolio. He may have had time for feeding fish but he did not have time for the pastoral industry or the buffalo industry. That is why we lost so much ground when people elsewhere in Australia were realising that it was becoming increasingly impossible economically to eradicate the diseases and that it was no longer in our national interest to do so. Although he comes from the area which is most affected, the Top End, the Chief Minister, as the then Minister for Industries and Development, did not take a stand. He did not go to the National Agricultural Council and say: 'Enough is enough. We want to change from eradication. We want a program of control!'

Of course, there will be continued assistance. The paper points that out. It contains a section called 'Equities', which I will photocopy and give to the Chief Minister. It talks about horizontal equity, vertical equity and equity over time.

Mr Perron: Who wrote it?

Mr EDE: It comes from the Bureau of Agricultural Economics and the authors are Gary Stoneham and Joe Johnston.

Mr Perron: Has John Kerin's department got a copy?

Mr EDE: I am sure that his department is familiar with it. The Chief Minister should know, however, that BTEC is not a federal campaign. The federal government funds it but the campaign is worked out among the states. In previous debates, he has used that as an excuse for the change from circles to lines on maps relating to BTEC.

Territorians in the pastoral industry and the buffalo industry are looking for the Northern Territory government to take a lead, to cease its weak-kneed, limp-wristed approach to the BTEC campaign, to stop accepting every aspect of it and to look at the realities in the bush, to look at what the facts are, to use the information that is now available and to read up on the economics of the matter. The paper points out quite categorically that, if America ever does move in relation to brucellosis and tuberculosis, the most likely occurrence is that the move will be towards partial exclusion, not full exclusion. It is only economic to talk about total eradication in the context of full exclusion. The chance of that occurring is 1 in 100 at the very most.

This government's neglect and mismanagement is an insult to the buffalo industry and the pastoral industry. It cost the Klines \$400 000 in 10 weeks. It cost Max Lyons over \$1m, the result of 20 years of hard work in the pastoral industry. He lost that amount because of absolute mismanagement. We had the 10 000 head that was agisted at Balbirini, a dirty property and then brought back to Brunette Downs. We had the Droving Australia blow out and other cattle moved down to Anningie. That, in itself, cost Max Lyons some \$40 000 in lost agistment fees because those dirty cattle were moved in there. It has now given his property such a bad name that he cannot use it for agistment. Nobody wants to touch it.

Those are the realities that the minister would be aware of if he got out of the Chan Building, got away from his air-conditioned office and started to talk to people. He has been mouthing on for weeks that I would not give him any facts. Now that he has the facts, I want him to tell us what he intends

to do about them. I hope that he will tell us that, on Friday, he will be on a plane, and that he will visit those pastoral properties to find out how the program broke down and do something about it.

Mr REED (Primary Industry and Fisheries): Mr Speaker, no one denies that the BTEC program has resulted in difficulties for a number of people. We have stated on many occasions that those difficulties will be experienced for a number of years. That is an unfortunate consequence of the program. However, it is necessary to go through the process to achieve a status whereby our herds throughout Australia are disease free and we have unhampered access to the markets of the world.

We have just seen an amazing about face and change of direction by the member for Stuart. In the last sittings, we had a broadside on rorts and all sorts of strange allegations that were not substantiated then and still have not been. I will not dwell on those events apart from tabling a letter that I wrote to the honourable member in relation to those comments. In that letter, I challenged him to provide the facts and said that, in the event that he was able to come up with information that was substantive, we would have it investigated by police and that the appropriate action could be taken. I have made no secret of the fact that anyone who has participated in rorts will suffer the full force of the law. We still await the facts.

I received a curious response from the member for Stuart.

Mr Ede: Will you table that too?

Mr REED: I will table that too. It is worthy of record. In it, there are similar suggestions, but it is totally devoid of facts. I would seek leave to have it included in Hansard together with my letter to the honourable member for Stuart.

Leave granted.

Dear Mr Ede

During the course of the recent sittings of the Legislative Assembly, you raised the question of rorts associated with the Brucellosis and Tuberculosis Eradication Campaign (BTEC).

Your comments, in both the House and the media, did not address one specific instance of any of those so-called rorts occurring. Nevertheless, you demanded the government investigate your 'allegations'.

I am more than happy to have the police investigate any substantive 'allegation'. To do so, however, I need more information than the vague hearsay you have provided to date.

Your comments have offered nothing other than serious but unsubstantiated criticism of the honesty and integrity of the pastoral industry, the transport industry and the officers of my department. You have indicated you believe only a minority of people are involved in your rorts. Your accusations, however, have left all members of these groups wearing your label of corruption.

At the very least, you owe an apology to the vast majority who, you have conceded, are not involved in any of your rorts.

Hon M Reed, MLA
Minister for Primary Industries and Fisheries
GPO Box 3146
DARWIN NT 0801

Dear Minister,

Your letter of 17 October 1988 would indicate that you are labouring under a terrible misapprehension regarding our relative roles.

I note that, even at this stage, you are not prepared to come out and say categorically that none of the reports I have detailed have gone on. You are the minister, if you are not prepared to say it's clean, carry out an investigation.

You have referred in your speeches to investigations by Federal and Territory police and to reports prepared by this group or that exorcising you of any blame. I am surprised that you have not tabled copies of the investigations etc and now request that you forward copies to back up your assertion that there is nothing to worry about.

I am surprised at your attitude to the whole affair. You cannot have spoken to people in the cattle industry without receiving similar information to myself. You are a new minister with one opportunity to sort out the department's problems. If you do not move now, they will become your problems and you will find yourself becoming ever more defensive and unable to act.

Yours faithfully,
Brian Ede MLA
11 November 1988

Mr REED: Mr Speaker, the facts speak for themselves. Anyone who reads the letters will soon realise the poor performance of the honourable member. On this General Business day, we have this remarkable set of accusations from the member for Stuart. There are no facts. This is the opposition's first stab off the rank on the General Business day that we heard so much about before lunch. Here we have another litany of half truths and tales of meetings that he heard of but did not attend. He referred to a number of meetings in November and March, but had he been to one of them? He had not been to one.

In his closing remarks, the honourable member suggested that I should get out of the Chan Building, move around the industry and get a feel for what is occurring. Clearly, that is something that the honourable member has never done. For the benefit of the honourable member opposite, I will read the names of places where I have been in the last couple of months. I have visited Opium Creek, Ban Ban Springs Station, Woolner Station, Kerlin Station and Marrakai Station. I have consulted the Buffalo Industry Council on numerous occasions. I am the Chairman of the BTEC Committee. I have attended 2 meetings with members of the buffalo industry - one for 2½ hours in my office this week and one on Friday 8 November. I have attended the Northern Territory Cattlemen's Council and numerous cattle stations in central Australia where I had the opportunity to meet with adjoining pastoralists who came into those stations to discuss issues with me. I attended a Barkly regional meeting of pastoralists a couple of weeks ago which was attended by Gulf and Barkly region pastoralists. I have visited all regional centres,

including Alice Springs. I have had day-to-day contact with people in the industry and I have visited the abattoirs in Alice Springs, Tennant Creek and Katherine. Clearly, that refutes the allegation that the honourable member made suggesting that I have not been in contact with the industry.

Mr Ede: You have ears full of wax.

Mr REED: He does not know what he is talking about. He cannot substantiate his allegations. He is simply grabbing things out of the sky.

It is interesting to note that, yesterday in the debate on the fishing industry, we heard high praise in relation to the Fishing Industry Council and glowing reports of the input it has had into the industry and how important it is to it. However, there was not a single mention today by the honourable member about the Buffalo Industry Council or the Northern Territory Cattlemen's Association. Has he been in touch with them? Has he met with the Buffalo Industry Council or the Northern Territory Cattlemen's Association? He has not been in touch with the industry representatives or with the industry organisations.

Mr Ede: I talk to the members.

Mr REED: Mr Speaker, for the benefit of the honourable member opposite, the telephone number of the Northern Territory Cattlemen's Association is 81 5976. Let him telephone it and find out what the industry organisations want to say to him about the BTEC program. They are the ones who represent the industry.

Mr Ede: They are not.

Mr REED: They are the ones that represent the industry.

Mr Speaker, I will turn briefly to the Leader of the Opposition. A 3-page letter was written to the Leader of the Opposition by the Cattlemen's Association and published in the NT News. Has the Leader of the Opposition responded to the Cattlemen's Association? No, Mr Speaker, not a word, and that is the contempt that members of the opposition show towards the industry in the Northern Territory. They have no concern about the well-being of the pastoral industry in the Northern Territory. They will not even respond to a letter from the primary industry group in the Northern Territory, the association that represents the pastoralists in the Northern Territory. In a disgraceful episode, the member for Stuart came in here saying that he had spoken to 1 or 2 people and had the minutes of this meetings, that meeting and every other meeting - but he has not been to one. He has not been there to get the facts for himself.

Mr Ede: I have been to the pastoralists.

Mr REED: Which one?

Mr Ede: I named them. How many do you want? Do I have to name 50 million?

Mr REED: Mr Speaker, we have heard all sorts of other allegations that the campaign will not work and that South Australia and New South Wales are experiencing continual breakdowns. By way of interjection, I invited the honourable member to let us know how many breakdowns there have been. He does not know. He is grasping at straws, Mr Speaker.

As an example of the serious way in which these states take the BTEC program, there was a breakdown recently in New South Wales. It was in a herd of 400 dairy cattle in Camden. Immediately, the dairy farm was quarantined and the whole herd was destroyed. There were no ifs, buts or wherefores: it was destroyed. They are persistent in their pursuit of the campaign and that is the performance that is expected from us.

We heard about feral pigs, badgers and possums and all sorts of other charades. The fact is that we do not have badgers. We have feral pigs, and they are something of a problem, but the circumstances in relation to TB in pigs and TB in badgers are totally different. There is no evidence that feral pigs contribute to breakdowns in the campaign anywhere in Australia. The UK is going ahead with eradication, not control, as suggested by the member for Stuart. They have come to grips with the badger control problem as well. The honourable member is ill-informed. He does not know what he is talking about.

New Zealand has admitted that TB eradication may not be possible in some, but not all, areas of New Zealand. The problems that occur in New Zealand are where possums are in close association with cattle. The member for Stuart, our little possum opposite, must be in close association with cattle. I do not know where he gets his information from otherwise. There is no known problem in Australian which is similar or parallel to the badger or possum problem overseas. The member for Stuart must come to terms with the fact that we are in Australia. We are dealing with local problems, and all these furies he raises in relation to all these other matters are irrelevant.

He touched on the health issues and referred to 10 cases per year of bovine TB in Australia in humans. It was interesting to hear him note that because I recall that he has spoken in the House on previous occasions extolling the virtues of the AMIEU representative that we know so well in the Northern Territory who is insisting that we have to get rid of these diseases because the health of abattoir workers is threatened. Now the member for Stuart is pushing that aside. I might tell the member for Stuart that, when I met with the Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service people from the United States in Darwin a couple of weeks ago, they had real concerns about TB in cattle because the consumer organisations in the United States, the Ralph Naders and whoever of this world, are starting to say to the cattle producers: 'How dare you present to us for human consumption cattle that are infected with disease'. The cattle industry in the United States is becoming very concerned about the fact that it could be facing litigation because diseased cattle are being offered for sale. It is a real concern and it is a matter that the agricultural people in the United States are starting to become very worried about. They see problems in the future from that point of view, apart from pure animal health problems.

The member's arguments on policy directions of the program, what he would do and where we should go with it, are all irrelevant. We have been through it all before. There is a firmly set program which is supported by the federal government. It is simply a case that we must come to terms with it. Unilateral decisions by the Territory would result in the states prohibiting movement of stock from the Northern Territory. We cannot draw circles around different parts of the Northern Territory or draw a line across the Top End. Should we become part of Papua New Guinea or Timor? What is the honourable member working at? He has no idea of the practicalities on the ground and how it all works.

How would the Labor Party explain to the cattlemen who wanted to move cattle to South Australia and Queensland that the Labor Party in the Northern

Territory has imposed on them a regime under which they cannot transport their cattle to markets interstate? The opposition would be laughed out of the country, and rightly so. The honourable member must come to terms with the fact that he does not know anything about the program. He must talk to the major industry organisations in order to alert himself to the facts. It is no good his coming in here to grandstand, quoting minutes of meetings and all sorts of other things, and making spurious allegations that different stations have had all sorts of problems.

The figures that were provided by the honourable member today from Mr Kline are not known to the department and I am not in a position to be able to comment on them. I am more than happy to have them investigated. I know that there was a breakdown at Banka Banka some time ago. However, whilst the member for Stuart gave a broad outline of events, he left out a few crucial facts.

When a breakdown was first thought to have occurred at Banka Banka, the owners decided to defer the slaughter of the animals concerned so that the presence or otherwise of the disease could be confirmed. As a result of that decision, delays took place which are now alleged to have cost large amounts of money.

Mr Bell interjecting.

Mr REED: Your brain is in neutral. That is why you keep thinking about Neutral Junction. When I asked you what station was involved, you said that it was Neutral Junction. We have not heard anything about Neutral Junction today. We have heard about Banka Banka and all sorts of other places.

In relation to Murray Downs, the heifers referred to had to be exclusively examined to confirm the presence of brucellosis or otherwise. This level of investigation is necessary in the final stages of the program to ensure that the Territory attains free status. It is a requirement of the national program. Whilst it does create difficulties, it is a step which cannot be dodged. We have to go through a very exhaustive process to ensure that the disease does not occur and that the herds in question can be clearly said to be disease-free.

The member for Stuart used a broad-brush approach to touch on all sorts of other issues. We heard of the great Ede plan to change the BTEC program by doing away with its objectives and eliminating shooting. He said: 'Do not worry about the adjoining properties. We will just draw a circle around them and, if Fred Bloggs up the road does not want to shoot and his neighbour has impending free status, don't worry about stopping him from sending his cattle to market because he is inside the circle and will just have to be satisfied with the consequences'.

I have explained the position as it relates to feral pigs which, I might add, are not confined to the Northern Territory. They occur right through Queensland and down into New South Wales. As I have already indicated, New South Wales is, to all intents and purposes, clear of BTEC. It has been able to achieve that despite the presence of feral pigs, in circumstances not dissimilar to those which occur in the Northern Territory, when one considers the Macquarie Marshes and the other large swamp areas in north-western New South Wales.

The member for Stuart alleged that the disease could be transferred through contact between cattle and buffalo. That is just as fanciful as all

of the other propositions he has made to date. He believes that we can dispense with the 1992 deadline and that we can achieve targets when we feel like it. Mr Kerin would be horrified to hear the program suggested by the member for Stuart and so would the cattle industry and the buffalo industry. As I have already stated, specific problems occur from time to time with individual pastoralists and they have to be sorted out at a personal level. By and large, however, the program is supported. Most pastoralists are working towards the completion of the campaign and the freedom of their herds from TB and brucellosis.

A core unit within my department deals specifically with buffalo. It has 2 permanent staff and 2 scientists. The scientists' time is dedicated principally to buffalo and consideration is being given to addressing the assistance that the industry requires. We are looking at appointing a full-time vet to improve the level of service provided to the buffalo industry.

The member for Stuart commented in relation to the extent to which our markets would be affected if countries overseas refused to take our stock because they were coming from infected herds. The chemical residues situation is an excellent example of how overseas countries view Australia. They do not see it as being made up of separate areas such as the Northern Territory, Tasmania or Western Australia. They look on us as a single country. If we cannot guarantee, from a national perspective, that the chemical residues in our products are at acceptable levels, other nations do not want to deal with us. We have to toe the line. We have to comply on a national basis.

Costs were imposed across the board to deal with that problem just as they have been imposed to fund BTEC which has been 50% funded by the cattle industry of Australia. In the Northern Territory, this government has provided an additional 30% of the funding with the Commonwealth providing the remaining 20%. It is a national campaign and, if the member for Stuart thinks that he can go fiddling with it at this stage of the game, he has another think coming. I do not deny, as I have said before, that there are instances in which we have to deal with individuals at the local property level. Those situations will continue to arise and, as we approach the end of the campaign, they will probably become more prevalent. Even after 1992, when the program targets have been achieved, there will need to be a mechanism to deal with further outbreaks of disease, despite the member for Stuart's allegations. We have had to look at such issues and to create the necessary mechanisms. However, such mechanisms are in no way to be regarded as extensions of the program. There is no indication from the Commonwealth or from the industry nationally that we will be funded beyond 1992 to undertake any further campaigns.

The member for Stuart referred to minutes of meetings which he did not attend. He has never met any of the people involved and that is why he is so devoid of facts. I have indicated that I spoke for 2½ hours with members of the buffalo industry earlier this week. Most of those people were producers whilst others were catchers. Indeed, some were involved in both catching and domestication. Undoubtedly, the buffalo industry is experiencing a time of change and great adjustment. Feral buffalo herds have no future, with the exception of those that are free of disease.

The member for Stuart referred to the fact that there are few buffalo left. He said that we would never achieve a buffalo industry and that the Territory government's commitment to the industry has not been a productive one. The Territory government's dedication to the buffalo industry started

with the release of buffalo blocks at Point Stuart 4 years ago. The people there are heavily committed to their blocks and are well on the way to establishing good herds. I do not deny that some of them have problems, but I deny the allegations that my department is not doing everything possible to try to see them through those problems and to provide them with every assistance.

We have the implementation of the \$1.9m loans which will be injected into the buffalo industry to assist producers. If that is not another indication of assistance to industry, I do not know what is. The government is very conscious of the current estimates of stock numbers. The member for Stuart said that we are killing them. In comparison with the total number of buffalo, the number being killed is quite small. I know the member for Stuart and probably the member for Koolpinyah will not accept this advice, but the fact is that a large ...

Mrs Padgham-Purich: Don't you give me advice!

Mr REED: No. You have never been known to accept it before and I do not expect you to start now.

Mrs Padgham-Purich: Not from you!

Mr REED: These include a large group of monitored-negative cattle in the buffalo area and they are estimated to total 40 000 animals. Current estimates of buffalo numbers are: domesticated on stations - 18 000-plus; feral on stations - about 15 500; monitored-negative feral herds in south-west Arnhem Land - 40 000; and other feral herds - approximately 76 500. Departmental estimates of controlled herds stand at 18 000, of which, as I have indicated already, it is estimated that one-third are breeding stock.

Mr Ede: They are not accessible, are they?

Mr Perron: He just said 'controlled herds'.

Mr Ede: He is talking about the monitored-negative feral stocks.

Mr REED: How many? How many did I say?

Mr Smith: There are 40 000 wild buffalo in south-west Arnhem Land.

Mr REED: He does not listen. I am giving him the facts. It is really a waste of time and clearly illustrates again the lack of commitment that the member for Stuart and all members opposite have to the pastoral industry and the buffalo industry. It is really a waste of time. They bring these motions on so that they can grandstand and grab a few headlines. They do not worry about facts. They believe that they can bluff their way through. They have decided to change course away from tales of rorts and allegations of misappropriation. They have slandered the pastoralists, the cattle industry, the truck drivers and everyone in the Department of Primary Industry and Fisheries. They slandered all of those people in the October sittings and now they have decided to have a go at the BTEC program because they believe that they always get a bit of a run on that in the press. They can then return to Alice Springs with little, warm feelings in their tummies that they have done something.

When the honourable member goes back to Alice Springs next week, I suggest to him that he contact the local permanent officer of the Cattlemen's

Association. I suggest that he ask for a meeting with the Cattlemen's Association representative. He might be able to take the honourable member out to talk to a few association members so that he get the facts from the industry and from those people who are the performers. He can get facts from those people who have experienced the benefits of the BTEC campaign in the Alice Springs area. Mr Speaker, you would be well aware that they have the ability now to access other markets and, of course, that ability will improve as time goes by and the program achieves further success.

Mr Ede interjecting.

Mr REED: You have had your say.

Mr Ede: No, come on.

Mr REED: You have had your say and you have missed your chance. You are starting to grasp at straws now.

I advised the buffalo industry people whom I met last Monday that I am only too happy, as is the department, to provide every assistance to them, but they need to get behind the Buffalo Industry Council and become an organised group. If they want to put a case to the federal BTEC Committee perhaps to obtain some benefits and, within the major structure of the BTEC campaign, some concessions and recognition of some of their problems, they will need the structure to do it. They cannot do it as individuals. They need to have an organised group. Their organisation must be supported by all of the producers.

Mr Ede interjecting.

Mr REED: I have already told the honourable member for Stuart, whose brain is in neutral, and he did not hear it. I read out the number of stations that I have been to.

Mr Ede: Yes. What did they say?

Mr REED: They are not all supporters of the campaign, but it did not stop me from speaking to them. It is amazing that the member for Stuart only contacts the people whom he knows do not support the BTEC campaign. He does not want to talk to anyone who is a supporter of the campaign. He does not want to talk to the Buffalo Industry Council or the Northern Territory Cattlemen's Association. He wants to talk only to those who do not support it. It is typical of the approach that the opposition take to everything that it does. If it is something that is working and if it is an achievement for the Northern Territory, members of the opposition have to oppose it. They have to go off like lepers to Canberra to talk to some minister there. They do not worry about doing it in the Northern Territory. They simply sidestep the system here. We are dispensable.

The member for Stuart has provided no facts today. He has come up with nothing. He is incapable of understanding the ramifications or the intent of the BTEC campaign, the benefits that lie up the road for the marketing of our pastoral industry and our buffalo industry in the future. He has no idea and he will never learn. It is almost a waste of time trying to put the message across to him. Mr Speaker, I oppose, in the strongest terms, this ridiculous motion that has been moved by the honourable member today.

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH (Koolpinyah): Mr Speaker, towards the last few moments of the Minister for Primary Industry and Fisheries' contribution to this debate, he contradicted himself quite clearly. Thinking to bludgeon us into acquiescence on his viewpoint, he tried to shout louder and louder, helped by the 2 honourable ministers sitting in front of him. On the one hand, he said that, if the buffalo producers who are disaffected with the Buffalo Industry Council get together as a responsible group and present their case to Mr Kerin in Canberra, they may stand a chance. On the other hand, he completely opposed this motion. When one brings common sense to bear on it, the 2 statements of the honourable minister do not add up.

I am sorry to have to say it again, but I believe this minister is just not listening. I do not have the experience of the member for Stuart. I do not know the particulars about the large stations that he has mentioned. There are no large stations in my electorate except 1 and that is in the headlines because of a court case. We will not mention that. I have information from very small properties. I thought this government was supposed to be helping not only the big people but the little people in the industry as well. The people whom I am talking about are very small producers. They are not Warren Andersons or Kerry Packers, millionaires who had money and expertise to establish clean herds and undertake subdivisional work on their properties years ago. I am talking about producers at the other end of the scale who do not have the money to put in all the improvements that those public servants - and I know they are listening to me in their ivory tower - in the Department of Primary Industry and Fisheries are demanding. Perhaps, when the minister goes out to these stations, those same public servants could go with him. It is one thing to go out to a station but I believe that, when the minister went out, he did his 3-monkey act: he did not hear anything, he did not see anything and he did not say anything. Certainly, he behaved a little like that at the meeting that I attended.

The honourable minister and his public servants talk glibly about putting in improvements on properties. If we were to put a fence around our property, 2 km by 1 km, it would cost us \$7500. I have been told that to erect a kilometre of heavy fencing costs \$1500. A kilometre does not go very far on even a very small property.

Mr Perron: Gee.

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH: I do not need you to tell me. You are just being facetious. Shut up and listen and you might learn something. You might know more about catfish than I do but I know more about buffalo and goats than you do. I bet that, if there was a disease that spread among catfish and there was an eradication program to get rid of all the catfish, you would be haranguing everybody about the need to keep your catfish. These buffalo producers have a hell of a lot more to lose.

A decent set of station yards, which would be needed on a property if buffalo are to be handled, would cost in the order of \$50 000. Portable yards cost about \$5000. I do not know how many grids people have on properties but, if you say it quickly, 1 grid costs \$3000. I have permission to use Mrs Grove's name. She told me that they erected 120 km of fencing in 6 years at a cost of \$1500 per kilometre. That is not peanuts in my book. For the honourable minister and his senior public servants to say glibly that they will shoot out the buffalo if the producer does not put in subdivisional fencing and all the other improvements is extremely arrogant.

It is all very well to say these people should know better and that, if they cannot stand the heat, they should keep out of the kitchen. For the information of the minister and senior public servants in the Department of Primary Industry and Fisheries, the buffalo industry is now going through a transitional stage from feral to domestic, and you cannot produce while you are reducing. If your cows and heifers are shot out, if you do not have the breeders, you cannot produce. Even the kids at school know that.

The way that matters are developing at the moment, the buffalo producers cannot make a living out of primary production. They can make a living only out of harvesting. If they are harvesting the feral buffalo on their properties, they are obtaining money from that but their whole time is taken up with the harvesting and therefore they cannot put in the improvements. They do not have millionaire backing like Tipperary Station. They probably are owner operators, with a couple of employees and members of the family working for them. They are small producers. There are only 24 hours in the day and, to stay solvent, their whole time is taken up with harvesting. They do not have the time to put in these improvements demanded of them. The government says that, if they do not put in the improvements and get the herd behind subdivisional fencing, the herd will be shot out. Thus, the primary producer, who is trying to harvest the beasts on his block, is in direct confrontation with the government. That is not the only time that the government has been in direct confrontation with small producers, but we will let that go by.

All these people want is time. I am talking about the small producers in my electorate and around Batchelor and Adelaide River. I will give an example of the stupid way in which this system is operating. I do not have permission to use his name but I am speaking about a chap at Darwin River who had 10 or 12 heifers. He wanted to sell them somewhere over near the Western Australian border which was declared a clean area. He was told he could not send them because his herd of heifers were not from an officially clean area, despite the fact that they had all been cleared earlier. He said that he would have them tested again or he may have been told to do that. When they were tested, 3 reactors were found. That immediately put the kybosh on his plan to send them over to this property near the Western Australian border. One could say that 10 or 12 heifers are pretty small beer, but this bloke is a small operator. He is trying to make a few quid on his block down Darwin River way. Who are we to say to him: 'Listen mate, you are beneath our consideration because you have only 10 to 12 heifers. Stiff bickies mate, you lose the lot'? He did not lose the lot but, because of those 3 reactors, he could not send the other heifers off for sale to make the few dollars that he expected from them. The 3 reactors were slaughtered and subsequently they were found to be clean. However, because they had reacted, his property was declared dirty along with the other heifers. If that is not a ridiculous situation, I do not know what is. It is almost ridiculous enough to form the subject for a Gilbert and Sullivan opera. If it were not so serious, it would be funny.

Mr Speaker, I do not often stick up for other people, especially people who can stick up for themselves. However, I do try to be fair. I felt that the minister and other CLP members acted improperly, and that their behaviour verged on being unparliamentary, although they were not pulled up for it. The minister implied that the member for Stuart was telling outright lies about specific people whose names he had given. The member for Stuart would have to be a shingle short if he stood up here and named people and then told outright lies about them. Although he has the protection of parliamentary privilege, his name would be mud in his electorate and throughout the Northern Territory. I, for one, was prepared to believe the member for Stuart when he told us of events involving named people on particular stations.

I think the minister needs to check for himself. Perhaps his oratory got the better of him. We do not need loud voices and oratory from the minister and his public servants. We want action, and we want attention to be paid to the situation of the remaining buffalo producers as they are affected by BTEC. They are the last people to be considered. Other parts of the Territory have been declared clean. I have been told, however, that some people have received deferrals in respect of the time within which they have to ensure that the results of tests indicate that their properties are clean. If it is possible to give deferrals to some people on some properties, why cannot the people who want deferrals now obtain those deferrals? I have to hand it to the minister's advisers. I am not certain of the exact sequence because my eyes were not glued on them or the minister all the time. However, I saw that they write quickly and that the minister is a very good reader. I have to hand that to him.

The minister told us that there were buffalo experts in the Department of Primary Industries and Fisheries. I would be very interested to have a bit more information about those positions and the people who fill them. What are their qualifications? Of course, I can use my own information channels to find this out but I would like the minister to say it publicly. Why is he so secretive about it? Perhaps he will tell us later who they are, what their experience is and what exactly their job is to be. If they intend to sit in fish house down by the harbour and make self-aggrandising announcements, that will be of no use to the industry. I want to know more about them and their jobs and whether they intend actually to help the industry.

I would like to raise a little matter which I first raised 8 days ago when I asked the honourable minister about a specific incident which related to BTEC. I think that 8 days is long enough to wait for an answer. Either the minister and his advisers do not know the answer or they are not going to give it to me. Of course, I can find out the answer and, when I do, it will probably be worse for the minister than if he had told me. He either does not want to tell me or he will not tell me. Perhaps he feels embarrassed about doing it or, dare I suggest, is unable to find out the answer.

What is sauce for the goose is sauce for the gander. If the minister and the Department of Primary Industry and Fisheries are to be so strict with all the properties in regard to BTEC, I want to know if it is true that, at the Darwin Show, cattle from dirty properties, marked accordingly, were entered in the carcass competition and were housed with clean cattle at the showground? My understanding of the status of the showground is that it is a clean area.

Mr Reed: Read my answer in the Hansard.

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH: You did not give me an answer.

Mr Reed: It is in Hansard.

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH: If this is the case, does it alter the status of the clean cattle which were at the show and does it alter the status of the properties from which they came?

Mr Reed: The answer is no.

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH. That is very interesting but I will check it.

Mr Speaker, the minister and the member for Stuart spoke about feral pigs. You do not have to be a whiz-kid to work it out. The feral pig population has

increased because of the operations of the eradicators some 7 or 8 years ago. I am not blaming this government solely. I am also blaming ANPWS. It was a marvellous war. About 1500 head of buffalo were shot in Kakadu and the carcasses were left to rot. The pigs ate the carcasses. More pigs survived to breed and more pigs continued to live so that there has been an upsurge of their numbers in the wild. Now everybody is saying that we must shoot out the feral pigs. The same situation will then occur again. Perhaps this relates fairly loosely to the subject of the motion but, nevertheless, it ties in with it. The minister says now that feral pigs will be eradicated. So what happens?

Mr Reed: I did not say that.

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH: You implied it or you mentioned it. If you did not mention it today, it has been mentioned.

Mr Reed: I did not say anything about eradication.

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH: There is to be a controlled shoot-out then.

Mr Reed: I did not say that either.

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH: All right. They are to be eradicated.

Mr Reed: I did not say that.

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH: He did not say it today.

When these feral pigs are eradicated, I cannot imagine realistically that their bodies will be picked up. I cannot see pet meaters using them because pet meaters do not use pig meat. They will be left where they are shot and we will have a great increase in the dingo population. When the feral pig carcasses are eaten out, the depredation on native wildlife will be very severe.

Mr Reed: You are a great supporter of dingoes.

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH: I am also a great supporter of practical conservation. I breed wallabies and I have bred dingoes, among other animals.

Mr Speaker, we will see an upsurge in the dingo population. They will come close to human settlement and attack stock and also people if it is in their nature to attack people. In addition, they will drastically reduce the numbers of marsupials and other small animals in the bush. As I understand it, Aboriginal people have traditional hunting rights in the Kakadu areas. I believe there are no restrictions on that activity. I wonder who will look after the endangered species in Kakadu. We will end up with a bush in the Northern Territory which does not contain much wildlife.

Mr REED: A point of order, Mr Speaker! Native animals in Kakadu and the conservation of native animals have nothing to do with the BTEC program, which is the subject of this debate.

Mr SPEAKER: There is no point of order but I ask the member for Koolpinyah to relate her remarks more closely to the motion before the Chair.

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH: Mr Speaker, I have finished speaking about that subject anyway.

We live about a mile from the Yarrowonga Zoo. Charlie used to live in a pen at Yarrowonga Zoo. Everybody knows about Charlie and everybody knows about the tests for TB which Charlie has had over the years until he proved negative. If people do not know, I am telling them now. Charlie is a very big buffalo. He is a very tractable buffalo. He has a very fine spread of horns and he is completely tame. I would hate to see anything happen to him. We travelled past Yarrowonga Zoo at least 3 or 4 times a day when Charlie was there and, on weekends, there were always at least a dozen to 20 people around the pen taking pictures of Charlie, the other buffalo and the banteng cattle. It would have been no use if I had told those people: 'Don't take photographs of those animals. They are only feral animals. We are shooting them. Take a picture of the native animals'. Tourists who come from down south are not really interested to know whether the buffalo is a feral animal or a native animal. They want to see buffalo. The member for Stuart also referred to this fact and I think that the Minister for Conservation should take note of that. I know there will be buffalo at Berry Springs but we must understand that tourists really want to see them.

In the half minute remaining to me, I want to say that the minister needs to pay more attention to the plight of young couples starting out in the buffalo industry now. They are supposed to be domesticating buffalo. If the minister orders that all buffalo in the wild be shot out, there will be not be too many feral buffalo left for these young people to start up their domesticated herds with. What will happen to them? It will take them years and years to get on their feet. Mr Speaker, I support the motion.

Mr HATTON (Nightcliff): Mr Speaker, I rise to oppose the motion. One wonders why we keep rising to speak on the same subject. It seems that the issue of BTEC is raised at almost every sittings. The opposition trots out the same old nonsense and the facts are repeatedly placed before the House by the government. Opposition members do not listen to the facts. They do not read Hansard or the relevant reports. They do not study anything. They come into this House repeatedly in order to play politics in relation to BTEC.

I would like to make several things clear from the start. Firstly, BTEC is very expensive. It is making fundamental structural changes to the pastoral industry in the Northern Territory. Tragically, a number of people who have not been able to cope with that have gone broke and there is a danger that that will happen to others. It is changing our pastoral industry from what could be described as a hunter gatherer economy into a managed agricultural industry. That is a fundamental change for the northern cattle and buffalo industry. Very few stock were branded. They were running wild on open grazing land and were controlled basically from the watering points. When mustering occurred, the pastoralist and his crew took them from those areas and sent them straight to the markets, either as store cattle interstate or straight to the abattoirs. That was a very cost-effective business.

I am no veterinarian or world beef and buffalo marketing expert. I do not know how important it is biologically to eradicate brucellosis and tuberculosis from the Australian herd any more than I know how important it was to get rid of pleuropneumonia from the herd. What I do know is that the Australian government has said that we must do it. If we do not, constraints and restrictions will be placed on our herd, including constraints and restrictions on potential export of our herd. We have been given fair warning about that.

Mr Ede: Who said that?

Mr HATTON: The federal government.

Mr Ede: Wrong!

Mr HATTON: Mr Speaker, I will leave the member for Stuart to demonstrate his claim. The fact is that it is a national campaign to eradicate brucellosis and tuberculosis from the Australian herd. It is not a recent phenomenon; it has been continuing for some 20 years. Over the years, many responsible pastoralists undertook testing and stock control programs to eradicate the diseases from their herds with no assistance from the government. Mr Speaker, as I am sure you are aware, quite a large number of the central Australian pastoralists did exactly that and received nothing from government in the process of eradicating these diseases from their herds.

As the campaign heated up, government and the industry generally made decisions in relation to financing the program of eradication. This included slaughter levies on each head of stock at an abattoir. That is a direct cost against the pastoralist. There are costs charged to state governments and significant costs charged to the federal government in these programs. The programs are set and determined at a national level. There are sub-programs, naturally set for each state and the Northern Territory. The Northern Territory's program is approved nationally and, within the constraints of the finances available, assistance is made available to pastoralists. As minister responsible for primary production and lands, I was involved in a continuing war and debate with the industry. I have no doubt that the member for Stuart has received a number of complaints. Certainly, I received a significant number as a minister and I investigated many of them. Some had validity and some did not. Some of the interplay between government departments has been of concern to pastoralists. I was always fascinated by the competing desire of the Department of Lands, under its lease covenants, requiring boundary fencing whilst the Department of Primary Production, with the BTEC program, required paddock fencing out towards the boundaries for stock control and management. A number of such situations occur. To deny that is to deny the truth.

I also know that the rest of the Australian industry, which is fundamentally clear despite the odd breakdown, has been asking why it should be paying slaughter levies etc into a central fund and see all that money vanish north to subsidise cattlemen and buffalo producers to get rid of these diseases when they have done nothing for 20 years. I am very conscious of the fact that, in 1985 and 1986, there was a significant push nationally to solve the problem by drawing a line across the Top End. Stock would then have been banned from coming south of that line and the people north of the line could have looked after their own stock. That was proposed seriously in the Bureau of Agricultural and Economic Occasional Paper No 92 on BTEC. It took a great deal of hard work from the Northern Territory industry and the Northern Territory government to oppose that successfully. The suggestion was rejected eventually by the industry representatives at a meeting in Brisbane in early 1987.

There have been a number of those moves. Do not think it is just a Northern Territory decision. There are national pressures and, if we do not continue with the national BTEC program in the Northern Territory, we will continually face those pressures. Despite the costs and the very serious and traumatic problems that we are confronted with, the fact is that, as part of Australia, we have to fit in with the national program. Where the program may not be working well and where people have positive suggestions on how it can be improved, I believe that such proposals should be made in a considered

manner to the various national consultative groups so that the federal government can adjust the program. No one should assume that we have the perfect way of going about the BTEC program. However, it is equally nonsensical to say we should simply terminate it. That is not a solution.

Instances have been recorded of uncontrolled, feral buffalo walking through fences from as far north as Arnhem Land across to the South Australia border. I admit that is very rare but it has been recorded.

Mr Ede: Come on!

Mr HATTON: It is a fact that they have been recorded as walking that far south. Certainly, they have walked well down into the Gulf and Barkly regions.

Mr Ede: You have been reading Phantom comics again.

Mr HATTON: If the member for Stuart wants to trivialise this, I will allow him to do so. I suggest he talk to the industry and to the veterinarians who have been around the industry for the last 20 years. They might advise him of these particular facts, as they advised me.

If an animal, that is untested and possibly contains brucellosis or tuberculosis, probably tuberculosis these days, walks through a fence into another paddock, that can destroy years of work. Hundreds of thousands of dollars, indeed millions of dollars in some cases, have been spent over the years in clearing properties and obtaining confirmed free status. If the fences are taken down and one dirty animal walks through, they have to start again.

Mr Ede: Buffalo with brucellosis?

Mr HATTON: I said tuberculosis, if you were listening.

If a dirty animal goes through a clean property, the whole process has to be repeated. How frustrating and how costly is that to the person who has gone to such pains and such costs to attain confirmed free status? Should we allow that to go totally uncontrolled, for people to be irresponsible and allow stock to break through fences and cause expense to their neighbours? There is that problem in many of the areas where clean properties border dirty properties. How do you address that, Mr Speaker? If particular pastoralists will not clean up their properties or their paddocks, should we simply shrug our shoulders and say: 'That is tough. We will have to live with that'? Do their neighbours have to live with that? They are screaming at the government to do something about it. No. We must enforce the rules on those people. It will be unpopular to enforce the rules and there will be the sort of arguments and disputes that we often experience here.

I might say that I accept the member for Stuart's contention that, occasionally, animals react on testing even though they do not have any disease. Particularly in the hotter parts of the year or if they have been under some form of feed, water or heat stress, they may well react and show signs akin to those of the disease even though they do not have it. The test is not perfect, and we know that. That is a major problem. Often, it is an indicator of a potential for a breakdown and it is also a fact that breakdowns do occur from time to time. Whether we like it or not, if we are to maintain a national program, we need to have these follow-ups. I do not know of any clear-cut answer. We cannot ignore a potential breakdown of the program in a

clean area. At the same time, there can be indications of a breakdown when, in fact, there has been no breakdown but only a stress-related reaction to the needle.

Mr Ede: Even when it has been proved there is no disease, the pastoralist has been required to muster again.

Mr HATTON: I admit that and, in relation to those situations, I have very serious questions and concerns. I am not certain of the exact percentage but I think it is in the order of about 90% accuracy on 2 needle tests over 72 hours.

Mr Ede: This is right.

Mr HATTON: We must recognise the need to clean up the feral herd and to expand the domesticated herd of buffalo. This year, the government has put in place an incentive program towards that objective. It is part of the answer. In respect of Woolner Station, for the benefit of our local Smith Street farmer, the member for Koolpinyah, I might advise that the Woolner pastoralist had the opportunity to apply for \$100 000 of financial assistance or grants in that respect as did everybody else in the industry.

I will not go through the very sorry, traumatic, conflicting and confusing tale of the border war between Woolner Station and its neighbours - the battle over the sanctuary area north of the property, the battles over mustering rights in those areas and the continuing disputes over the location of trap yards facing towards their neighbour's properties from both sides of the fences. There have been allegations of illegal mustering on Crown land from both properties and of aerial combats using helicopters and goodness knows what else flying backwards and forwards in that area for the last 2 or 3 years. It has been the most extraordinary tale. Quite frankly, I cannot get to the bottom of it. I have heard so many conflicting stories. There have been so many reports and investigations as people have tried to sort it out over the last 3 years. In the end, all we could say is that, if anyone is caught, he will be in trouble. The whole matter is so confusing and there is no evidence to support either side.

Certainly, the Grove family have become violent opponents of the BTEC program since that period because their ability to muster off Crown land has been limited as a consequence of the program. After several years of trying to muster a sanctuary area, finally the government decided that, in the end, the contractors could not get the rest of the beasts out and it would be necessary to shoot them out. That was what started the battle from Woolner Station over the BTEC program and the loss of buffalo. For years, we tried to muster that clean. It is not that big an area. That is a classic example of how the contract mustering system failed in the program of eradication, particularly from sanctuary and national park areas.

The clean up must go ahead. We must accelerate the domestication program and, contrary to what the member for Stuart says, a 30 000 herd will not touch the edges. In my view, there is a market for a turn off of buffalo in the order of 50 000 head a year, without going into the prime-cut markets for the meat, but with marketing and promotion of buffalo as a high-protein, low-cholesterol, quality meat. In my opinion, there is a potential for that. It will require significantly more than 30 000 breeders. In my view, we would be looking at a herd in the order of 150 000 to 200 000 head because I am advised that calving rates are in the order of 56%. I thought they were a little higher than that, but I will accept that. That means that, with a herd

of 60 000 breeders, there will be only a 30 000-head increase per year. Not all the cattle will be breeding. There will be a percentage of young heifers coming on. If 250 000 are to be turned off at about 2 years of age, there will be another 50 000 at 1 year of age. Something like 100 000 breeders will be needed to handle them plus the bulls to work the herds.

We are looking at a herd of a significant size. It is important to look beyond what I think of as the Top End. We should look at the Gulf country which would be very well suited for the buffalo industry. Indeed, many of those areas would be better suited for buffalo than cattle. There is a significant need to do that, but we cannot do that if we leave the feral herd there. We have to try to move the feral herd to a domesticated program and find mechanisms to achieve that.

Mr SMITH (Opposition Leader): Mr Speaker, I will start by addressing some comments made by the honourable minister. I have 2 main comments to make on what he said. He said that a number of individual difficulties were being addressed. My comment is that a large number of individual difficulties have come to attention over the last few weeks. What has emerged is a picture of concern right throughout the Territory, ranging from buffalo producers in the Top End, such as the Groves and Rod Ansell, to cattle producers in the member for Stuart's electorate. Coupled with that was what appeared to be the minister's admission that there were serious concerns among buffalo producers at the direction that the BTEC program was taking. His advice to them, and it is legitimate advice, is that they need to form themselves into an industry association and have their concerns recognised through the appropriate channels. Essentially, that is what we are saying to the honourable minister.

Mr Reed: You missed the important point within the framework of the program.

Mr SMITH: There are concerns that are being expressed and it is time that government, both at Territory and federal level, recognised those concerns, was prepared to examine them seriously and not simply sweep them under the carpet.

There is a logical reason why those concerns are coming to the fore at the moment and that is because we are getting to the business end of the program. We are approaching the proposed 1992 deadline and, the closer we come to that, the harder it becomes. I do not think anyone would dispute that. The reason is that we are dealing with more difficult areas and with more scattered cattle and buffalo. We are dealing with the hard-nut problems that we did not have to deal with previously. At this stage, we need to ask ourselves what are the costs and benefits of proceeding with the original program that was sketched out when the scheme started?

The key question is whether we can meet the 1992 program as it stands. I would like the honourable minister, either in this Assembly or outside, to give a categorical assurance that we will meet the 1992 program as it stands and that he is prepared to stake his ministerial career on it. He cannot do so, and I am not criticising him for that. He knows that it is not possible to give that commitment because he knows that there are very real problems indeed with meeting that 1992 deadline. The target is that, by 1992, there will be no known tuberculosis infection in any herd in the Northern Territory. I challenge the minister to give us a categorical assurance that we are on target and that we will achieve that objective. We will not get that categorical assurance because he knows that we cannot achieve it.

The essential reason why we cannot achieve that particular target is because of problems in the Top End. They are not the minister's problems or his department's problems; they are the problems that exist due to the very nature of the country in the Top End and due to the nature of the operations here. What we are saying is that there is a very real prospect that, because of those problems, we will not achieve the 1992 target. We are saying that it is time to look at a sensible alternative to the 1992 target if it cannot be achieved.

This is a sensible alternative. I will not read it all out again but, in essence, it says that we should draw a line as far north as we can get and concentrate on complete eradication south of that line. North of the line, as a secondary consideration, we should continue to encourage - and 'encourage' is the key word - the existing producers to work towards the eradication of the disease. Where it is not economically and financially viable for them to do that, we must insist that that disease be controlled on their particular properties.

I would have thought that, instead of being dismissed out of hand, instead of the 45 minutes of blatant political point-scoring that we heard from the minister opposite, the concept was worth some serious consideration. At least the member for Nightcliff gave it some serious consideration because he knew some of the arguments. Unfortunately, the minister opposite did not even know enough of the arguments to be able to argue against it. I accept there are some arguments indicating that we should continue to work for the total eradication of the diseases throughout the industry in Australia. Obviously, that is a desirable objective. However, when we have clear evidence that that is a very difficult, if not impossible, task to complete by 1992, perhaps it is time to take another look at what we are doing. We are saying that to both levels of government. Perhaps it is time that we concentrated on the areas in which the disease can be more easily eradicated so that the industry is free from the disease over as much of the Northern Territory as possible, and then worry about the minor cattle producing section at a later date. Indeed, we might even set about approaching it in a different manner. We might have to accept that, in some areas of the Top End, we will have to settle for control rather than complete eradication. We might also have to accept that, instead of having these massive shootouts, we should adopt other measures for controlling the disease.

That is all we are saying. It is not a matter for hysterical debate. It is not a matter of chucking out the baby with the bathwater. Like the members opposite, we have a commitment to the program. However, we have also the capacity to recognise that there are some difficulties, to recognise that the deadline that we put in place some years ago may not be reached and to suggest that perhaps we should look at another approach that may well be much better for the industry in the Northern Territory.

It is as simple as that, and that is where I will leave it because I do not want to become involved in any of the other arguments that have been talked about today. They are all irrelevant. There is one major issue that confronts us here today: whether the 1992 timetable can be met. If it cannot be met, and I do not think anyone denies that there are serious reservations about that, we should be looking at whether there are effective ways of helping the pastoral industry in the Northern Territory. We have given members opposite an effective way to consider. It does not behove the minister completely and utterly to reject it without thought as he has done today.

Mr TUXWORTH (Barkly): Mr Speaker, some of the comments made by the Leader of the Opposition have stimulated me to rise and participate in this debate. I have listened to a great deal of the mud-slinging over the last several months about the priority of the BTEC program and can only say that I have been amused by most of it. However, I think there is a broader issue at stake. Probably it has been growing with the campaign as it really starts to bite. The truth is that, in 1978, when the target date of 1992 was set, the people who set it were certainly not familiar with the wetland areas of the Northern Territory. They certainly had not seen some of the tiger country in my electorate where cattle management would have to be described as minimal. In fact, I would go so far as to say that there are animals in the Gulf country which have never seen a white man. When you talk about eradicating disease in conditions like that, you are really taking on a major task.

BTEC has been very successful. I think we are starting to feel the results of that success. Any disease eradication program, whether related to humans or animals, follows the same pattern. In the first couple of years, results come slowly. After a while, the benefits begin to become evident. The majority of available funds are normally spent on eradicating 90% of the disease. However, generally, a similar amount of money is spent on eradicating the last 10%. The minister might care to correct me on this but I am pretty sure that well in excess of \$90m to \$100m has been spent on BTEC so far by the federal, state and Territory governments and the industry itself. If the eradication of these diseases follows the normal pattern, we can look each other in the eye and say that we are probably up for another \$90m to eliminate the remaining 10% of the diseases. That is a very daunting prospect when we consider that the Northern Territory herd is 1% of the national herd. The problem for the government and the industry is quite immense.

I accept that the minister and the industry have to hold the line in relation to the 1992 target. We cannot admit that we cannot achieve that target. That would be an open invitation for the monkeys who use disease control and health regulations to control exports and imports to come down on us like a ton of bricks. However, we cannot avoid the fact that eradicating the last 10% in the last few years of the campaign will be very difficult. It will be extremely hard, and we are just beginning to feel the pain. Honourable members have recounted some of the stories they have heard and I can tell you, Mr Speaker, that we will hear bellows about things which we have not even dreamed about. The situation will be much worse if any major outbreaks occur in areas which we believe are clean, free and well-managed.

I want to refer specifically to some of the problems which will make things difficult for us. When I drive through the top part of my electorate, I am really concerned about how we will fare in that area, not only in the period prior to 1992 but afterwards. The whole program is based on controlling the herd and that entails proper fencing. People who have seen the country in my electorate in times of flood will know that more than topsoil, sticks and trees are washed away. Anything which even looks like a fence is lost. Under such circumstances, we will have a pretty torrid time maintaining the program.

It is clear that, as the program becomes tougher and people on marginal blocks with less effective management and fewer capital resources become involved, the pain will become greater and we will have to make some decisions. Will we pay 2 or 3 times as much on those properties as elsewhere or will we cut our losses and walk away? Even if we do walk away, that is not the end of the day. Somebody will need to ensure that the properties are kept clean and free of animals. That will certainly cost a few dollars in some of the tiger country in the Northern Territory.

My point is that the noise which is starting to be heard now is only the beginning. It will increase and the reality is that we will have to pay more because we are moving into the more difficult areas in terms of eradicating the diseases. When I say 'more difficult', I do not necessarily mean that those areas experience higher rainfall or whatever. There are many blocks in the Territory and most of them are between 900 km² and 1400 km² in size. Many of them are not good country. Some are dogged by drought and others have not received sufficient injections of capital over the years. Those properties will be difficult for us to clean, whether they are around Alice or Katherine or out in the Gulf or the VRD.

I know that the minister cannot say that he acknowledges the problem because he would then be seen to be raising doubts about the 1992 target. I certainly do not think that he should do that either. I know that the industry cannot acknowledge that there is a doubt about achieving the target by 1992. That would not be in its interests. However, I am quite happy to say that there is an underlying concern about the fact that we now have to pour a very substantial amount of resources into the effort to clean up the last 10% of disease in the herd. That will be very costly. I feel for many of the cattlemen, particularly those in my electorate, as well as some people in the buffalo industry who probably have not understood the extent of the pressure which the campaign will exert on them. I feel for those people because they will bear the brunt of the extremely high cost of getting rid of the last 10% of the diseases.

From time to time, the member for Stuart has reflected on the appropriateness of the program and its management. He suggested that there have been rorts and so forth. You would have to be a mug to argue that such things have not occurred, Mr Speaker, but I think you need to accept that the program has been monitored for over 10 years by the Commonwealth government, the Northern Territory government and the industry itself. So many people are now involved in the administration of the program that, if there is any funny business - and they all know what that will mean in terms of the flow of money into the program - they will blow the whistle on it without any hesitation whatsoever. I am happy to state that I believe that the program has been conducted with the utmost propriety. I can contemplate the possibility that some slippery customers may have got away with a bit of poddy-dodging here and there, but I do not accept that there has been any major impropriety in the overall management of the program.

I say to both the minister and the member for Stuart that we are a long way from the end of the line. We have much work to do and we need to get this particular discussion out of the media because it will only hurt Territory cattlemen, particularly those whose marginal operations really need our help at this time. If anybody has any doubt about that, I would invite him to spend a week cruising around in a car in the top end of my electorate. That will give him a good understanding of the job ahead of us.

Mr EDE (Stuart): Mr Speaker, I thank honourable members for their contributions to this debate. The member for Barkly has said that many more problems will arise. These problems are not merely political signposts pointing towards a CLP defeat; families are suffering. People have committed their lives and invested every penny they could lay their hands on in pursuit of a dream. They are now having to watch their dreams turn to ashes. Many people will be hounded off the land by the banks after being ruined because of the BTEC program. The minister should think a bit more about that because, as the member for Barkly said, those properties cannot be left dirty when the campaign is aiming at total eradication.

Mr Reed: No, you have still got it wrong.

Mr EDE: In fact, Mr Speaker, any sort of program would require that those properties be kept clean.

The member for Barkly said that the minister cannot give any indication that 1992 is not an attainable target because that would send out signals to the industry. I do not know whether the minister wants to look at me and wink if that is the case.

Mr Reed: No thanks. I'm pretty right!

Mr EDE: I do not know if he will go to a confidential meeting and battle seriously to remove the 1992 yoke from the industry's neck so that the industry can be saved before it perishes in the mire of its own survival, which is the current proposal.

Mr Reed: Can we have that again?

Mr EDE: That is what it is, Mr Speaker. Check it out. The minister has had extreme difficulty in understanding anything that has been said in this debate. He has simply looked over to his left to ensure that the notes kept coming from his ministerial advisers. If he had got them in the wrong order, he would have been in strife. I think that actually happened somewhere along the line because he lost his track and seemed to be answering the wrong questions at the wrong time.

Mr Reed: When was that?

Mr EDE: The Leader of the Opposition has enumerated some of the problems in the Top End. He asked the minister whether he would be prepared to stake his career on the 1992 deadline.

Mr Dale: You haven't got one.

Mr EDE: The minister is working on the basis that he will not hold this portfolio in 1992. He is ambitious. He thinks that he can maintain this line for a few years, chalk up a few points for toughness ...

Mr Dale: A few years. We will be here, won't we?

Mr EDE: It is only a few months. He is hoping to get a new portfolio in the Christmas reshuffle. The fact is that, while the minister can move on to another portfolio, the people in the industry cannot. They are locked in and they will be the ones to suffer. The minister will be able to get out and some other poor Johnny will be in there in 1992. He will turn round and say: 'It was not my fault. I have only been here for a few months. It was the minister who went before me'. That minister will have to deal with the real problems.

Of course, Mr Speaker, 1992 is after the fateful date of 1991 when we will have an election. The people who are now on this side of the House will be the ones who will have to deal with those problems in 1992. In consequence, we have a vested interest in ensuring that there will be an industry for us to take over and develop and that it is not ruined by the crowd opposite.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The phrase is 'honourable members opposite'.

Mr EDE: The honourable members opposite.

Mr Speaker, the member for Nightcliff said correctly that BTEC is expensive. In arguing against the concept of a fundamental change, all he could say was that a number of people have gone to the wall and many more will. He then talked about hunter gatherers and pastoralists. It is true that some people carried out brucellosis and tuberculosis eradication programs in years gone by without the investment of vast amounts of money. That is correct. It was much simpler in the southern areas of Australia, where infrastructure is in place, to carry out programs to eradicate cattle diseases.

What pastoralist would want his cattle to have brucellosis? Has the honourable minister ever seen the results of brucellosis? He has not. Anyone who has seen the results of that disease will understand that any pastoralist would want to eradicate it if that is within his economic reach. That is what has occurred in the southern areas. Property owners cleared it out. As the campaign proceeded further north, however, it became economically non-viable.

The member for Nightcliff said that, under our proposal, nobody above the line would be paid assistance. He said that that was a proposal made in Occasional Paper No 92 or something. Under our proposal, that is absolute rubbish. The people in the north have contributed more. They have been contributing for years through the slaughtering levy without obtaining the benefits. They send a higher proportion of their herd direct to slaughter than people on the clearer properties who put a high proportion of their herds into stores. If the minister knew something about the market, he would understand that. It is no surprise that the pastoralists are now saying that paying the slaughtering levies is like paying for the bullets for your own execution. I can understand them drawing that simile.

The member for Nightcliff said that there were no clear cut answers. Half way through his speech, he had a slight change of heart and agreed that, if beasts tested clean, there were some concerns about their being mustered again in the hotter part of the year so that they could be tested again. Losses mount in those circumstances.

Mr Reed: Read Hansard. You have been told so many times.

Mr EDE: Mr Speaker, the honourable minister appears to be unable to understand the basic inequity of that. However, he will continue on to his own downfall. At least, the member for Nightcliff did have some dream of having a buffalo industry in the Territory. I hope that the Chief Minister was listening and, as part of the member's gradual resurrection from the dead, he may be able to be put in charge of that. There are very real problems with the wiping out the feral herd, and that is something which he would have to take on board as well.

Mr Reed: Not wiping out. You have it wrong. Disease free.

Mr EDE: I am not talking about what you said. Sit down, son.

Mr Speaker, I am referring to the discussion points of the member for Nightcliff who said that the feral herd had no future.

Mr Reed: You did not listen.

Mr EDE: The beef from that feral herd has particular characteristics which are very popular in various parts of the trade. I do not think that is a matter that we should throw away lightly. I refer the minister to Hansard where I discussed this point at length in other debates and supplied information to support that point of view. I do not have time to go through that debate again but I will give the member for Nightcliff the reference later.

The member for Koolpinyah made a very useful contribution to this debate because she gave the point of view of the small producers. There is no doubt that, as she said, there is a very real perception that, if you are big enough, you can survive BTEC. You will be given extensions of time and every assistance will be extended to you to ensure that you do not have problems. When that happens, the statistics have to be kept at some middle line and the small owner operators get it in the neck. They are the ones who suffer the compulsory shoot-out orders. They are the ones who lose the \$400 000 or the \$1m. They are the people who suffer most, and that is an unfortunate result of the way that this government has managed the proposal.

The honourable minister said that no one denies that there are some difficulties. He said that there were some people who were unfortunate consequences. What a delightful phrase, Mr Speaker. I will have to send a copy of the minister's statement to all those 'unfortunate consequences', those battlers who are trying to survive this madness so that they can develop the industry that they have pinned their hopes on and that the honourable minister has shown himself to have no interest in. He is simply going to mouth the departmental line from all the veterinarians who are making a quid out of it. That's what he is, Mr Speaker - he is a puppet of the department and the vested interests who are running BTEC around Australia. He should be ashamed of himself. He is supposed to be the Minister for Primary Industry and Fisheries. He is supposed to be representing the battlers in the industry, but he will not do that.

He says that we have to follow slavishly behind the industrial organisations. It is a bit hard to follow slavishly behind those organisations because they are so busy following slavishly behind his department that we would all end up running around in circles. We are fed up with running around in circles. We will go to the members and try to cut through it. I know what their stance is. The Dunbars wrote to the member for Nightcliff, before he was Chief Minister, complaining that officers of the Department of Industrial Development who attended all those meetings seemed to frame all the motions and were there simply to stifle debate and to ensure that there was no criticism.

In the Northern Territory, this campaign has been going since 1982. Elsewhere, it has been in operation since 1970 and, by 1992, people will have had 22 years to come to grips with the problem. In the Territory, people are now in the situation where they are being rammed up against that deadline and it is cutting them to pieces. What is all this pain and suffering for? Where are the benefits? There is no benefit unless it is actually preventing overseas companies from taking action against Australia by ceasing imports. Does the honourable minister have 1 skerrick of documented evidence that he can table to show that that is about to occur? He does not.

Mr Reed: Read Hansard tomorrow. It was about to occur, was it? It did not occur.

Mr EDE: Mr Speaker, he did not say why it took 10 weeks for Banka Banka to get out from under. All he said was that it was the fault of the Klines because they did not kill those cattle and, if they had done that, they would have been okay. Those cattle did not have brucellosis or TB.

Mr Reed: How many were there?

Mr EDE: I have it in my notes somewhere. I will tell you afterwards if you like.

Mr Reed: You do not know, do you?

Mr EDE: Mr Speaker, I do know. I have it in my notes. I am not going to dig it out now because it is irrelevant. The fact is that the animals did not have brucellosis. Why should he have had to kill them when they did not have brucellosis? They were tested and they were found to be clean. Why did he have to kill them? Why should that have made any difference?

Mr Perron: Do you blame the minister for that? You do not understand do you?

Mr EDE: The minister is running the program. Why was there no compensation for the \$400 000 lost? I will tell you why. After all that, there was no compensation because there was no brucellosis. If the animals had had brucellosis, compensation would have been granted but, because there was no brucellosis, there was no compensation.

Mr Speaker, we know the Dunbars of Nutwood and that is another name for the honourable minister to put in his hat. He keeps saying that no names are being provided here. They have made clear statements about their position. The honourable minister has asked for other names. He has Wally Kline, and his number ...

Mr Reed: I have it. I phoned him today and he was not there.

Mr EDE: You obtained it from the phone book.

Mr Reed: Yes. Mind you, it is only a couple of weeks since I spoke to him last.

Mr EDE: He is not there. He may be available by radio link-up later on, but he is not there at the moment. If the minister wants to contact Charlie Chalmers at Mt Swan, radio telephone 429 is the number. If he wants to ring Max Lyons at Pine Hill Station, it is radio telephone 324. If he wants to ring Terry Lee, he can probably ...

Mr Perron: Now we really know you are trying to fill in time.

Mr EDE: What is that?

Mr Coulter: Are you going to read the whole phone book out to us?

Mr EDE: The honourable minister says that I have not given him names. I give him names and you want to interject over the top of me and complain about the telephone book.

Mr Speaker, if the honourable minister does not want names, he cannot turn around and say that I am not giving him names and facts. It is ridiculous.

We had to drag out of him which properties he had been to and what the producers had to say. First, he tried to make out that they did not say anything about problems until we dragged it out of him. Now we find that, while they are telling him their problems, he is not listening. Yesterday, in another debate, he defined 'consultation'. Honourable members will recall him talking about his relationship with the federal government. He told us the dictionary definition of 'consultation'. I ask him to read the speech he made yesterday about consultation because it is very obvious from that definition that, if there was no consultation by the federal government with him, there was certainly no consultation between him and the producers. He fails on every aspect of the definition that he had great fun trotting out for us. By his own admission, he has failed.

It is all right for the honourable minister to mouth off his departmental line and to be the captive of his own propaganda. If he cannot manage it in the southern areas of the Northern Territory, how can the people involved in ownership and the downstream operations etc that have evolved in the buffalo industry and the pastoral industry in the Top End, where everybody has agreed it is far more difficult, have any confidence whatsoever? How can any of them have any confidence whatsoever in the honourable minister's ability to do anything about it? I have provided the minister with case histories of mismanagement by his own department.

Mr Reed: Partial.

Mr EDE: Last time around, he wanted me to be his policeman. Now he wants me to be his researcher and his field worker. I want the minister to do a bit of work, to get off his tail and go out. I have given him names. I have given him the facts of what has occurred. Now let him get out there before the Christmas break and talk to the Klins, talk to Max Lyons and other people. Let him admit that he has problems and pass this motion.

Motion negatived.

MOTION
Freedom of Information

Mr SMITH (Opposition Leader): Mr Speaker, I move that this Assembly:

recognising that every individual has the right to know what information the government holds concerning her or him;

recognising that every person has the right to evaluate what the government has done; and

recognising that every citizen has the right to participate in what the government proposes to do,

urge the government, as the first step in attaining these rights, to give every person a legal right to gain information held on them in documentary form which is in the possession of ministers or of the departments and statutory authorities of the government.

Are you going to support this? We could take the vote now.

Mr Coulter: Keep talking. It is your 30 minutes.

Mr SMITH: Right. I was trying to save the House some time.

Mr Perron: It is your day.

Mr SMITH: Mr Speaker, freedom of information legislation is not new. In many parts of the world, freedom of information legislation has been an essential component of the democratic parliamentary system for a number of years. Under that freedom of information legislation worldwide, probably the basic tenet is the right of the individual to obtain access to information held by government, either directly by elected officials or in the various bureaucratic arms of the government. As I have said, it has been in vogue for a number of years. The United States of America has had freedom of information for 22 years - in other words, it was introduced in 1966. The leaders in the field were the Scandinavian countries. A couple of the Scandinavian countries have had freedom of information access and legislation for a longer period of time than that.

In Australia, of course, it has been the Australian government that has taken on board the need to protect the rights of its citizens and, at the Commonwealth level now, we have legislation which ensures that right of individuals to access a range of information held by government. I want to make the point clear in this debate that we are not talking about a motion which refers to as wide a range of information as is provided for by the Commonwealth legislation. This debate is narrowly focused, and it is the right of individuals in the Northern Territory to be able to access their own files that we are speaking about. In layman's language, that is what this particular debate is about and what the motion refers to.

The Commonwealth legislation is set up under the Commonwealth Freedom of Information Act of 1982. That act was put together by the Fraser government before the Hawke government took over and, at that time, it received widespread support from all parties. It came into operation after a very thorough inquiry at the federal level involving interdepartmental committees, an inquiry by a Senate Standing Committee on Constitutional and Legal Affairs and several debates in the Australian parliament. Obviously, there is a strong likelihood that it will take several debates in this parliament before we obtain proper freedom of information legislation as well.

The federal legislation was introduced by the Liberal Party in 1982 and it is significant that, just last week, at the height of the debate in this House on this particular question, the shadow Attorney-General in the federal House, Mr Neil Brown, himself went on record arguing for an extension of the freedom of information powers that already exist at the Commonwealth level. I think that that is a fair indication of the attitude of the federal government and the federal opposition to this matter.

The 3 principles that we have identified in this motion - that every individual has the right to know what the government knows about him, that every individual has the right to evaluate what the government has done and that every individual has the right to participate in what the government proposes to do - are the same principles that were adopted by the Senate standing committee and formed the basis for the discussions and the subsequent legislation in the Commonwealth House. I make the point again that, essentially, this debate is about the first of those 3 principles: every individual has the right to know what the government knows about him. In other words, as we should in a democracy, we want to discourage any belief that there is a big brother collecting files on people.

Mrs Padgham-Purich: What about the ID card?

Mr SMITH: I intended to come to that. If members opposite were to adopt a consistent position on this, I would expect them to support a motion like this because of the opposition they expressed at the time of the Australia Card debate. At that time, particularly the member for Nightcliff, the previous Chief Minister - and he will hear his words quoted to him shortly - and the government were running a very strong line on the rights of individuals and the limitations on the rights of government to keep and maintain records on individuals. Again, essentially, that is what this motion is about.

Freedom of information provides individuals with access to documents that exist on their government files, either in the offices of ministers or in the public service or statutory authorities. That means that the onus of justification changes from the individual to the government. Under the terms of this motion, the government would have to justify withholding information on a particular individual as opposed to the previous situation, and the present situation in some cases - in other cases files are not available at all - where the individual has to justify her or his entitlement to access.

This is a convenient time to point out that we are not arguing for unrestricted access. Obviously, there are times when it is desirable to have restrictions on access to files for individuals and I will cover that point a little later. However, as a basic principle, it should be the right of an individual to have access to a file held on him by government and, as a basic principle, it should be the right of the government to deny access in a particular case or in relation to a particular page or pages. However, the onus would be on the government to justify its reasons for not permitting access rather than on the individual to justify his request to examine his own file.

At the Commonwealth level, the types of departments that are involved in this are the Taxation Department, the Department of Social Security and the Department of Immigration. These are the Commonwealth departments which are in control of information that relates to how much money someone earns, where a person has invested his savings, details of family dependants, unemployment circumstances, whether a person is incapacitated and how immigration was achieved, to give a few examples. Mr Speaker, imagine what it would mean to you, as an individual, if you could not determine what types of investigations may have been undertaken concerning you. At the Commonwealth level, you do not have to imagine what types of investigations may have been undertaken about you because of the existence of the Freedom of Information Act 1982. That act enables you to protect your interests and to find out - if it does not constitute a security risk and there is no other valid reason for withholding the information - what information is being held on you and, if necessary, to correct that information. We all know that it is very possible for wrong information to appear on people's files.

In the Northern Territory - and this is not an exhaustive list - there are a number of departments that hold files on individuals. The police hold files on those who come into contact with them, whether they are actually charged or not. The Department of Health and Community Services holds medical records, adoption records, child protection records etc. The Department of Lands and Housing has records of individuals in relation to housing schemes, other related matters and land sales. The Motor Vehicle Registry has personal information on people who have registered vehicles or obtained motor vehicle licences. The Work Health Authority has information on rehabilitation and worker's compensation. The Department of Education has examination results, psychological and guidance results and school counselling reports. The

Department of Transport and Works has records in an area that has caused considerable concern in the past. I am pleased to note that the Ombudsman has noted a decrease in complaints about the tendering procedures. Of course, that is another area of conflict and another area where it is possible and desirable for people to have access to those particular files. It is not acceptable for Territorians to discover that file clerks at the Royal Darwin Hospital and the Berrimah Police Station know more about them and their government files than they do themselves. That matter is of great concern.

Another area that is of concern to many people is information that relates to their employment and promotion prospects. I understand that, in some departments, there are procedures to enable access to employment and promotion records, but there is no legal basis for that and that is what we are on about. There should be a legal right for people who are employed by the government to access their employment and promotion records, both for the satisfaction that it can give them in resolving any misgivings that they might have about how they have been treated and also in improving the performance of the relevant government departments. One of the things that has been demonstrated about freedom of information legislation is that it makes government departments tighter and more accountable. In other words, when they know that their decisions are likely to be scrutinised, they take more care in arriving at those decisions and providing reasons for those decisions. Mr Speaker, you will be aware that, on a previous General Business day we moved a motion for the establishment of a process to enable the review of administrative decisions. Quite clearly, a scheme like that is an integral part of what we are trying to achieve now.

Mr Perron: The Ombudsman does it now.

Mr SMITH: The Ombudsman does it now but, if you talk to the Ombudsman, he will say that, if the records were kept in proper condition and if decisions were properly explained, the need for his services would be reduced quite dramatically. It would be much better for the Ombudsman to be the last resort, not the first resort as the Chief Minister has hinted at from time to time.

The best way to achieve that is to allow individuals access to their files under certain conditions and to ensure that procedures are put in place within government departments, statutory authorities and the offices of ministers that ensure that the files are kept properly and that decisions are properly explained. It is my understanding, for example, that there is no common filing procedure throughout the Northern Territory government departments and authorities.

That is one positive thing that could be taken up by this government from this debate. Filing has become more complicated. We are no longer talking about filing mountains of paper in hundreds of filing cabinets. We are talking about electronic filing and other sophisticated filing techniques. There is an urgent need within the Northern Territory Public Service to establish a filing system that will enable the efficient retrieval of information for use by government departments and the ability of individuals, who are mentioned in those files, to gain access to that information.

We can all quote examples where people have had problems with government departments and have come to us as members of parliament and, because of the influence that we have with the public service, we have been able to help them to gain access to information on their own files and resolve their difficulties. That is a problem with the present system. If you have

influence in the system, you can gain access either to your own file or to other people's files on their behalf. I think that is an undesirable way to go about providing information. What we should be doing is legislating for a system that allows individuals, no matter what their rank in society, no matter what their income, the right of access to their personal files. That is an important principle that we in the Northern Territory should take up and run with.

Mr Speaker, let me give you an example of a Darwin man who tried to gain access to his hospital file and had enormous difficulty when he made the approach directly. He made the approach through his lawyer and the hospital file was described as being the 'possession of the Royal Darwin Hospital'. Obviously, the file cover and the sheets of paper contained within the cover were the property of the Royal Darwin Hospital, but the information contained in it was not. The information contained in it was quite clearly the property of the person whom it described. To have a situation where that information is not available to the person is ludicrous and smacks of the big brother syndrome. That is something that we should not have in the Northern Territory and, as civil libertarians and guardians of the rights of individuals, we should be doing something about that.

We have a situation in the Northern Territory at present where it seems to be the attitude that decisions about the individual are left in the hands of those who know least about how to deal with them - total strangers who operate in government departments. I am not critical of the people who operate as filing clerks in government departments. It is the system that I am critical about and the failure of the system to provide to an individual access to his personal files.

Territorians have a right to something better than the present system. They have a right to inspect their hospital files if they so desire. They have a right to inspect their files at the Housing Commission if they see fit. They should not have to fight, as do many Territorians who are involved in worker's compensation cases, to get their files out of the hospital. We have had this crazy and extremely unfair situation where the TIO, acting on behalf of the government in particular worker's compensation matters, is able to gain access to an individual's file but the individual whom the file is about cannot gain access. That is a matter of equity and justice. It is completely unfair and we should do something about it.

Mr Perron: And it is not true.

Mr SMITH: It is true and I will take that up with you later if you like.

We have given notice that, at some time in the new year, we will be introducing a Freedom of Information Bill. That bill will be based on the principles proposed by the Senate Standing Committee on Freedom of Information. I have read those principles out. We are not asking the government to do that by this motion. We accept, reluctantly, that the government is not prepared to introduce freedom of information legislation. That is its right and we do not deny it that right. What we are arguing in this motion is that there are also rights for individual Territorians - men, women and children. What this motion is proposing is that those individual men, women and children of the Northern Territory should have the right of access to files held on them by the government of the Northern Territory. That is a different matter and I hope it is a matter which the government can take on board.

We are not naive. We are not proposing an open-slathe policy and we are not proposing a policy without safeguards. We are proposing a policy and legislation which would contain a number of safeguards which would protect the interests of the government. Of course, there are some matters which require high security, some procedures which relate to the legal process and law enforcement and some matters in which the privacy of other parties could be at risk if information were revealed. We accept that there is no unfettered right. We also accept that the onus has to be on the government to justify the withholding of information. We work from the very basic principle that individuals should have the right to as much of the information as is possible which appears on their personal files.

I will focus on an area in which there has been some movement in recent months. I refer to the adoption process. There has been a worldwide trend to free up the availability of information to people involved in the adoption process, whether they be the natural parents, adoptive parents or the children who were adopted. A discussion paper on that subject has been circulated in the Northern Territory but there has been no action. This motion certainly relates to that area. Much more information should be made available to people involved in the adoption process, under certain conditions and agreed legislative safeguards. We are behind the times in that regard. The rest of Australia and other parts of the world are ahead of us and that is a symptom of our situation in the Northern Territory. We should be starting to think about the rights of individuals vis-a-vis the rights of government.

In conclusion, the motion establishes the 3 basic principles that the opposition believes are important in determining the rights of individuals and groups to have access to information held by government. Based on those principles, the motion states that the government should start moving now to provide for the right of individual Territorians to access the files held on them, either by ministers or by government departments. That access should not be open-ended. It should be restricted on the basis that as much information as possible should be provided and, when the government considers that the information cannot be provided, it should have to justify that.

Mr MANZIE (Attorney-General): Mr Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition put forward what might at first glance appear to be adequate arguments in support of the proposition that he has brought before the House. He cited some instances through which he sought to show that the present system contains injustices which can be righted only through freedom of information legislation.

In the context of this debate, it is worth while to look at the policy of the Department of Health and Community Services in relation to patient records held in hospitals. Much has been made of the inability of individuals to access their records. I have information regarding that department's policy in relation to records held by the Royal Darwin Hospital and I will go through some of that.

The primary purpose of a health record is to provide documentation on the course of an individual's health care and to provide a means of communication among health care professionals for current and future patient care. Health records are the property of the Northern Territory of Australia through the Department of Health and Community Services. It is important that patients recognise that their contract for treatment is not only with an individual but also with the hospital or health centre. As a matter of policy, the department supports the right of the patient or client to have access to the information held about him or her. Given the nature of the record, it is

necessary that supervised access be provided. This means that a staff doctor accompanies a patient who is permitted to view his or her record. This facilitates provision of information on what procedures were carried out, their purpose, the diagnosis made and the shorthand phrases that doctors use. Where information about a patient's treatment required for insurance purposes is compiled by a medical officer, a discharge summary is usually sent to the attending general practitioner. General practitioners who require further information are supplied with that information on request and with the patient's consent.

People who are suffering from illness sometimes get their facts a little confused. By the time they run to members of parliament, the significance of events can be magnified and things can be misinterpreted. It is important to understand that the policy is that the patient has access to his file in company with a professional. I know that a particular matter has been referred to in the media. On 16 November, the Leader of the Opposition was the subject of a news item on Channel 8 in which he referred to a 47-year-old man who had been fighting for 4 months to see his hospital files. Even though this particular person had access to the files through his lawyer, for some reason or other, he commenced a court action against the Department of Health and Community Services after access had been granted.

Mr Smith: That is not true.

Mr MANZIE: The Leader of the Opposition says it is nonsense. He says that because it contradicts the order in which he recounted the facts. This information does not dispute the facts as he related them. It simply places them in a different order.

Mr Smith: The information is wrong.

Mr MANZIE: The information is the same. It is simply the order of the facts which differs. The people involved can verify that. The example fits the policy of the Department of Health and Community Services. Problems can arise because of emotive considerations but I can assure honourable members that the policy works in practice.

The Leader of the Opposition suggested that everything would work well if this motion were passed. He seems to believe that this is a nasty, secretive government. In that context, it is important for people to realise that freedom of information legislation applies in only 2 jurisdictions in Australia. First, there is the Commonwealth Freedom of Information Act. I will refer to some of the problems with that act in a moment. Secondly, there is the Victorian act which is modelled on the Commonwealth act and was introduced in 1982. In addition, New South Wales is in the process of introducing legislation. The Leader of the Opposition enunciated the purposes of such legislation. I will spell out some of the reasons why governments introduce freedom of information legislation like that.

The broad aim is to make government more open to public scrutiny and, thereby, to be seen to be more accountable. Such legislation is thought to allow people to influence policy by giving them access to information. It makes available to those groups and individuals affected by government decisions the criteria applied in the making of those decisions and gives individuals access to files and the right to correct them. The manner in which the legislation has been put together both in Victoria and New South Wales is probably similar, although I am not certain of this, to the way it has been done in other areas around the world.

It is important to note that not many countries have introduced such legislation. I believe that Sweden introduced it 200-odd years ago. The situation in the USA is quite well-publicised. I am sure that honourable members would have concerns if our systems of government and administration, and our lifestyle, imitated the USA situation. The member for MacDonnell is having a good old chuckle but I am sure that, in all seriousness, he would not like us to experience the sort of problems which a place like New York experiences in relation to drug abuse, law enforcement and so forth.

Mr Bell interjecting.

Mr MANZIE: The member for MacDonnell has to concede that, if we copy everything faithfully, we will end up with the same sort of problems. I believe that it is incumbent on us to be aware of that. Obviously, the member for MacDonnell will contribute to this debate and we will hear him offering the sort of inane comments which he normally makes.

Mr Bell: I would not have a chance of competing with you, Daryl.

Mr MANZIE: Mr Speaker, apart from the US and Australia, only Denmark, Norway, France, the Netherlands, New Zealand and Canada have freedom of information legislation. There are many other countries which, despite being quite progressive in a social sense and in terms of their commitment to democracy, do not have freedom of information legislation although I dare say that some people are attempting to have it introduced.

Whilst travelling on an aeroplane recently, I came across a rather interesting article in a magazine called The Listener. It was an article by a person by the name of Mark Colvin. It discussed freedom of information legislation in Australia and some of its comments are worth repeating because they encapsulate the problems of freedom of information legislation. It contrasts the sort of ideals espoused by the Leader of the Opposition and other members opposite with the realities of such legislation and its operation in Australia. The fact is that such legislation does not solve the problems it purports to solve. The article begins as follows:

The New South Wales Premier, Nick Greiner, says most of his colleagues think he is mad to want to introduce it. Victoria's John Cain becomes furious at the suggestion that it means he will have to release details of a public opinion poll. The federal Finance Minister, Senator Peter Walsh, says it has been abused by politicians and others too lazy to do their own research. It is freedom of information legislation - popular, it seems, only with oppositions, journalists and governments which haven't been long enough in office to know where the bodies are.

Further on, the article says:

The truth is that bureaucrats and politicians are edging Australia back towards freedom from information. For documents on Australia's arrangements with the Soviet Union in the event of a Nazi war crimes trial, a federal opposition MP was charged \$7000. He could not pay so he did not get the documents. After a series of court battles, the Herald and Weekly Times obtained documents that it had been seeking through the Victorian Freedom of Information Act. Cost - \$171 000.

Obviously, one of the problems with such legislation is that it costs money. It does not simply bowl along. Under the systems which operate in Australia, the user pays. It becomes quite expensive. Cost is probably the sharpest weapon the federal government has used to rein in freedom of information. When the act came into operation in 1982, costs were minimal. In 1986, however, in the guise of a revenue bill which the opposition had vowed not to obstruct, the government introduced a new fee scale incorporating an application fee of \$30, a charge of \$20 for decision-making, \$15 an hour for search and retrieval and 10¢ a page for photocopying. Even if no documents at all are obtained, the average request costs \$250.

Further on, the article says:

When in opposition, Victorian ALP leader Cain was a ferocious campaigner for freedom of information. Elected Premier in 1982, he brought in a Freedom of Information Act saying that 'when people are informed about government policies, they are more likely to become involved in policy making and in government itself'. Not the same Cain, surely, who had been involved since July 1985 in protracted legal proceedings aimed at preventing the release of public opinion polls done for the Victorian government. Not the same Cain whose ministerial advisers unit, according to a leaked document, makes most major decisions on sticky yellow labels which are easily destroyed. Taxed with these cases now, Cain claims that however public the opinion polls are and however much public money was spent on them, they were prepared for Cabinet and they are Cabinet documents sacrosanct from freedom of information.

As for the 'sticky yellow mess', as it was described in the Melbourne Age, that has been rejected by the officers concerned since the leaked report quotes a ministerial adviser's unit spokesman as saying: 'If challenged, anything he said would be denied and this may not come as much of a surprise'.

As I said, the article encapsulated the problems that freedom of information legislation creates for those who believed originally it would be the shining, white knight and the solver of all problems. The present legislation in the rest of the country does not work. It is not effective and people who were its most vociferous champions before it was introduced now find that it is causing great problems and they are going out of their way to try to thwart the operation of the act. To me, that seems a bit crazy. Fancy sticking your head into a tiger's mouth when you know it will bite your head off! Obviously, the procedures of good government are inhibited when a government is spending much of its time and effort in working to try to prevent the operation of legislation that it has introduced.

We have heard assertions that, somehow or other, the government keeps information from the people of the Territory. In some cases, that is very true. There are certain records which are entirely confidential. These are not available to me and they are not available to other members of the community. It is only after some quite stringent criteria are met that even the people who are identified as the owners of that information receive access to it, and that is right and proper too. Easy access to information becomes dangerous because it is available to others to use to cause harm and damage to people.

In respect of medical records, we have policies in train. If there are problems in the operation of those policies, if they are not being followed

properly, the correct procedure is for the people in charge of the operation of those areas of administration to be taken to task to ensure that they follow government policy. If there are problems in regard to people's attitude towards the policy of government, effective representation can be made in this House and, if government decides that there is a need to change its policy, that policy can be changed. If government decides there is no need to change its policy, so be it. In a political sense, it would rest on our heads.

There has been no indication at all that the problems that have been alluded to by the opposition will be solved by freedom of information legislation. Obviously, they will not be. I think that it has been shown very superficially and very quickly, that there are considerable problems with the operation of freedom of information legislation in the few places that it exists in Australia. It is not working appropriately and it is ineffectual. Why have legislation that does not work? I think we should be very careful about even contemplating introducing something which 99% of democratic governments around the world have not touched. Until the opposition can show that freedom of information legislation will solve the problems and that it is the only means by which those problems will be solved, I will not be supporting the concept. I can assure you, Mr Speaker, that the government will not be supporting the proposal that has been put by the Leader of the Opposition today.

Mr BELL (MacDonnell): Mr Speaker, that was a series of quite extraordinary admissions from the Attorney-General with respect to freedom of information legislation and the constructive, forward-looking proposals that the opposition has put forward. Every interstate and international example of the application of freedom of information legislation to which he referred indicated the strength of the case that the Leader of the Opposition has put forward. The Attorney-General rather took offence at my burst of laughter over his wonderful comment about there being certain aspects of civilisation in the United States that were not desirable and would not sit very easily in the Northern Territory or Australia generally and that, therefore, we should not copy any aspect of American civilisation.

He went on to suggest that freedom of information legislation would destroy civilisation as we know it, which seemed to be drawing rather a long bow. From my experience of the United States of America, I never cease to be amazed by the passion that Americans have for open government and for the availability of information from their elected governments. I believe that support for the motion moved by the Leader of the Opposition is mandatory on the part of the government. Honourable members who have spoken in this debate already, other members of this Assembly who have listened to news broadcasts and even members of this Assembly who pay close attention to questions that are placed on notice will be aware that, for a considerable length of time, the opposition has taken a keen interest in the matter of freedom of information. They will recall that the opposition has placed on notice to each minister questions in relation to his use of the federal freedom of information legislation.

It seems that the Attorney-General is guilty of some not inconsiderable hypocrisy in this regard in that he, and the government of which he is a part, is quite prepared to acknowledge that legislation in the federal parliament, which was enacted by his conservative fellow travellers when they were in government in the federal parliament, is not acceptable to this government. On no fewer than 29 occasions has this government used federal freedom of information legislation to obtain information.

We heard the Attorney-General say that there were various groups who took advantage of freedom of information legislation. He referred to examples of oppositions or governments which did not know where the bodies lay. He went on to say that his reference to such governments was such as to imply that they were incompetent. If he imagines that the government of which he is a part is incompetent because it uses freedom of legislation in the federal House, that is a particularly harsh judgment indeed. I trust that future speakers on the government side will pick up that point and that it will be explained to all members exactly why the government has been prepared to use freedom of legislation information on no fewer than 29 occasions yet still does not see fit to introduce it in this Assembly.

I think the general principles of freedom of information have been dealt with. I would like to take a minute or 2 of the Assembly's time to indicate my understanding of the historical perspective of this issue. My understanding is that, under the common law, there is no right of the citizen to freedom of information and that, in fact, the sovereign was able to make decisions and keep records that the ordinary citizen had no right to obtain. Of course, that was the nature of the society in which our common law was founded. Examples have been legion. In fact, on a daily basis, this legislature makes decisions and passes laws that alter and, over time, can turn those common law precepts right around. Obviously, this is one of those areas where that is happening and we are living at a time in history where an effective change is occurring in that regard. With the enlightenment in the 18th century, the industrial revolution in the 18th and 19th centuries, the gradual development of a mass society in the industrialised countries, particularly in the west, the increasing role of representative democracy in running the affairs of those countries, the increasing emphasis on the right of the individual to know, to participate and to be free to inquire about the decisions that are made about his life have meant that that traditional common law concept has been affected dramatically. I believe that those governments around this country and around the world that have taken the step of introducing freedom of information legislation have done a great service to the democratic process.

The Attorney-General raised a question about the amounts of money involved and, of course, that question has to be addressed. Obviously, there has to be a screening out of frivolous and highly-expensive requests. That is one problem. Clearly, the question of the application of the user-pays principle has to be considered. The Attorney-General referred to the case of the \$170 000 bill for the Herald and Weekly Times and one of its freedom of information requests. Obviously, an organisation, such as a newspaper, that organises and packages information for sale to the public, which is what newspapers do, is in a better position to pay for that sort of information than a community-based, non-profit organisation would be. There are those sort of judgments to be made.

However, there can be no doubt that, as a matter of principle, in a democratic society individuals should have the right to access any information that is in the possession of governments or their agencies subject to those sort of qualifications that I have discussed. Another qualification is the question of Crown privilege, the extent to which a government should be able to have communication among its members for the purpose of organising opinion and the extent to which access should be had to that. Of course, we have had a dramatic example of that in the Northern Territory since self-government with the claim of Crown privilege in respect of documents to do with planning decisions that have affected the Kenbi Land Claim. I will not address that further because of the continuing process in that regard, but that issue is a live one here.

The federal government has seen fit to recognise the principle of a citizen's right to information and, as my colleague pointed out, this has been enshrined in the 1982 Freedom of Information Act of the federal government. It has removed from the government the discretion as to whether or not to provide an individual with information which, as I said, was the common law right. No longer do individuals have to justify why they want the information. They have a right to obtain it now. This act gives every person a legal right to obtain access to information in a documentary form which is in the possession of ministers or of the agencies of the government. A person has a right to access a document of an agency, other than an exempt document or an official document of a minister, other than an exempt document. Exempt documents include Cabinet and Executive Council documents and submissions and decisions relating thereto, documents relating to security, defence, international relations, documents that could damage Commonwealth state relations, documents which prejudice law enforcement, documents which could adversely affect property or financial interests of a government agency and documents that might impact unfairly on the privacy of individuals in respect of their personal affairs or their business dealings, or information passed on to a government in confidence. It excludes documents that are relevant to privileged legal proceedings and so on.

In the debates leading up to the introduction of the bill in the federal parliament, there was full support for the principles of freedom of information. There was a reiteration of the 3 reasons that the Senate standing committee offered for freedom of information and those are contained in this motion today: every individual's right to know what the government knows about him; every individual's right to evaluate what the government has done; and every individual's right to participate in what the government proposes to do. I believe that these principles contain the democratic justifications for freedom of information legislation.

The opposition plans to introduce a private member's bill in relation to freedom of information. The focus will be on the rights of the individual to access information relating to himself. It would not be an open book. The opposition has regard for the need to promote safety valves which protect the rights of a number of parties. The Leader of the Opposition referred to the Ombudsman's report and his concern that the supply of information should be freed up in the hope that fewer complaints would be referred to the Ombudsman. He believed that, if there were a freer exchange of information between individuals and government departments, it would be easier for people to obtain redress.

Honourable members will recall that, earlier this year, the opposition introduced a private member's bill that would have provided a limited form of freedom of information. That bill was not opposed in principle by the government, and I appreciate that. It bothers me that, in that case, the Attorney-General accepted our argument in principle but, today, he is insistent on opposing the principle of this issue. That should send a shiver up the spine of every citizen of the Northern Territory, every member of this Legislative Assembly and any person in this country who has a democratic spirit flaming inside him.

On Wednesday 2 March, the opposition moved that 'the Assembly endorse the principle that every Territorian should have a right to know the reasons for administrative decisions that adversely affect him or her and that the Assembly is of the opinion that a trial non-legislative scheme should be implemented based on reform elsewhere in Australia requiring administrators in appropriate areas to give reasons for administrative decisions when they are

made with a view to the future introduction of a legislative framework for such a scheme'.

On 12 April, I wrote to the minister saying that he would recall that, in the context of his contribution to debate on that motion, he said that the government would be in a position to consider the issue further when the Law Reform Committee's report on this concept had been received. I wrote to him requesting information about the time frame. He responded to me a month later saying that the executive officer of the Law Reform Committee had advised him that the committee had divided its consideration of the reference on appeals from administrative decisions into 2 stages, stage 1 concerning the appeals structure and stage 2 concerning the appeals procedure. He went on to say that the committee 'would issue a discussion paper on both aspects which would be distributed widely for comment'. He said that the executive officer would send me a copy and, on receipt of comments, a final report would be issued. He concluded his letter by saying that the committee hoped to report before December this year.

I do not believe that I have heard too much about that. I have severe reservations about the government's interest in this general area of freedom of information legislation, even in the limited form that we debated in this Assembly in March. It is high time that the opposition stepped up its campaign in this regard and it is certainly our intention to do so.

Mr Speaker, I have no hesitation in endorsing, in the strongest possible terms, this motion from the Leader of the Opposition. We recognise that every individual has the right to know what information the government holds concerning her or him. We believe that every person has the right to evaluate what the government has done. We believe that every citizen has the right to participate in what the government proposes to do. This government must give every person a legal right to gain information held on him or her in a documentary form which is in the possession of ministers or the departments and statutory authorities of this government. Until this government accedes to this request, it cannot call itself a democratic government.

Mr TUXWORTH (Barkly): Mr Speaker, I rise this afternoon to speak to the proposition put forward by the Leader of the Opposition. While I do not agree with every word of it, I certainly do agree with the spirit of the Leader of the Opposition's motion. When freedom of information was first proposed in the last 10 or 12 years, it was regarded as a big bogey because it would be seen as a mechanism that enabled anybody in the community to reach into the bowels of the government's filing system and drag out information that might be embarrassing to members of the government or people in the community generally. I would have to say that I have never supported the concept of freedom of information legislation that would allow that sort of investigation to occur.

When the Commonwealth introduced its legislation - and it has already been mentioned in this House - the Northern Territory government was one of the groups in the community that took advantage of that legislation and obtained information from the Commonwealth. It has also been pointed out that the Commonwealth gave out exactly what suited it and, on many occasions, pages of information from the Commonwealth files would be obtained that were blacked out and there would be 2 sentences at the top and a sentence at the bottom of the page that you were permitted to have access to. In itself, that makes a nonsense of the freedom of information legislation and I do not believe that that is really its purpose.

The point that I wish to speak to this afternoon is not so much freedom of information legislation but personal information access, which is really a different concept altogether. I will outline to government members some incidents that, in my view, are not unreasonable requests by people to have personal information extracted from the files relating to themselves made available to themselves. In 1 or 2 cases, it is good manners, apart from anything else, for the information to be made available.

My first example concerns a gentleman whom I met in the Mall yesterday. He introduced himself. He said: 'You would not recognise me. The last time you saw me, we sat next to one another on the plane. I had a really big cancer and I was going away for treatment'. Obviously, the treatment had been pretty successful because his disfigurement had been almost eliminated. However, he is still a very sick man. He said: 'Can you help me?' When I came back from Brisbane, I was given a letter from the specialist that would enable me to see the specialist here. If the specialist here could not see me, the letter was to be used for IPTAAS so that I could see Dr X in Cairns. Sometimes, I become a bit muddled and, so that I did not lose the letter, I put it on the hospital file. I have been out to the hospital to get the letter off the file so that I can send it to Cairns to obtain an appointment to see the doctor because the local specialist cannot see me. They will not give it to me. Not only that, they will not even let me look at it even though I put it there. Not only that, I cannot have a photocopy of it. I do not know what to do'.

That is the first example. Apart from anything else, it would seem to me to be the essence of good manners for the department to make that sort of information available to the patient. If it cannot do that, the least it could do is contact the receiving specialist and forward the information if he is prepared to receive it. That sort of personal information access is essential. I listened very closely to the comments of the Attorney-General this afternoon in relation to how people have access to hospital files. I have never heard so much galloping tripe in my whole life. Obviously, the Attorney-General does not talk to anybody in the community who has anything to do with the registry section in the hospital because, if he did, he would know that the proposition he put forward was just so much rubbish that he would not have bothered to repeat it.

I would like to raise again the case of Mr Graham Aked. I have raised Mr Aked's name and his case history in the House before and he rang me within days of the sittings saying: 'I still have a problem, will you raise it?' Mr Aked's history was raised during the budget sittings. The Minister for Health and Community Services said: 'I have information available to me that, with the treatment that Mr Aked is receiving from his doctor, the air-conditioning in his house is probably injurious to his health and doing more harm than good'. It was of great concern to Mr Aked that another medical opinion was made available suggesting that his doctor's treatment and the things that he was doing to maintain life were injurious to his health and would restrict his capacity to live further than it already is.

It would seem to me to be perfectly reasonable for Mr Aked to have access to that information so he can contact his doctor and say: 'This is what a doctor in the department has said. Do you want to have a look at this and should we talk about it?' Mr Aked has been to the department and he was told that he cannot have any information because departmental officers do not know about the information to which the minister referred. Not only that, he cannot have access to his file because it is the property of the department and it does not want to give it to him. Not to be fazed by that, Mr Aked went

back to his doctor and his doctor contacted the department asking for the information. He received the same answer that nothing could be made available.

The Attorney-General's comments left members in no doubt that people could obtain access to information on the hospital records and there was a way to do it. Clearly, in this situation, the information that Mr Aked wants is in the hands of the minister, not in those of the department. It is the minister who has the information about whether Mr Aked is being given proper treatment or unsatisfactory treatment that could be injurious to him. How does he get that from the minister? I have asked the minister to release it to Mr Aked and his doctor, and I believe the doctor has been in contact with the minister. However, nothing has been done to satisfy Mr Aked's curiosity. It would seem to me to be nothing less than good manners for that sort of information to be made available when we are talking about people's medical records.

As for applying the system that was outlined by the Attorney-General for access to medical records from small hospitals and small health centres throughout the Northern Territory, it is nothing short of a joke because that system could not be applied. There needs to be a way whereby people in places such as Borroloola or Adelaide River can go to the health centre and obtain a copy of information relating to them on their medical files. What is unreasonable about that? There is nothing unreasonable about it. It is a perfectly natural expectation.

The next case that I will raise was put to me by a businessman, a member of the CLP. In fact, I think he is an executive member in a CLP branch. He believes that personal access to personal information is perfectly reasonable. He outlined a situation which occurred when he tendered for a small government contract. He missed out by a few dollars. He thought that perhaps he had done something wrong and decided to seek some information which might help him to compete better in the future. He went to the office which had let the tender and asked if it would be possible to obtain information about why he had been unsuccessful. The person at the counter said: 'Yes, there was a reason why you missed out but I cannot tell you what it was'. The businessman asked why and was told: 'We cannot give out that sort of information'. He said: 'It is not a multi-million dollar tender and I am not laying a complaint. I just want to be a better businessman and be a better competitor'. The answer was: 'That is just too bad. You will just have to try again in the future when the tenders are called. We cannot tell you why you missed out this time'.

The businessman was not on a witch-hunt. He simply wanted to know what shortcomings the Tender Board had detected in his tender so that he could make himself a better competitor in the future. I would not regard that as an attempt to delve into the bowels of the government's record system to dig out dirt and embarrass the government. To me, it seems to have been a perfectly reasonable request. Whilst it might not be necessary for the Tender Board to tell anybody about why a particular tender was not selected, it is not unreasonable to ask for the information. I suppose the honourable members would know of dozens of case like that.

The third case I want to describe concerns a public servant who went to the personnel section in his department and asked to look at his file. It was made available to him under the rules of the Public Service Act and, as he was handing the file back to the personnel clerk, the clerk said: 'There is another file on you but it is in the secretary's drawer. I cannot get access to it. I do not know what is in it, but it is there'. When that person came

to me, he asked whether it was possible that such a file existed and whether it was possible for him to access it. I sent him off to the Public Service Commissioner's Office to work the matter out for himself. It would seem to me, however, that there is nothing unreasonable in allowing a person to have access to information which relates to him if he so desires.

I would say to the government that there is a reason to knock back the concept of freedom of information legislation if it is to be abused and used as a tool to cause embarrassment and mayhem and perhaps damage other people. Access to personal information, however, will not do that. It is simply a reasonable opportunity which should be available to citizens. I do not agree with every word in the Leader of the Opposition's motion. However, I support the concept of having a mechanism which allows people to have access to personal information. I would be very surprised if the government could offer any rebuttal, in respect of the cases I have cited, on the grounds that the individuals involved had unreasonable expectations.

Mr Coulter: Do you support this or what?

Mr TUXWORTH: In reply to the Leader of Government Business, I certainly believe that there is a need for change. I would be interested to hear what he has to say about the points that I have raised.

Mr LEO (Nhulunbuy): Mr Speaker, I will address my remarks this evening to 3 main topics. The first is the utterances of a previous Chief Minister in this House, the second is the utterances of a present Chief Minister in this House and the third is the utterances of some speakers on the government benches.

It would seem that, at some time in the last 12 months, there has been a remarkable shift in the philosophical attitude to personal liberty within the ranks of the CLP. You and I can recall, Mr Speaker, the debate that was conducted in this House in September last year on the matter of the Australia Card. In that debate, the previous Chief Minister said, and I quote from Hansard:

Mr Speaker, the resolution before us today is, without doubt, one of the most important ever to be introduced in this Chamber. It goes to the very heart of our society and the sort of political system we want for our future and for the future of our children. It deals with the essence of democracy, the question of who ultimately controls our destiny, the people or the bureaucracy. It is concerned with the issue of whether the state or the individual should have pre-eminence in citizens' lives and it focuses on the central question confronting modern man: the proper role of technology with its potential to dominate mankind and to extinguish human dignity. Superficially these matters may seem rather remote from the technical arguments about the effectiveness and security of the Australia Card but, to my mind, they are the real and the most crucial questions.

In that debate, the previous Chief Minister indicated clearly that he was a sincere libertarian. In my contribution to the debate on the Australia Card, I indicated clearly that I had very few qualms about its impact on personal liberty and that I was more interested in the revenue that it would generate. However, the previous Chief Minister indicated to this House that he was a libertarian and that he upheld the dignity of the individual in the face of a remote bureaucracy.

We now have another Chief Minister. In another debate, on another day, the present Chief Minister said in this House: 'Government policy is made by the bureaucracy'. He did not say that it was made by elected persons or dictated to the bureaucracy by the voters of this country. He said that it was laid down by the bureaucracy. You and I can recall that rather recent debate, Mr Speaker, and I will not talk about the particular events to which it related. You will be able to recall very clearly - and I am sure the Chief Minister can recall very clearly - the context of that debate.

The Chief Minister has said in this House that government policy is made by the bureaucracy. He says that that is the only way we can be ruled. Because it knows best, the bureaucracy will tell us what our policy should be. It is there to tell us what we should think and how we should behave. The government seems to have undergone a remarkable shift in attitude between the time of that great libertarian, the previous Chief Minister, and that of the present Chief Minister, who insists as an authoritarian that the bureaucracy knows best. That is the result of the coup d'etat which occurred earlier this year.

As an individual, I am extremely confused about the direction of this government. As an individual, I would prefer to align my views with those of the previous Chief Minister and to assert my dignity and rights as an individual in terms of knowing about how the bureaucracy assesses me via its information-gathering techniques. Those views contrast sharply with the current Chief Minister's assertion that the bureaucracy will dictate to me my rights within this society because it is the policy architect of government. The Chief Minister said that, and I have no doubt that that is how he thinks. The bureaucracy makes the policy. It then becomes CLP policy and it then becomes this government's policy to be inflicted on the populace. That is what was asserted very recently. Whilst I accept that that is the way the Chief Minister thinks, I do not think that way.

No man is my master. The Chief Minister may accept the dominance of the bureaucracy and that may mean that he will stay in government until doomsday. However, I will never be dictated to by any bureaucracy. I will never have shoved down my throat any bureaucratic assertion that freedom of information is not worth while, that it is too expensive, that it is too cumbersome or that it is unenforceable. I will never have that shoved down my throat. If the Chief Minister wants to assert that to this House and to the people of the Northern Territory, good on him, and good on the Northern Territory because I am not going to cop that! I would defy the previous Chief Minister to get up and say that he will accept that, because I doubt that he can or he will.

I will now turn to the only other arguments offered by members opposite. They were all bureaucratic arguments: it is too cumbersome, it is too difficult, it will make for more paperwork. To hell with the dignity of the individual! To hell with the rights of the individual! The bureaucracy says that it cannot tell a person what is in his police file because it is too difficult. It takes too much paperwork. It cannot tell a person what is on his medical file because it is too difficult. It takes too much paperwork. It cannot tell a person what the Housing Commission or wherever else has on file in relation to him. It cannot tell people those things because it is too difficult. Once again, the present Chief Minister has had his policy dictated to him, as he recently asserted, by the bureaucracy. The bureaucracy has dictated this government's attitude towards this motion.

If members opposite have any difficulty with sections of this motion, they should amend it. But, if they oppose the principle of an individual asserting

his rights within society, they should say so. They should not use flimsy argument, based on utter hypocrisy, to dismiss the intention of this motion. I can accept that members opposite may have difficulty with the second and the third sections of the preamble. However, the first section recognises that every individual has the right to know what information the government holds concerning her or him. The conclusion of the motion urges 'the government, as the first step in attaining these rights, to give every person a legal right to gain information held on them in documentary form which is in the possession of ministers or of the departments and statutory authorities of the government'. Such a step cannot be denied by any government which seeks to represent the interests of the individual. Nobody can deny that. The only way that can be denied is by saying that governments represent bureaucracies and not the people.

Mr SETTER (Jingili): Mr Speaker, he is a worry. He really is. Indeed, we will need to have a first aid room in the new Parliament House. One thing I learned about the member for Nhulunbuy when he was speaking to the freedom of information motion put forward by the Leader of the Opposition is that he really does not know the meaning of the word 'bureaucracy'. He must have used it 150 times in his speech. All the bureaucrats whom he has been castigating over the last 15 minutes and who are listening to the loud speakers must also be wondering about the reference made to the bureaucracy by the honourable member. Quite obviously he has never worked in the public service.

Mr Speaker, let me refer you to a report on Territory Extra on 17 November when the Leader of the Opposition indicated that he would introduce a freedom of information bill. When I saw the Notice Paper this morning, I was surprised to find that he would be moving a motion in relation to freedom of information. Where is his bill? Has he changed his mind? Will it be introduced at some future time? I would like to see it. In his reply, perhaps he could clarify that point because he seems to be going about it in a strange way.

Let us have a look at his proposals. The member for Nhulunbuy acknowledged freely that he could understand how we would have a problem with the first 2 clauses. The first is: 'recognising that every individual has the right to know what information the government holds concerning her or him'. That is an unusual statement. It suggests that big brother, the government, is keeping files on all of its citizens. I have been a citizen of this country for a long time and I have lived in the Northern Territory for the last 15 years. I do not really have any concern about what information the government holds about me. It has never caused me any trouble.

Mr Collins: That you know of!

Mr SETTER: It hasn't. I have been able to find out everything that I have needed to know with regard to my normal day-to-day business, running my home, looking after my family and whatever is involved in that.

The second clause is: 'recognising that every person has the right to evaluate what the government has done'. What does that mean? I don't quite know. Perhaps he can enlighten us. Is he referring to government departments, to the actions of public servants, to the medical profession, to the Power and Water Authority or whatever? Let him tell us exactly what he is talking about there because I do not quite follow what he is getting at. Is he suggesting, for example, that every citizen should be able to go to the Power and Water Authority and ask to examine the file covering his water account or his sewerage account, or ask the hospital for his medical records,

as was suggested by the member for Barkly? Human nature is such that, if that were the case, no public servant would put any substantial comment on any file at all. Nobody would be prepared to put down a true assessment of what the situation was because he would be fearful that, if somebody gained access to that file, he would end up in court. That could easily happen. It is unreasonable for citizens to expect or the Leader of the Opposition to expect totally free access to files relating to any matters concerning citizens.

The last clause is: 'recognising that every citizen has the right to participate in what the government proposes to do'. I am astounded. What does that mean? What is the Leader of the Opposition implying? How can every citizen have the right to participate in what the government proposes to do? At what stage would he participate: at the decision-making stage, at the implementation stage, at the follow-up stage? I do not understand that at all. It is totally unworkable.

The reality is that the Leader of the Opposition is totally devoid of original ideas. His ideas come from the media. This particular one came from the Four Corners report of a week or 2 ago. He saw it on the television and thought that it would be a good thing to raise at the next Legislative Assembly sittings. He decided to do a bit of work on it because the opposition did not have anything else to propose. It is an emotive matter which he thought would gain some media coverage and make him look good. What nonsense! Four Corners is doing his homework for him.

At an earlier time, the Leader of the Opposition was talking about population decrease and expressing concern as to why the population of the Northern Territory has been decreasing over the last 3 quarters. Do you know where he got that idea from, Mr Speaker? He got it from a weekend newspaper. Either the Saturday NT News or the Sunday Territorian ran that very story and, lo and behold, the Leader of the Opposition came up with the same idea. I will be very interested to watch the media prior to the next Legislative Assembly sittings to see if I can predict what proposals the Leader of the Opposition will introduce.

The Leader of the Opposition called the Northern Territory government one of the most secretive governments in the whole of Australia. What is secretive about this government? We come into this place and discuss a whole range of issues. Every question that members opposite ask is answered by this side of the House. Ministers make statement after statement about their activities. Indeed, members of the opposition have been complaining, in the last day or so, about the number of statements that have been made by ministers. They claim that they are taking up the time of the House unnecessarily. Rubbish! It is an honest attempt on the part of the government and the ministers to inform the House and the public about their activities. He claims that this is a secretive government. The ministers of this government move around this community and speak to the media, day after day. The public of the Northern Territory would be the most well-informed public in this country. The Leader of the Opposition's comment is absolute nonsense.

Let us have a look at freedom of information. Apart from the Commonwealth, the only states which have such legislation in place are New South Wales and Victoria. We heard earlier that Premier Cain has been very embarrassed in recent times by the fact that his Freedom of Information Act has created some difficulties for him with regard to a poll that he conducted. I understand that he has refused to release the details of that poll despite a request by the opposition. One would assume that, under his Freedom of

Information Act, he is required to do so. He should do so, under his act, because the taxpayer funded it. If the public has a right to know about anything, it is when it pays the bill.

The reality is that, where governments do have Freedom of Information Acts in place, they release the information very selectively. It is not open slather. No citizen can apply to have access to everything because those governments have ways and means of avoiding that. They will say it is a confidential Cabinet document or conjure up some other reason to deny access to anything that they think is sufficiently sensitive that it should not be released to the applicant. In spite of what the members opposite say, there is no government in Australia that releases all information to any person making an application.

Mr Smith: No one has ever said that.

Mr SETTER: The Leader of the Opposition said on radio the other day that 'the people have the right to know'. Perhaps he can clarify that. The people have the right to know what? Let us go a bit more deeply into that. Perhaps, in his reply, he can tell us what he means by that.

Mr Smith: Weren't you here when I gave my speech.

Mr SETTER: Mr Speaker, what we are really seeing here is the socialist policy of consensus. That is what they are trying to apply. They are suggesting that the government should consult the people about everything. The reality is that that just does not work. It is my belief that governments are elected to govern and, when they are elected, they set about governing. That is their job. They do not run back to the citizens before they take any decision and ask them what they think. Governments are elected to govern. If the voters do not like a government's policies or the legislation that it has introduced, they have the right at the next election to vote it out. That is the democratic system under which we operate in the Northern Territory and, if they were ever elected, which God forbid, I am quite sure that the system would change. It would become a social democratic system, not the one under which we operate at the moment.

The aspect that worries me about this proposal is not only the fact that, under the proposal, legislation would be implemented and, depending on the details of the legislation, people would obtain access to all this information, but that it would mean the establishment of another huge bureaucracy because it would not be possible to supply such information to the citizens of the Northern Territory without establishing a huge bureaucracy and employing dozens, if not more, public servants to run around all day sourcing this information and photocopying it at enormous expense. An honourable member mentioned that the Commonwealth charges something like \$250 for an application for information under the Commonwealth act and that there is a further charge for photocopying etc on top of that. A great bureaucracy would be set up and a great team of people would be sourcing information.

If we follow the same system that the Commonwealth has, of charging \$250 to access information, it is quite obvious, if you think about it, that the \$250 is designed not only to cover costs but to discourage people from making applications. You would really think twice before you signed your cheque for \$250. If you really wanted to find out what the doctor at the hospital said about you, you would really need to know that if you were prepared to pay \$250 plus extras. That charge is designed to ensure that people do not make frivolous applications.

It is impossible to provide access to all information that citizens would be likely to require under such legislation. It is totally impractical. Of course, we must not overlook the fact that we already have the Ombudsman whose role it is to receive applications from disgruntled citizens who are having difficulty with government departments. It is the Ombudsman's role and responsibility ...

Mr Collins: There is only one of him!

Mr SETTER: ...to take up their cause - and I will come back to that point in a moment. It is the Ombudsman's responsibility to take up their cause, conduct the investigation, go to the file, assess the situation and report back to the person who made the application. The Ombudsman has been carrying out that role very effectively in the Territory for many years now. I do not see citizens queueing up requesting that we introduce freedom of information legislation. It is something that has been conjured up by members of the opposition after watching the Four Corners Report a week or so ago.

The member for Sadadeen interjected that there is only 1 Ombudsman, and that is indeed true. However, he has a team of people who work for him.

Mr Collins: How many?

Mr SETTER: I do not know how many but he has a team of people under him whose role it is to carry out the functions of the office and report back to the Ombudsman. The member for Sadadeen is incorrect when he mentions that.

Mr Speaker, in conclusion, I indicate that I see no necessity whatsoever for the introduction of freedom of information legislation in the Northern Territory. Citizens' rights are well protected under existing legislation and the Ombudsman can quite effectively carry out any investigatory role that might be necessary to satisfy the concerns of any person who might have any difficulty or be dissatisfied with the actions of any government department. I indicate quite clearly that I do not support the motion.

Mr COLLINS (Sadadeen): Thank you, Mr Speaker.

Mr Reed: How do you know who stood up first?

Mr COLLINS: Do not dare to dispute the ruling of the Chair. I am very supportive of the Chair and its important role in the parliament.

Mr Speaker, there is a saying, which I think is one of the wisest I have heard relating to parliament: 'Don't give yourself a power in government that you would hate your opposition to have if it took over'. I think this freedom of information proposition, in practice, really works somewhat in reverse and that is most probably why we have very little freedom of information legislation because, when you are in opposition, you want freedom of information. You do not have the numbers to get the legislation through whereas, when you are in government and you find that it is being used against you, you do not want it. Of course, over the years, people have generally said that there are dangers with it. I refer to people such as the Premier of Victoria, Hon John Cain, who put himself out on a limb, perhaps a little unwisely he might feel now, in saying that he would introduce a freedom of information act. He had one enacted and he found that it was a nuisance.

I support the first proposition put by the opposition. We have had some conflicting examples given today. The Attorney-General suggested that, if a

person wants to go to the hospital for information, he can have a medical adviser accompany him and he will be given access to his file and have its contents explained. I suppose that would apply also to information on one's children. Naturally, doctors will have their own hieroglyphs and shorthand forms.

On the other hand, the member for Barkly quoted cases in which he claimed that personal information was not made available. I have a pretty good imagination but I cannot imagine that such information would involve anything that could embarrass the government. Thus, according to the minister, the information will be explained by a medical person who understands the files yet, nevertheless, we also have the example of a person who cannot gain access to a letter that he himself had placed on his file because he was afraid of its being lost. If that is true, it is a ridiculous situation. I have no reason to doubt the member for Barkly and therefore I would like to think that the government will do something in relation to that sort of thing.

I believe that what the Attorney-General outlined is eminently supportable. If it is not happening in practice, I would ask the government to examine the matter and give people the right, under those limited restrictions, to access their medical files. After all, they are their own personal files relating to themselves and the treatment they have been given. I cannot believe that any member could honestly say they should not have it. In essence, the Attorney-General said that the policy is that they should be able to have it. If that access is not permitted, that policy needs to be tightened up and made quite clear to individuals involved.

I have not had a great deal to do with files. However, I was teaching in the days when South Australia administered the education system in the Territory. There were 2 report systems - VG1 and VG2. The VG2 was the report book, and that is something which I dearly wish our schools still had. It contained reports on a student's work for all subjects each semester and could extend over 5 years of education. I do not know whether I would be pleased to show honourable members copies of my report books, but the system was certainly a darn sight more effective than the sheets of computer paper that are the norm these days. These are easily lost and you have no record. For better or worse, I have my report books at home. My mother kept them for many years until she handed them over. I may show them to my kids one day when they have completed their own schooling. That VG2 was available to parents and students and it was a very useful record.

There was another card, the VG1, which was kept in the school's files. That contained more confidential information. It might have had a medical history or information that the student came from a broken home and so forth. A good principal would tell his staff to study the information on their students' VG1 cards because the card might explain why a student behaves in a particular manner. Then, with the exercise of a little more sympathy, the teacher may understand a student's situation rather better.

Each year, teachers were asked to add to the VG1 cards any short comments that they felt were relevant. On occasion, some teachers would vent their spleen a little on some of the students and add comments that, personally, I would not have liked the parents to have seen. In general, however, they were a very useful means of transmitting information from one teacher to the next, particularly if there were behavioural problems in relation to a student. The information enabled a teacher to be more understanding and sympathetic and, in general, was to the advantage of the students. However, I would not have liked all the information noted to have been seen by the parents. If there

had been freedom of information as proposed in this motion, I am sure that some might have been a little more circumspect in the words that they chose but, in general, the cards were certainly very helpful to teachers.

The point that I wish to emphasise is that I do not think the government would be open to any embarrassment if people had access to their own personal information such as medical records. I wonder what records are kept on public servants as they move through the system. I am sure that people in this Assembly would know that much better than I. Public servants are like any other group of people. They can form their cliques, have a high regard for some people and dislike others. There may be comments on a person's public service record card of which he is totally unaware and which could be harmful to him in respect of his chances for promotion. In all fairness, a public servant should be able to view all information on file that relates to himself. I know that such information was made available in the teaching profession. If there are no secret files floating around the traps - and I heard a few giggles about that from members opposite - if it is all fair and square, I believe we are quite a way down the track, particularly if the government examines these cases where people claim that they have been unable to gain access to their hospital files.

The second point relates to recognising that every person has a right to evaluate what the government has done. That would be an absolutely massive task if everybody took up such a right. It really boils down to why we have representative democracy. People elect representatives to this Assembly and this is the place where the government is supposed to be accountable. If it provides information by means of its legislation and statements and in answer to questions, in general people are fairly well satisfied. On the other hand, when the government appears to be secretive, when information has to be dragged from it or it simply refuses to supply information, that gives the opposition a weapon with which it can create suspicion about the government in the wider community. If that continues, the government may well fall. At the last Assembly sittings, it appeared to the people in the electorate that the government was most reluctant to supply information about the TDZ. The government lost brownie points and the opposition gained some.

The third point relates to 'recognising that every citizen has a right to participate in what the government proposes to do'. If everybody sat in this place, we would certainly have bedlam. I am sure that the ideas which come to government do not all come through the public service. Listening to the Chief Minister on the radio this morning, one got the impression that he received his political advice from the public service. He was right in saying that the public service should give advice in respect of decisions and their consequences.

The Chief Minister would have done himself a great deal of good if he had said that, having received the advice, it was discussed by Cabinet which takes the final decision and the government stands or falls by it. The government receives high-quality, professional advice but it has been elected to make the final decision on what will be done and take the responsibility for that decision. If the advice is crook, the minister goes and Sir Humphrey stays on. The Territory seems to have a somewhat more refined system where, occasionally, there is a shuffle and some of the public servants take a well-deserved holiday, not to put too fine a point on it.

Individual members of this Assembly are approached by people in the community who have certain ideas. Members themselves, being alert to the role that they play, pick up ideas and propose them. Generally, the government

does not accept such ideas from the opposition or the crossbenchers because they are from the wrong source. If 6 months later, the government uses the same basic principles in a somewhat different form, you have a warm inner glow because it was worth your while to propose the idea. If people are really keen enough, they are able to influence government. One person among 80 000 voters cannot expect to change the world but he can have an influence. I believe that happens and that the parliamentary system is one of the best means of that occurring.

The citizen has his greatest input at election time. There is only one problem with election time: people tend to vote for candidates or a party on the basis of the promises which they make. What a pity there is no mechanism by which you can force a party that is elected to government to keep the promises which it made. Let me recall a few from the 1983 elections. We have heard many times that only a Labor government could be trusted to build a railway and, a few months later, after Mr Hill had reported, it was said that it was a foolish idea anyway. We were to have a 3¢ per litre reduction in the price of fuel. Within 6 weeks, we had a 3¢ rise and it has been indexed ever since. People have been hit very hard and it certainly affected the economy in many ways. It ought to have a reverse effect in that people will not be fooled forever by promises which are not kept.

I strongly endorse the principle that individuals should have a right to see their own personal files and those of their children. I believe that the other aspects mentioned here are handled pretty well by the existing parliamentary system. In practical terms, the proposition of everybody becoming involved would be very difficult but, in this Territory of ours, if people so desire, they really can have a pretty strong influence.

Mr PERRON (Chief Minister): Mr Deputy Speaker, prior to these sittings, the Leader of the Opposition acted fairly angrily on radio and television in relation to freedom of information and said that it is time that we caught up with the rest of Australia. I thought that was fairly interesting. The Commonwealth and Victoria have freedom of information legislation and New South Wales has introduced a bill. That is the extent of it. There are a few other governments around Australia, including Labor governments, which have not been in a hurry to become involved in this exercise. Thus, I dismiss his first argument totally.

The second argument, which he used many times, may have some merit as a political tactic from his point of view. It was that this is one of the most secretive governments in Australia. He did not offer any evidence to support the argument but he said it many times.

Mr Smith: What about the Strehlow bill last night?

Mr PERRON: I suppose that, if you repeat a statement in the media often enough, people may begin to accept it at face value. In that regard, I give the Leader of the Opposition credit in purely political terms.

Then he said that government should be accountable for its actions. Of course, governments are accountable for their actions or their lack of action. This government is no different from any other in that respect and I do not think freedom of information would make much difference to that. In the Territory, a great deal of information is provided. In many respects, probably more information is provided than in some of the states. That may be because we are fairly small and we have the opportunity to detail a lot of information which may not be possible in the larger states.

Of course, an enormous amount of information is provided to this Assembly which is never used and perhaps we have a situation of information indigestion in the opposition ranks. I appreciate that the opposition is not large in numbers and it is probably fairly difficult for its members to keep up with the enormous number of reports and other information which flow across their desks. I have some sympathy for them - to the limited extent that I can be sympathetic towards the opposition. Even in the light of that, however, I cannot accept their view that this government is not accountable for its actions. Of course it is.

As the member for Jingili pointed out, there is a simple reason for freedom of information being a topical issue at present. Several weeks ago, an edition of Four Corners covered the topic of freedom of information legislation in Australia. Having seen that, the Leader of the Opposition decided that it was a pretty good topic to bandy around the place. He has made a fair fuss about it. Honourable members who may have seen the program will agree that it showed freedom of information to be something of a farce. I said to myself afterwards, in summing it up, that governments will only release the information which they think it is appropriate to release, whether there is freedom of information legislation or not. I think that is a pretty good summary of the reality of the situation.

The Leader of the Opposition will recall a very embarrassed Premier Cain of Victoria on that Four Corners program trying to find some words to answer the reporter's questions about why the Victorian government was refusing to release the details of a public opinion poll which had been requested under Victoria's freedom of information legislation. He really did not have any excuses at all. He floundered around and eventually said that it really was a document associated with Cabinet papers and therefore it was not appropriate to release it to the public.

By way of explanation, I should say that the Victorian opposition was pushing hard for the release of that information. When interviewed by the ABC in Darwin, the Leader of the Opposition was told by the interviewer: 'But, in Victoria, Mr Cain is being highly criticised for the way he is tightening up the FOI legislation there'. Mr Smith responded: 'Well, of course, in Victoria there have been some problems with the mischievous use of freedom of information by both the opposition there and certain individuals'.

Mr Smith: That is right. That is one of the problems.

Mr PERRON: I see. One of the problems with freedom of information legislation is that oppositions tend to use it to seek information in response to questions such as: 'Why can't the public have the results of a public opinion poll which was funded by the taxpayer?' The Leader of the Opposition was very quick to leap in to try to defend his Labor colleague from Victoria.

Mr Speaker, one thing which has not emerged to any great extent is the cost of FOI legislation. It did not emerge to a significant extent in the Four Corners report. I will quote a couple of interesting figures from a Commonwealth parliamentary paper on the subject. Honourable members may be interested to learn that, during the 4 years in which the Commonwealth's freedom of information legislation has been in operation, the cost has been \$60m - \$15m in the first year, \$16.5m in the second, \$15.7m in the third and \$13.3m in the fourth. I suppose the only comforting trend is that the figure seems to be coming down. What are we getting for this \$60m of the taxpayer's money? \$60m is a great deal of money in anyone's terms, even the federal government's terms. It represents the cost of setting up the system,

administering it and responding to 118 575 requests. That comes down to a cost of about \$450 to \$500 per request. During 1986-87, the public service spent 272 man-years in operating the legislation. That figure gives a very powerful indication of the extent of resources which are required by FOI. The figure converts the work of 169 permanent public servants and 2489 part-time public servants into the work of a single officer. That officer would have to work for 272 years to carry out all the tasks arising from the Commonwealth Freedom of Information Act.

Despite the fact that all taxpayers are footing the bill for FOI in Australia, 118 000 requests is not particularly high. It is likely that those requests were made by considerably fewer than 118 000 people because, as the Four Corners program illustrated, some people are almost professional requesters of information under FOI. One of the gentlemen on the program was a journalist from Canberra who is obviously on a permanent fishing expedition to try and get into the bowels of government departments to see if he can find some material. He was digging for that sort of information. It strikes me that about 15 900 000 Australians are not using this particular opportunity that is open to them. However, all taxpayers are footing the bill on behalf of the few who are doing so. I am not really excited about paying part of my taxes for that purpose.

When discussing this matter, it is important that honourable members address the subject of costs. On many occasions in the past, the opposition has spoken at length in this Assembly about the cost-benefits of anything that the government does. Perhaps members opposite could give us the benefit of some of their desk-top scribblings on the costs and benefits which the introduction of freedom of information legislation would bring to the Northern Territory.

Another thing which comes to mind is the fact that, in the Northern Territory, we have created history through the use of the court system to obtain access to information. Whilst I will not say a great deal about it because the case is still before the courts, as honourable members will be aware, the Kenbi Land Claim, has demonstrated that legal processes can be used to obtain access to documents which are as restricted as Executive Council papers. I am sure that honourable members are aware of that and that my reference to it is not in any way a breach of protocol in relation to court cases which are still in train. That shows that, in certain circumstances, courts can obtain access to information in the highest forum - forums which were formerly considered beyond approach as far as access to information was concerned.

Of course, the citizens of the Northern Territory have other opportunities to gain access to information. The Ombudsman's office is kept fairly busy. The Ombudsman has very wide powers to access government files in respect of subjects that he cares to inquire into on behalf of complainants and I am sure that he does a fairly good job. I see that as a legitimate avenue for people who want to seek information from the government if they feel in any way aggrieved.

The subject of medical files has been addressed by the Attorney-General. There is a system which allows people to have access to their medical files under controlled circumstances. There are good reasons for that, which I will not bother to enumerate since other honourable members have already done so.

The Leader of the Opposition's views contrasted with those of the member for Nhulunbuy. He accepted that there were some areas of government in which

it was not appropriate for individuals to have access to files. He mentioned police files as one instance.

Mr Smith: No, I did not quite say that.

Mr PERRON: If he did not say that, it would be nice to hear him state in his closing remarks whether he believes that citizens should have access to their police files, criminal investigation files and drug squad files and whether he thinks the law enforcement system will operate properly if individuals are allowed access to such files. Perhaps he might also consider whether an organisation like the National Crimes Authority should allow citizens to have access to its files and tape-recordings made through legal phone taps, as it monitors individuals in an effort to combat organised crime. I would hope that members opposite are not being quite as absurd as that, although the rantings of the member for Nhulunbuy indicated that he placed no limitations whatsoever on the information to which he believed every citizen had a right.

Citizens in the Northern Territory have a very effective means of obtaining redress for many of their problems - through their local MLAs. If they cannot obtain satisfaction through their local MLAs, I suggest they try another because there are varying degrees of expertise and ability in these matters. If they cannot get information through their MLAs, it may be that an approach to a minister could be fruitful if the request is a reasonable one.

I believe that the Leader of the Opposition would really be delighted to have legislation on freedom of information in the Territory if for no other reason than to allow himself and members of his party to go on a permanent fishing expedition. I am sure that he would be absolutely delighted to do that. The government opposes the motion. Of course, as has been pointed out by honourable members, the wording of the motion is really quite absurd in at least 2 instances. For that reason alone, the government would oppose it.

Mr McCARTHY (Labour, Administrative Services and Local Government): Mr Deputy Speaker, I rise for a few short minutes only to address a couple of issues that have arisen during the fairly wide-ranging debate this evening. The Leader of the Opposition alluded gently to the issue of people's access to their public service files. As he and all honourable members know, all public servants have access to their personal file. Only the person involved has access to that personal file. If a public servant approaches the personnel section of his department, there is no difficulty in relation to him perusing the contents of his personal file.

The member for Barkly raised a few individual cases of people who had difficulty in getting information from certain files. I am aware of some of those cases and of the reasons for the difficulties. However, I almost fell off my chair when the member for Barkly mentioned the so-called phantom files which I understand may be kept by some people. I am sure that long-term public servants of the Territory would have been quite amazed to hear his remarks because they know that the member for Barkly invented the phantom file. I am sure that he had his tongue in his cheek when he mentioned phantom files this evening.

If phantom files exist, they could be a direct outcome of the fairly free access that people have to their files and the fact that there are times when information might come to hand that is kept and which would be rather embarrassing if it were put on the file. I suspect that people would not wish to have it around anyway. I am not aware of people keeping phantom files but,

if they do exist, they exist at the whim of individuals who have a reason to keep them, whether it be a sound one or otherwise. There is not much that anyone can do about files that are not a part of the overall system, but the files that are in the system are available to public servants and they have free access to them. If we had a freedom of information act in the Northern Territory, I would imagine there would be a much greater proliferation of phantom of files.

The Leader of the Opposition spoke about the Work Health Authority and the need to have access to Work Health Authority files. In fact, to date, there has never been a request for access to a Work Health Authority file. There is nothing particularly unusual in a Work Health Authority file. Usually, there is an accident report and there may be a few other oddments of information. If there were a request for a Work Health Authority file, that would be made available apart from information that may be in some way commercially sensitive or commercially confidential. There is no problem with access to Work Health Authority files for the injured party or on the authority of the injured party.

The Leader of the Opposition made much of the idea that FOI exists in the Commonwealth and in some states. In the Commonwealth, FOI certainly has not assisted constituents of mine and I speak of John and Jenny Whatley at Tortilla Flats who have been trying to obtain information from the Department of Defence in Canberra on the status of their property and the bombs that exist on their property. They have been unable to obtain that information from the Commonwealth. In fact, the Minister for Defence has hidden behind the freedom of information legislation rather than using it in order to pass information to people. I really believe that it can work just as easily against the individual as it can work for him.

There is no doubt at all that freedom of information is a great idea for oppositions. In their great zeal on coming into office, new governments sometimes bring in freedom of information legislation and, for the rest of the time that they are in government, they work at trying to get around it. Indeed, they are very successful at doing that. As was mentioned earlier tonight, whole letters are blotted out. On occasion, all that is left is 'Dear Sir' and 'Yours sincerely'. What use is that to anybody? Obviously, information is available to people in the Northern Territory and I believe that most of the means of obtaining information have been addressed tonight. I have had regular requests by constituents for information held by government departments. Normally, it is easy to obtain such information from Territory departments but I have found it rather difficult to obtain it from the Commonwealth even though there is a Commonwealth Freedom of Information Act. For that reason alone, if not for all of the other reasons that have been expressed tonight, I oppose the proposal.

Mr SMITH (Opposition Leader): Mr Speaker, rarely have I seen so many people on the government side scramble for so long to avoid addressing the real issue that is contained in this motion. Of course, the real issue is the right that ordinary citizens should have to access their government files. That is the nub of this particular motion: the right of ordinary citizens to access their personal files. We have had a free-ranging discussion across almost everything else from the government side except that issue. I still do not know why members opposite do not trust the citizens who voted them in, and have done so for the last 14 years, to have access to their personal files. It does not make sense to me that they could have so little trust and so little confidence in the people of the Territory.

Mr Perron: 99% of them do not need it yet 100% of them will have to pay.

Mr SMITH: I take the point that 99% of the people do not need it, but the problem is that we do not know who the 1% are who will need it. We do not know who will have an accident, today or next week, and will require files from the hospital to fight a worker's compensation case and, as we have seen so many times, will have to employ a lawyer and go through the legal process to obtain access to those files.

Mr Perron: You do not need to employ a lawyer at all.

Mr SMITH: You do need to employ a lawyer, Mr Speaker. We gave 1 example tonight. My honourable colleague, the member for Barkly, gave an example tonight of a fellow whom he spoke with in the Mall yesterday. This man had asked for something to be put on his hospital file for safekeeping. When he sought to retrieve it, it was withheld from him.

Mr Speaker, when we were undertaking research 2 weeks ago in relation to this freedom of information motion, I asked one of my staff to go to the medical records section at the hospital and ask to see her file. She was not told that she could see it if she were accompanied by a professional. She was given a simple, 2-letter answer: 'No'.

Mr Manzie: That has nothing to do with freedom of information, has it?

Mr SMITH: If that is the policy of the Northern Territory government, as enunciated by the Attorney-General, perhaps he had better tell the hospital administrators that that is the case. But even that is not satisfactory. What we have is a basic choice: either the government says to the people of the Northern Territory that they have a right to as much as possible of the information in relation to them that it holds in its filing systems or it tells them that they do not have that right and that it will fight them every step of the way and make it as difficult as possible for people to gain access to their personal files. That is what this motion is about and that is why members on this side of the House have pursued and will continue to pursue it.

I can understand the reservations that the government has about freedom of information legislation. We would not expect to obtain the government's support on freedom of information legislation because we know that this is not an open government that is prepared to have its operations scrutinised. However, on the evidence of the Australia Card debate, I had thought that at least it would be prepared to recognise that there is a limit to the amount of information that governments should hold on people and that there should be a legal right for individuals to have access to as much information as possible that governments hold on them.

I admit that there are some good things happening. It is positive that public servants are entitled to inspect their own personnel files. However, the problem is that it is not a legal right; it is a practice which has grown up within the Northern Territory. It is not underpinned by any legal prescriptions. It may well be contained in the standing orders but certainly it has no legislative underpinning, and that is the point of this motion.

We heard from the Minister for Labour, Administrative Services and Local Government, who at least provided us with information on what is happening in his own department. The other honourable ministers who spoke in this debate were unable to provide us even with that information, and possibly the reason for that is that they are too ashamed about the practices that have developed in their own departments.

Because the issue is very simple, I will not take up a full 20 minutes in response. Government members clearly avoided debating the key principle in the motion: the right of all people in the Northern Territory - the people who vote for us, the people who pay taxes, the people without whom we would not have jobs - to gain access to information held on them by government. I would have thought that nothing could be simpler but, for some reason that I do not understand, the members opposite have a mental block about it. The issue will not go away. In my estimation, it is a matter that will assume increasing importance throughout Australia in the next few years because we do have a fundamental rearrangement in process in Australia on the rights of individuals versus the rights of governments. It has been going on over the last 10 to 15 years. People are no longer prepared to accept that governments have a right to do anything that they want to and to hide it in government files. People expect governments to be accountable, not once every 3 years at the time of an election, but for the decisions that they take. That accountability is demonstrated by making their files open to inspection.

That is what we expect of small and major companies in Australia. There is a rigorous requirement for them to be open. Currently, we have an example in Western Australia where the National Companies and Securities Commission is examining Rothwells, and so it should. The same sort of access should be available to people who want to scrutinise the actions of government. However, we are not arguing that tonight. We are not arguing that people should be able to scrutinise the activities of the Northern Territory government. We are arguing that individuals should have access to information that the government has on file in relation to them. They should be able to check the accuracy of the information. If they are involved in litigation, they should be able to check on the use of those files in relation to their case. That is what we are arguing here tonight and, for some reason, the government is refusing to support this motion. Mr Speaker, we have done it before and we will do it again. We will persist with this type of motion and, in the end, we will be successful. I have no doubt about that. It is a pity that, once again, we will have to drag the members opposite, kicking and screaming into the twentieth century.

Motion negatived.

HERITAGE PRESERVATION (INTERIM ARRANGEMENTS) BILL
(Serial 133)

Continued from 24 August 1988.

Mr MANZIE (Conservation): Mr Speaker, yet again the opposition has introduced a heritage bill into this Assembly which shows all the signs of hasty drafting and, more importantly, a lack of understanding of the real heritage protection and conservation issues of importance to the Territory. Use of the word 'heritage' within the context of environmental conservation and in relation to the concept of preservation of the national estate came to prominence in Australia under the government of Gough Whitlam in the early 1970s. Those words have mystified and confused many Australians for the past 15 years or so, including, one suspects, the member for MacDonnell who has so graciously given us the pleasure of his company.

The bill proposes the establishment of a committee of inquiry to report on the appropriate form of legislation to protect the Territory's heritage and estate. Nowhere in the bill is there an exact definition of what exactly is meant by 'the Territory's heritage' or 'the Territory's estate'. It could be assumed from reading the bill that no such legislation already exists in the Territory.

To return to one of the sources of Labor Party wisdom in this area, I refer to Gough Whitlam who, as Prime Minister, established the Australian Heritage Commission with the primary purpose of protecting the national estate. The Hope Report, which was commissioned by the Whitlam government, identified the components of the national estate as 'the natural environment, the man-made or cultural environment, archeological or scientific areas, and cultural property'. The Australian Heritage Commission Act was passed. Subsection 4(1) of the act stated: 'For the purpose of this act, the national estate consists of those places, being components of the natural environment in Australia, that have aesthetic, historic, scientific or social significance, or other special values for future generations as well as for the present community'.

If one assumes that the Territory heritage and estate is similar to the national estate as defined by this Commonwealth legislation, it becomes clear that the Northern Territory has already a substantial body of legislation which deals with such heritage issues. Examples which come to mind are the Crown Lands Act, the Aboriginal Land Act, the Planning Act, the Aboriginal Sacred Sites Act, the Native and Historical Objects and Areas Preservation Act, the Conservation Commission Act, the Cobourg Peninsula Aboriginal Land and Sanctuary Act, the Territory Parks and Wildlife Conservation Act, the Forestry Act, the Soil Conservation and Land Utilisation Act and the Environmental Assessment Act. There are others, Mr Speaker.

I do not claim that there may not be some important gaps in such a body of legislation or that it could not be improved by the addition of new legislation. The government acknowledges that possibility and I will cover our plans in that area in due course. However, it is important to recognise that this proposed legislation is most definitely not the answer to any real perceived problems with our existing legislation.

In simple terms, it would create far more problems than it would solve. This bill gives us no guidance. It identifies no special needs or deficiencies. It simply proposes to give to a committee dominated by politicians, with few members having any special expert knowledge, the task of identifying the need for legislation. No precise terms of reference are given and, in fact, the whole approach is so vague as to be worthless. It then presents us with a long list of buildings and places which, it is claimed, need some additional form of protection. The logical basis for the list is not entirely clear but it would appear to have been taken from a list of places nominated to or registered on the Commonwealth Register of the National Estate.

When the schedule to the bill is examined, it becomes apparent that the great majority of the places listed - 80% or more - are privately owned. Many are still used for business or community purposes. These include Browns Mart, Larrakeyah Barracks, the Victoria Hotel and the Westpac Bank in the Darwin Mall, just to name a few. The bill proposes that any minor alteration to places on the schedule will attract a \$20 000 fine unless prior approval is obtained from the Supreme Court, with the National Trust being obliged to act as a respondent before the court. This means, Mr Speaker, that the manager of the Westpac Bank could not repaint the building and the owner of the hotel could not replace a front door without fear of being found out and hit with a draconian penalty.

That is an important point. There is no range of penalties to take account of minor or inconsequential acts which may constitute technical breaches of the proposed legislation. The penalty is \$20 000 whether you

replace a window frame or blow up the building. No provisions are made in the bill for any compensation to the private owners for any costs associated with these imposts or for the National Trust, which would be forced by the legislation to be represented at each hearing. I wonder if the member for MacDonnell discussed this with members of the National Trust before he brought it into this House. Frankly, I do not think members of the National Trust would be too impressed about being saddled with a responsibility which they would have no option but to carry out if this bill became law in the Northern Territory. It would have to fund the significant costs associated with civil court appearances. I would point out also that no appeal provisions are included in the proposed legislation. In short, these provisions are discriminatory and potentially vindictive in the extreme. They go well beyond the provisions for heritage orders over private property which have been enacted elsewhere in Australia. The schedule is highly biased towards historic buildings and many other places of major significance in the natural or cultural environment are not listed. In fact, the rationale behind the schedule remains something of a mystery.

To summarise, the bill has little to recommend it. It proposes the establishment of yet another committee without any clear function, terms of reference or operational guidelines. The proposed legislation has not been thought through and is clearly unnecessary. The Conservation Commission, with assistance from the Museums and Art Galleries Board of the Northern Territory and the National Trust, is far better equipped to handle this issue. That is certainly an understatement.

Mr Speaker, to return to my earlier point, the need for additional or amending legislation the better to protect and conserve natural and cultural items and places of value is constantly under review and existing legislation in this area has been amended on a regular basis. Honourable members would recall my statement to this House, when this bill was first proposed, that I had instructed the Conservation Commission to review the need for further heritage protection legislation. That review, which is still under way, includes examination of the operation of heritage legislation in other states. I can certainly give a commitment that this government will introduce heritage legislation into this House during 1989. I will advise the House of the progress of that legislation in due course. Having made that commitment, I must point out again that the bill presently before the House is certainly not the answer to any deficiencies which may exist at present. This bill offers nothing of value and deserves only to be laid to rest in archival peace.

I believe that any government in Australia which has created an environment such as we have created, that has protected the number of buildings that this government has protected, deserves accolades, not the condemnation we constantly receive from members opposite. Mr Speaker, I ask you what the 100th anniversary of Alice Springs would have been like if the original site of Alice Springs had not been preserved. No other place in Australia still has the site of its original village. That is certainly not an example of a government that does not care. It is a perfect example of the sort of success that this government has had in that respect. It shows our commitment to the heritage of the Territory.

The legislation proposed by the member for MacDonnell shows that he has approached this particular task without any idea of what is involved. The legislation is sloppy. It displays a vindictive attitude to people in that 80% of the listed buildings are privately owned and to fix a window pane will require an application to the Supreme Court or risk of a \$20 000 penalty. The same will apply if the Darwin Hotel wants to put a barbecue out the back. How

ridiculous! If the honourable member had a concept which he wished to enshrine in legislation, one would expect that he would take a little care and use a little nous in drafting the bill in such a way that it might possibly be acceptable to this House. However, he would spoil his record if he did that. He might have something accepted. Probably, that would offend his left-wing companions in the area from which he comes.

I have given a commitment. I believe that, in terms of the concept underlying the bill, the honourable member had good intentions. His application has been pretty hopeless. We will undertake to introduce legislation which will further protect the heritage of the Territory whilst ensuring that we do not impose great imposts on Territorians. However, this bill certainly will not be supported by members on this side of the House.

Mr EDE (Stuart): Mr Speaker, I hope that the honourable members opposite will exercise their own brains in relation to this issue and will not follow the lead of the Attorney-General.

The Attorney-General offered the nonsense that no other place in Australia, other than Alice Springs, has preserved its original site. The fact is that historical villages of a similar nature abound in other parts of Australia. In fact, 100 years ago, what is now called Alice Springs was called Stuart. It is a sad fact that virtually nothing is left of the town of Stuart. This government is doing its best to ensure that all traces of those days are obliterated.

The honourable minister rabbited on for some 10 minutes. It has been obvious for quite some time that there are severe deficiencies in respect of heritage protection. In fact, the government itself noted that when it commissioned Mr James many years ago. Since then, the position has not been rectified. Repeatedly, the opposition has brought forward legislation. In fact, when the government's own legislation lapsed after parliament was prorogued, we reintroduced it, only to have the government throw it out. At that stage, we wished to obtain a specific piece of legislation to handle the job. What happened, Mr Speaker? The government hated it. Members opposite indicated that they did not like it. We then proposed another piece of legislation, framed in general terms, as a stopgap measure to safeguard our heritage until such time as a parliamentary committee developed something which would suit this House. What happens? The government turns on this occasion and accuses us of not being specific!

Mr Speaker, we cannot satisfy members of the government and sometimes I think that there is no point in trying to. They do not look at what is in the legislation and they do not read it. That was obvious from what the Attorney-General said. He has not read the legislation. His repeated, gross errors indicated his lack of understanding of what the legislation contains.

Mr Manzie: Come on! We have had people working on it for 2 years.

Mr EDE: He looked at the top right-hand corner of the bill and saw the name of an opposition member. Immediately he decided that it would have to be rejected. He said to his advisers: 'How can we reject this and put a bit of a face on it?' The advice was to throw in a few inaccuracies if it was impossible to make a reasoned argument against it. All the minister could come up with is that the legislation will cost something. That does sound great coming from this government. All day we have heard the sound of jackhammers next door as the government demolishes 2 buildings in preparation for spending \$100m. The jackhammers stopped a couple of hours ago when it

became dark. This government cannot talk about what it will cost. All it can talk about is priorities. Let government members tell people that their priority is to find themselves a nice, comfortable little perch somewhere ...

Mr Coulter: It will not work. Your suggestion is unworkable.

Mr EDE: ... and not worry about heritage. That is what they are on about. All they can do is carp and criticise anything that we propose.

Mr Coulter: Knock, knock, knock!

Mr EDE: Yes! Knock, knock, knock.

The minister said that the matter is under constant review. The government has been backing off at 100 mph. It had a draft bill 10 years ago. The next time around, it was not a draft bill but a consultancy. We are now back to a review. The minister's assurance that we will have legislation next year is not worth a cup full of cold water. We have heard that sort of assurance before from honourable ministers opposite, and we have waited for years without any action occurring. Promises, promises ...

Mr Coulter: Who from? Trust us, trust us.

Mr EDE: He asks us to trust them. It is time that this legislature did something about this matter. Heritage is not only an aesthetic issue, it is a practical economic one. Currently, there is no sensible approach to heritage preservation as was evidenced by the destruction of 2 buildings in 18 months in Alice Springs: Marron's newsagency and Turner House. There is a strong economic argument that the destruction of such buildings results in the destruction of important tourist resources and, therefore, economic resources. Everyone is aware how important tourism is to the Territory but, if we rip the heart and soul out of our towns by destroying the beautiful old buildings simply to make way for something that does not necessarily even fit in with its environment, we are destroying the very things that the tourists are coming here to see. The Northern Territory government keeps saying that the Northern Territory's economic base is narrower than that of any state. That is a fact, but it does not prevent this government from chipping away at that base.

In Alice Springs, there was a very strong community reaction to the destruction of Marron's newsagency and that was demonstrated by the major support that was evidenced during the by-election in Flynn. In fact, from memory, the member for Flynn actually mounted his campaign around a series of television advertisements focused on the wall erected around the Marron's site. The campaign slogan was: 'Look what they are doing to our town'. The results of that were reflected in the poll. Labor achieved a 20% swing, the National Party achieved a swing and the CLP came in last. The CLP preferences went to the National Party which then won the seat.

Mr Coulter: Is coming second in this type of event of much significance at all?

Mr Tuxworth: It is a lot better than coming third.

Mr EDE: Mr Speaker, in his paper, Roger Linklater referred to the regulation of development in an urban environment and he discussed how building regulations can create difficulties for a developer. However, he stated that, in particular cases, there is a need to ensure that regulations

reflect heritage needs. Marron's newsagency was recommended as part of a heritage walk and it is included in the National Trust brochure. Only 15 buildings and structures have formed part of the heritage walk, and 2 of them have been lost already.

Let us have a look at the history of the legislation in this regard. A private member's bill was introduced as part of the James Report. Mr James worked for the Northern Territory government and prepared a report and draft legislation. That even reached the stage where it was referred to as the Northern Territory Heritage Bill 1979. We introduced that bill and the government rejected it. After looking at it further, we decided that it had become outdated and, in the light of further developments elsewhere, we saw the need to develop new legislation. We took cognisance of the fact that the government had rejected it on the previous occasion and decided to do everything possible to accommodate the government and arrive at suitable legislation.

Australian states have come a fair way on this. For example, the South Australian legislation is well regarded by both Mr James and the National Trust as an improvement on the New South Wales act. It provides for the minister not being able to enter or remove a place from the register unless he informs the committee set up under the act that he intends to do so. It provides for the establishment of a heritage fund which is an incentive to owners. Funds are received from the community and state government and grants or low interest loans can be made available for work in respect of places on the register. That is a very important point. The point has been made here that people who own heritage or trust properties should not be put to financial disadvantage. The setting up of that heritage fund in South Australia has gone a long way towards providing funds to enable the owners of properties to maintain them in a way that reflects their importance. The Western Australian parliament has a bill before it at the moment and it is hoped that it will be passed in the near future.

This bill sets up a committee of inquiry. It has 5 members: 2 government members, 1 opposition member, 1 National Party member and 1 person from the construction industry to be nominated by the MBA from a panel of 3. The committee was to have been established within 30 days and to report back within 6 months. The essential provisions are in clause 4, which provides interim protection for buildings listed in the schedule, a penalty of \$20 000 and a provision that enables a court to impose an additional discretionary penalty to provide protection against big developers incorporating the \$20 000 fine into their costs. Clause 6 provides the mechanism for an owner of a listed building to carry out essential work. That gives the lie to what was stated by the Minister for Conservation. As my colleague interjected, obviously he has not read the bill.

There is an urgent need for this legislation and I find it an incredible shame that, once again, the government is up to its same old tricks. Because it is an opposition bill, it will reject it. Government members have a history of doing that. They keep saying they are interested to see positive action from members on this side of the House but, in reality, they are not at all interested in that. They are interested simply in scoring political points. That is their right, but it is unfortunate that they do not take that hat off now and again and look towards the good of the Northern Territory for a change. They should cooperate with us to develop legislation that would provide interim safeguards for our heritage in the Northern Territory and prepare the ground for the development of a legislative framework that would provide permanent protection.

Mr FLOREANI (Flynn): Mr Deputy Speaker, I believe this bill has the right spirit, but I agree with government members that it is unworkable. I have done quite a bit of background research on the bill. I believe my election to the Assembly came about largely because I did not consider that the wishes of Alice Springs people were being met. In particular, the people of Alice Springs were concerned about what was happening to their heritage. Having read the second-reading speech, I question the motives of the opposition in introducing the bill. It is half-baked and I do not think that it is workable. For that reason, I will not be supporting it.

If members of the opposition had done their homework, they would have found that there are many competing interests when it comes to heritage legislation. I will expand on that a little later. To start with, the bill would create a committee to evaluate the various sites. What sort of people would be on this committee which would be selecting the sites? Would they be local people? Would the committee examine older local residences that it feels local people may be interested in and would local people have input in relation to the selection of sites?

What is the role of architects in respect of the preservation of old buildings? What would they be permitted to do? Could they knock walls out? What sort of materials would they be permitted to use? For example, could they vary the materials used on an old building? Would the National Trust have an input? What architectural merit and what historical merit would selected buildings be required to have? All these factors must be considered. People need to resolve those questions and I do not think that the bill addresses the question of who would select the sites.

It has been mentioned that private people own many of the properties listed in the schedule to this bill. What would happen to the owners? Would they be allowed to build additional buildings on the site? Would they be allowed to add to existing buildings? Would they be able to undertake renovations? Would they be able to knock down some parts but not other parts? Would the owners be allowed to initiate repairs or would that be contrary to the legislation?

Mr Bell: Have you actually read the bill, Enzo?

Mr FLOREANI: Yes, I have.

What materials would they be permitted to use? Would they be required to use the original building materials? What costs would be involved in that? Are those materials still available? None of those questions has been addressed.

In terms of penalties, would a flat penalty apply if someone knocked down a wall? If the entire building were knocked down, what would be the penalty? I do not think that question has been resolved.

In addition to those questions, I believe that far greater issues will need to be resolved because of the large number of competing interests involved in heritage legislation. For instance, developers need rules and regulations to work by. If they bought an old building, what would they be permitted to do in respect of it? In Alice Springs, height restrictions apply to buildings. In other places, what restrictions would people want? We need answers to such questions.

Then there are investors. How would investors be attracted to buy a property when regulations affecting that property are not clear? I certainly would not be interested in buying an old building if there were heritage legislation which would prevent me from doing anything to that building. That has not been spelt out. What guidelines would there be for the investors? What exactly can an owner do to his property if it has been designated as having heritage significance? Would he be able to repair and maintain it? What can he do to secure a return on his investment?

I believe the conservationists are rightly concerned, as I am, about what is happening to many of our old buildings but I cannot support this legislation. It has not been thought out properly. I was pleased to hear that the minister has committed himself to introducing legislation next year. I will certainly be pursuing that and pushing him along to ensure that he does not forget that commitment.

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH (Koolpinyah): Mr Speaker, I had not intended to speak on this but I will.

Mr Coulter: We are going to do it, Noel.

Mr Tuxworth: Who would believe that?

Mr Coulter: Trust me!

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH: I would not trust you. You would be the last person I would trust.

Mr Speaker, this bill is setting us on the right track. The originator of the bill has the right general idea. Because I believe in putting my cards on the table, I will indicate from the outset that I will not be voting for the bill. However, I think the sponsor should take comfort from the fact that there has been debate in this House on the matter and he has awakened people's consciences to the fact that our heritage needs to be preserved. He does not have to worry too much about the crossbenchers but the people in the CLP government need to have their consciences pricked from time to time.

In the time that I have lived in Darwin, I have seen quite a number of old buildings knocked down. A short while after I was elected, the old Parap police station was demolished. I was inexperienced at demonstrating or gaining publicity at that time. I always felt a bit guilty because I had done nothing. That old police station at Parap was quite an historic building. It was a stone or concrete building and it certainly had many historical associations. When we first came to Darwin, the old motor vehicle registry office was a small, stone building by the side of the Reserve Bank. It was bulldozed to make way for the Reserve Bank which is still on the site.

I agree with the previous speaker that it is easy when heritage sites are owned by the government because the government then has a free hand to spend money or not to spend money. When the particular building or the land is owned by private interests, the fact of private ownership has to be considered. I believe that private ownership must be considered because I have a great feeling for freedom of movement, freedom of land ownership and freedom of property ownership. Perhaps I am a capitalist at heart but capitalists do more for the world than the socialists do anyway.

However, I believe that the people who own these old buildings have some responsibility. Nevertheless, the buildings are used and, if the owners wish

to extend or sell the properties, their rights as the property owners need to be considered before the rights of the community. Without actually having Solomon to sit in judgment, I believe that, with sensible discussion or sensible and comprehensive legislation, a happy ending could be found to any conflicts in this regard.

Unfortunately, in the Top End, we are battling against nature when we wish to preserve many of our historic buildings. In the wet season, dry rot can be a threat and also we have termites and cyclones. All these can result in the disintegration of buildings. The wet season can also occasion extensive rusting. Possibly buildings in the more arid region of the Centre are more durable.

If we seek to preserve an old building in the Top End, how far should we go? That is a serious matter that needs to be considered. If an old building has deteriorated to such an extent that it is barely recognisable, do we set about restoring it to its pristine state? Do we use modern materials or reconstruct the building using original materials if they are still obtainable or do we use a combination of materials? Or do we leave a pile of rocks and indicate that that was such and such a settlement or building?

Mr Finch: If it is not authentic, knock it over.

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH: No, I do not agree with that. I think that we have to avail ourselves of modern technology. A certain amount of restoration work has taken place at Victoria settlement. Personally, I would like to see more restoration work occur. In order to give future generations, in particular, some idea of how people lived in the past and the buildings that they occupied, it would be better to reconstruct the buildings with modern materials. These would possibly be more durable.

I hope the government will do something in relation to heritage preservation although perhaps not exactly along the lines proposed by the member for MacDonnell. I am reminded of an incident which occurred when I was in the Country Liberal Party - 3 Chief Ministers ago.

Mr Bell: Last year then.

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH: No. 4 Chief Ministers ago.

The subject of Admiralty House was raised and the proposal of the then Chief Minister - and no marks for guessing who it was - was to knock down Admiralty House and erect it in some historic precinct in the Gardens. The then member for Nightcliff was violently against this and I had to agree with her. I think the Chief Minister's idea was to sell this prime site to somebody who would build a magnificent modern hotel on it. Admiralty House is still there and I hope that it stays there.

The excuse put forward by the opponents of heritage preservation is that it was only built in the 1920s or in the 1930s and therefore there is no need to preserve it. Those people cannot recognise the fact that something built in the 1920s or the 1930s in the Top End is fortunate to have survived, given the rate at which buildings deteriorate here. We do not have many buildings and sites that are still usable and that date back much further than that. If we do not start preserving them now, there will be none at all in 100 years time.

The Chief Minister who wanted to knock down Admiralty House was all for development and that is okay up to a point. However, he could not grasp the concept that history is where it happened, not where you choose to put it.

Mr Speaker, this legislation may prick the conscience of the CLP and I thank the honourable member for introducing it. I am not really being a hypocrite by not supporting it because I can exercise my right as an independent to vote in any way I want. He will have to be satisfied with the fact that I think it is very commendable of him to have introduced it but I would like to see it tackled in a different way.

Mr COULTER: Mr Speaker, I move that the debate be adjourned.

The Assembly divided:

Ayes 12

Noes 8

Mr Coulter
Mr Dale
Mr Dondas
Mr Finch
Mr Firmin
Mr Harris
Mr Hatton
Mr McCarthy
Mr Manzie
Mr Poole
Mr Reed
Mr Setter

Mr Bell
Mr Collins
Mr Ede
Mr Floreani
Mr Lanhupuy
Mr Leo
Mrs Padgham-Purich
Mr Tuxworth

Debate adjourned.

JUVENILE JUSTICE AMENDMENT BILL
(Serial 131)

Continued from 24 August 1988.

Mr COLLINS (Sadadeen): Mr Speaker, I must confess that, when I heard the member for Barkly's second-reading speech, it sounded a little draconian. However, following a further reading of the bill, and believing that our courts do have a high degree of common sense, I have formed the opinion that there is a great deal of merit in this legislation. Juveniles sometimes cause damage. Sometimes this is only in the nature of mischief and costs a few dollars to make good. On other occasions, whole schools have been burnt down and millions of dollars worth of damage have been caused by juveniles on the rampage. The bill proposes that juveniles be brought to account for their actions and also that, if it can be proven that parents are grossly negligent in the care and guidance of their children, a penalty will apply to them. I am sure the courts would have a great deal of fun interpreting that. However, I hope that the courts would deal with matters in the spirit of the law. If evidence was presented indicating that parents were themselves derelict in their duties, the court would have the option of making them pay - in time, money or service - for the wrongdoings of their children. The bill also allows for a child who misbehaves to make some restitution to society.

Mr Speaker, I am sure that you, along with most members here, would have heard people in the community express the desire that parents be more responsible for their children's actions and that they should control their

children. Given some of our laws, I sometimes wonder whether parents are really given a great deal of control in this area. When I consider some of the actions of people in certain departments, I wonder whether parents are really given much legislative support in relation to the control and discipline of their children. Even so, most parents try. Some, however, do not. They do not take an interest in where their children are and generally neglect them. This can occur in rich homes or in poor homes. In such situations, the parents really do not care and the kids feel unwanted. The parents sling them a few dollars and tell them to get out of their hair. They do not care where they are as long as they are not a nuisance to themselves. If the court so determined in its wisdom, such parents could be called to account for their children's actions.

One possibility which might arise is that a child who was determined to kick up against his parents might commit a deliberate act of vandalism in order to obtain revenge on his parents. That may be an extreme case but it is a possibility. I would like to think that, in such a situation, the courts would take into account any evidence indicating that a child, knowing that his parents could be hit hard by the court, might have done something deliberately to create trouble for his parents. I dare say that the safeguard would rest in the preparedness of caring and concerned parents and other people in the community to vouch for the parent's concern for the child, even though that child had kicked over the traces and had done something drastic in order to take revenge on his parents. The chances of that happening might be very small and I believe the courts would be quite capable of deciding whether the parents really were uncaring and derelict or not.

Mr Speaker, the bill is pretty straightforward. I am sure that honourable members have studied its contents and I believe that, on reflection and study, it is well worthy of the support of this Assembly.

Mr DALE (Health and Community Services): Mr Deputy Speaker, this bill could well be renamed the 'persecute a parent' bill. Its main thrust is to give the juvenile court power to order parents of young offenders to pay fines, make restitution or carry out some sort of compensatory service if the court feels that lack of parental care and control has contributed to a child committing offences.

On the surface, the proposition that parents be made accountable for their children's actions might well appeal, and in fact does appeal, to some sections of our community. I concede that. It is perhaps understandable in the light of the very high level of media reporting that vandalism and juvenile crime receive. In a recent case in New South Wales, 2 or 3 young children caused about \$30 000-worth of damage in a particular school. As a parent, I can understand the disappointment and anxiety parents would feel if their child broke the law. There are occasions when even the most caring and supportive families experience the trauma of their child becoming involved in delinquent behaviour. In the past, I have often experienced the frustration of dealing with juvenile offenders who have had to survive with very little love, support and guidance from their parents.

Northern Territory statistics show that about 80% of children who appear in the juvenile courts are first offenders. Most of them have committed acts of theft or break and enters. Honourable members might recall that, in 1985, the then Minister for Community Development took the very responsible action of setting up 2 task forces to look after juvenile crime - 1 in Darwin and 1 in Alice Springs. I was an active member of the Darwin task force. These task forces found that legislation to give courts power to impose a fine on

parents of offenders or to order them to make restitution was not viable. The task forces concluded that such legislation could be successfully used only against parents who could afford to pay. It discriminated against higher income families. With legislation like this, we could create an administrative nightmare for ourselves trying to help a court determine who could afford to pay and how much. The task forces accepted that other family members, particularly children, could suffer hardship because the whole family would be penalised by having to pay a fine.

The Northern Territory government's view is that the family is the focal point of the community. As a responsible government, we have an obligation to keep families together wherever possible and we have a wide range of services in support of this goal. These include home-maker services, budget counsellors, parental effectiveness programs and other welfare programs. This bill would contribute to the disintegration of the family unit, a result no one wants. The proposition being put forward has major flaws and cannot be taken seriously.

Forcing people to be responsible for the actions of their children sounds like a good idea. However, until thinking people recognise the destructive implications of the scheme proposed in this bill, the main appeal of the proposal is that it sounds simple to apply. The solution to juvenile crime in our society is not simple. The realities are quite different and I will outline these for honourable members.

Of the 1023 people aged between 10 and 17 years who have been placed under the care of Correctional Services since January 1986, 84% were male, 63% Aboriginal, 39% lived with both parents, 56% were enrolled at school at the time of their offence, 39% finished school with part-secondary or lower education and 36% were 14 years or older. Under Australia's criminal justice system, juveniles are deemed to be accountable for their own actions before the law once they have reached the age of criminal responsibility, regardless of whether they have a parent or a legal guardian. This means that young people who commit an offence must expect to stand on their own feet before the law.

Under our legal system, the concept of punishing a person other than the guilty party for an offence is seen as abhorrent. The only departure from this occurs where a fine is paid by someone else. Nowhere is it possible to undergo, or be made to undergo, a prison term on behalf of someone else or to accept a form of punishment on behalf of a guilty party. The concept of punishing a person for someone else's crime is unacceptable in our society and might even be unconstitutional.

Australian Institute of Criminology experts have described the proposal embodied in this bill as a 'bizarre notion'. The new section 55A envisages that, for every case coming before the juvenile court, the question of a parent 'neglecting to exercise due care or control' must be investigated and assessed. The resource and cost implications of this aspect alone are enormous. Properly skilled officers would be required to look into each juvenile's home circumstances and prepare assessments for the court on the parents' degree of culpability. There would be the added time needed for courts to take this into account plus the tangle of complications that would ensue if parents decided that they needed legal representation in court.

Mr Speaker, already juvenile courts receive pre-sentence reports about some young offenders and their home circumstances. The court can exercise that prerogative at the moment if it feels that it is necessary. Lawyers,

too, would be faced with making moral judgments about parental responsibility and liability. I wonder whether the interests of natural justice would be served if court processes were delayed and prolonged in this way. We must also consider the financial impact of the bill on our community. The bill contains significant cost factors which would be borne ultimately by the community.

Another problem is that the bill seems to be based on the assumption that all members of our community are middle class, with middle class incomes and values. The reality is that most juveniles involved in criminal activity in the Northern Territory come from broken homes. Of the 37 juveniles in our detention centres last week, 10 were from families identified as dysfunctional, and a further 15 came from single-parent families. Of 1023 juveniles placed under Correctional Services care from January 1986 until August this year, 61% live with either parent, with friends, other relatives or in youth refuges. The effect on the low-income families who have to pay fines because of a child's crime would be to impose financial and emotional hardships. The problems would be compounded for a single parent. Failure to pay a fine or make restitution usually leads to imprisonment. Parents unable to pay a fine or a single parent unable to carry out community service work could face a serious dilemma through default.

The bill would put a Territory juvenile court in the position where it must imprison a parent for an offence which, under normal circumstances, might not warrant imprisonment. The effect of this bill, if successful, might be to transfer power in the home to the juvenile offender who sees these amendments as a new weapon with which to intimidate a parent or to obtain revenge. The Northern Territory government is committed to a policy of reducing costly and unnecessary imprisonment. That policy is starting to pay off. This bill threatens to overwhelm the effect of that positive policy. This bill would gather more people into the criminal justice system. The community would have to bear the cost of keeping people in prison and also accept the risk that those people might become permanently involved in crime as a result. An impaired home life is not likely to be improved if a parent is forced into jail, especially if the parent has sole responsibility for a child's care. We must also consider the very real possibility that a parent, who faces the threat of imprisonment because of a child's misdemeanour, might go overboard in punishing the child. This would lead to further breakdown in the family environment.

Another serious flaw in the bill prevents its application to the whole Territory community. I refer, of course, to traditionally-oriented communities. The bill does not take into account elements of Aboriginal culture whereby senior elders and other relatives share responsibility for guiding young people through life. The bill does not recognise the disproportionate representation of Aboriginal people in our criminal justice system. This reflects again the unrealistic assumptions the bill makes about the Territory community.

I wonder whether this bill arises from a sincere interest in addressing the issue of juvenile crime. If so, it is obvious that no consideration has been given to the broader implications of the plight of families who are already experiencing difficulties with their children. 12 months ago, this Assembly passed wide-ranging amendments to the Juvenile Justice Act as part of a total overhaul of the legislation. The review committee included the Chief Magistrate and had extensive experience and statutory powers. It took several years and much research, along with a great deal of community input, to arrive at its recommendations. During its review process, the committee agreed that

orders against parents were undesirable and not a viable sentencing option in the Northern Territory.

Amendments to the Juvenile Justice Act included stronger penalties for offences and provided mechanisms for swifter and visible penalties for juveniles who failed to meet a court order. These penalties include: giving the juvenile court power to impose combinations of penalties; stricter good behaviour bonds; bringing the community service works scheme for juveniles into line with the scheme for adults; increasing detention or imprisonment up to 12 months, depending on an offender's age; empowering the juvenile court to impose sanctions contained in other acts as if that juvenile were an adult; disqualification from driving; and the establishment of boards of management in Alice Springs and Darwin. Their role would be to evaluate programs and recommend more effective programs for young offenders and that, of course, is ongoing.

In plain terms, the philosophy behind offender treatment programs in the Northern Territory is to stop young people being caught up in the criminal justice system as soon as possible. This is because young offenders who enter the criminal justice system are likely to continue their involvement into adulthood. In 1985, the Task Force on Juvenile Crime recognised that a relatively small group of persistent offenders account for a substantial proportion of all juvenile offences. There has been no significant increase in juvenile crime in recent years. The merging of juvenile justice with other correctional services has proven that an overall approach to an offender's treatment is practical and effective. The merger has reduced successfully the rate of imprisonment of juveniles. A wide range of programs has been introduced to meet more effectively the needs of those young people who come into conflict with the law.

Alternative treatment programs for young adult offenders have been set up and the courts make use of them in sentencing offenders. Initiatives like the Wilderness Work Camp at Wildman River, the station placement program, the juvenile offender placement program and curfew as a condition of probation illustrate the firm measures this government has developed to tackle the problem of persistent juvenile offenders.

We have another young offender treatment program which takes into account the special needs of Aboriginal families. These programs are monitored constantly and adjusted to ensure that they are appropriate and effective. These include the community justice program, through which senior community elders assist magistrates, the Aboriginal Community Correction Officers Scheme under which the community selects and employs appropriate Aboriginal people to liaise between correctional authorities and the court and to supervise juvenile offenders and, of course, probation and parole officers based in communities which have juvenile crime problems. The Department of Health and Community Services has developed a coordinated approach to delivering a full range of services to Aboriginal communities. This includes correction programs for adults and young people.

The provisions of this bill have been taken from 1957 legislation in Western Australia. Given the social changes of the last 30 years, I am at a loss to see how this concept could be applied anywhere today. In his second-reading speech, the member for Barkly said: 'This section is not used often, although it does seem to have the effect of encouraging parents to take notice of their children's whereabouts and what they are doing'. The legislation in Western Australia seems to have a positive effect only on parents. I challenge the honourable member to produce empirical evidence to back his claim.

The Northern Territory is acknowledged by the rest of Australia and some international authorities too as being at the forefront in terms of offender treatment backed by progressive policies and legislation. It certainly has no need to fall back to 1950s concepts. The bill before us is irrelevant to life in the Territory today. I urge honourable members to consider closely the implications of this bill as I have outlined them. The positive results of the persecute-a-parent approach are negligible.

I am not rejecting this legislation. I am merely putting reasoned argument and logic up against the emotional knee-jerk reaction this bill represents. I sincerely understand that there is a perception in the community that this is the way to go. There are a great many logical arguments that have been presented by very authoritative persons, such as the Chief Magistrate chairing a committee in the Northern Territory, that would argue against the present form that this bill takes. For that reason, we will be asking that the bill stay on the Notice Paper. We will be seeking to adjourn it tonight. In the meantime, my department and other advisers will be taking further advice. If there is a possible and practical way to address this issue, we will do so at the next sittings.

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH (Koolpinyah): Mr Deputy Speaker, I have not heard such a sickening load of pap from any minister before. From the very fact that he had so few of his own party listening to him while he was speaking, it is very clear what they think of him. He fluttered furphies from start to finish. It was as much as I could do to sit and listen to him.

Mr Dale: You do not understand.

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH: I understand. I have had 6 kids; you have not had 6 kids. I know more about it than you do.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I deprecate most strongly this sickly sweet approach of the minister which, in effect, is encouraging juvenile offenders. He is treating them like spoilt brats: 'Kick me in the shins again, darling, and I will give you another bag of jelly beans. Go on, kick me again in the shins'.

The honourable minister drew distinctions between ethnic groups in his speech. He made what I and other people would consider to be rather racist remarks about the ethnic origin of certain juvenile offenders. He also made unfair remarks against high income earners. It sounds a bit like a 'poor bugger me' approach. He is okay, but nobody else can be. He has a pretty high income. I do not believe that this minister is fit to stand up as a minister and say what he said.

Mr Tuxworth: Do not change him. He is our best electoral asset.

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH: In reply to that interjection, I would not disagree with that at all.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I would like to see somebody - and if somebody does not do it, I will - copy the speech of the minister and send it to every CLP branch in the Northern Territory to gain their views on what the minister said. I would like to make a guess, and I would be pretty certain that I would be right having been in the party and having observed the members for a number of years, that the Leader of Government Business, the Chief Minister, the Attorney-General and the Minister for Education ...

Mr Collins: And the member for Nightcliff.

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH: Not the member for Nightcliff. Do not include him.

... would not have a bar of what the Minister for Health and Community Services said. I would also perhaps include the member for Jingili. I would like to see - but I do not suppose it would do it because it would be pretty forward-thinking for the CLP - the government allow its members a conscience vote on this legislation. I think it might be very surprised at the result.

I believe that the excuses put forward by the minister in relation to juvenile offenders' behaviour - they used to be called delinquents once; that is passe because it was a bit nasty and we have to handle them with kid gloves now - to be positively sickening. His sappy, slack, misguided approach to the whole question was a disgrace to normal family values. He harped again and again: 'Oh, the poor parents will not be able to pay for the damage their children have done in committing an offence'.

Has the honourable minister ever thought of community service orders? If he says parents do not have the money to pay for the offences their children have committed, has he ever thought that the people who are fined in the courts anyway may not have the money to pay? They could be ordered to undertake community service by way of community service orders. No doubt, I raised my children differently from the way he appears to have raised his or suggests that other people raise theirs. When my children were under the age of consent, I accepted full responsibility for their actions. I suppose that they could have all gone off on the wrong track but they did not and the occasion never arose when I was called on to pay for any anti-social act on behalf of my children. If such acts had occurred, I would have felt compelled to pay for them. Years ago, my financial situation was perhaps not as happy as it is now but, nevertheless, I would have considered it my duty to be responsible for the actions of my children.

The minister has adopted a soft approach in the way that he is suggesting that we treat juvenile offenders. He more or less said - and these are my words, not his - or implied that we should say: 'Sorry, darling. Promise not to do it again and I will let you off'. What the honourable minister failed to realise is that somewhere in the morass of his convoluted thinking is the victim. The victim might have been a person who lost his car because a juvenile stole it and smashed it. Perhaps he had no insurance and had to bear the cost of that. Perhaps this victim is the person who has his home vandalised and goods stolen by juveniles. Does he have to bear the cost of that? Who is going to pay?

Somewhere along the line, we have to consider the victims of crimes. We pay far too much attention, as the honourable minister did, to considering the offender's plight, in considering his future and in considering his welfare. What about considering the welfare and the future of the victims?

Mr Dale: We are very concerned about that.

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH: Well, you don't show it.

Mr Dale: Oh, don't I?

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH: You had better put your money where your mouth is.

Mr Deputy Speaker, my remarks have been brief, but I think I have put my point across and I do not think anybody would be left in any confusion as to what I think about this bill and the remarks of the minister. The time has

come when we need to start thinking again about being a caring community, and I say that in all seriousness. I do not say it in a sappy way. Being a caring community means that not only do we need to look at ourselves and our own civil rights, we need to consider also the family unit which is one of the most important mainstays of any community. We need to stay together as a family, we need to work as a family and family interests need to be uppermost in our mind. That goes for parents to the children and the children to the parents. A family should act as one unit and support its members. If a member of the family is unfortunate enough to commit a crime or to go to jail, the family should stand behind him or her. The family not only accepts the rights of family closeness but also accepts the responsibility of family closeness.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I support this bill wholeheartedly.

Mr HATTON (Nightcliff): Mr Deputy Speaker, I would like to speak in this debate. Let me say in opening that the underlying desire of this bill, as presented by the member for Barkly, is one which I fully support. I, for one, and I am sure most of us in this House, together with most of our constituents and members of the Northern Territory Police Force, are sick and tired of the situation in relation to juvenile crime. The police experience unbelievable frustration when they apprehend kids committing crimes and haul them before the courts, only to go through extraordinary rigmaroles with things like the Anunga Rules and evidentiary materials and guardians and parents and goodness knows what else. After all that, kids with 50 or 60 charges proven against them are patted on the head, given a \$100 good-behaviour bond and put back on the streets. On their way home from court, they break into half a dozen houses. A month later, the police bring them back before the courts where they are given a 6-month good-behaviour bond and the freedom to go out and do the same thing. That is very frustrating for everybody.

We stand up in places such as this, beat our breasts and consider the civil liberties of the people accused of crime. That occurred earlier this year when I introduced some legislation in this House which contained some very reasonable amendments to assist the police in doing their job properly. The very thought that we might further increase police powers brought the dogs howling to the gates again.

Mr Deputy Speaker, let me outline a few of my personal thoughts on the matter. I think it is about time that we started to think about the civil rights of the victims of crime. I am not certain that this bill addresses that issue but I want to be very clear in stating my views on the subject. It is my view that, when a court has brought down a conviction in relation to a particular offence, the court procedures should provide for a victim impact statement to be put before the judge to be considered in determining the appropriate sentence to be imposed. Far too often, we forget the trauma that is caused to people by crime, even by such crimes as burglaries and thefts.

A couple living in my electorate had their flat broken into 3 times in the space of a fortnight and then their car was stolen. They lost money and other items. Their vehicle, which they were paying off, was scrapped. They were virtually bankrupt. They ended up having to move into a caravan park because they could not afford the rent on a flat. The person who was convicted of the thefts was put on a good behaviour bond. A crimes compensation action was taken out against that person who was declared to be a person of straw. He had no money. The victims of the crime received no compensation and ended up living in a caravan park trying to start their lives again in middle age as the result of 3 robberies, by the same person, within a fortnight.

There are innumerable examples of that sort of thing in many electorates. Many are not crimes against property but crimes of personal violence. The level of sexual assault and general assault in the community is alarming. I have been very impressed with a practice developed in the United States. In a situation where a court determined the guilt of a particular person, the victim of a rape was able to come into the court and tell the judge and the jury what she had had to endure. It was certainly interesting to note the impact of that in terms of the sentence. I think that that would be a good experience for some of our judiciary to undergo.

There is a second problem which relates to the issue of compensation and for which I do not think this bill provides the solution. I do not know what the solution is but we certainly need to look for it. The problem arises when a court decides that compensation should be paid. Somehow, that becomes a common law provision in the courts. A constituent of mine is having some tussles with the Attorney-General in relation to this issue at the moment. The constituent won a crimes compensation decision against a person. The person simply shot through without paying the bill. The constituent argued that the government, through the court, had imposed the charge and should therefore be responsible for making the person pay. My constituent is faced with the cost of issuing summonses and so forth. The person has to be brought before the courts again with the likelihood of the same thing occurring. It is not a simple matter of saying that the government pays. There is a complex process involving common law judgments and decisions. It is a real problem. We sit here as lay persons and say that it does not sound right. The victim of the crime is expected to fork out money in an effort to obtain compensation from the person who was ordered to pay compensation by the courts.

My attitude to the issues addressed by the bill is very traditional. I believe that parents are responsible for the actions of their children. I am not going to step away from that. I have 4 kids and they are all under-age. I regard myself as responsible for the actions of my kids. I believe that it is helpful to put some pressure on parents to accept their responsibilities properly. However, the practicalities of doing that are not simple. I do not object to all the positive things we are doing in terms of correctional services and community welfare. I think that they are important. However, if people ignore all the positive incentives and break the law, they ought to be disciplined for that. There has to be positive and negative motivation in all matters of discipline. I think it is just as important that people should pay for their actions as it is for them to have access to support to discourage them from continuing those actions.

We do not have the answers yet. There is much more work to be done. I do not really believe that this bill will solve the problem. I support the minister's proposal that the debate be adjourned and that opportunities be made available for further discussion. I think there are good points in this bill. I support the minister's comments and I believe that we have to look seriously at a range of proposals in relation to a number of areas, some of which I have alluded tonight.

Mr Collins interjecting.

Mr HATTON: That is a real problem with the member of Sadadeen. He plucks something out of the air which sounds good politically and throws it down on the table. He does not consider its ramifications. He simply runs around trying to make a bit of political capital from it. He is not trying to achieve something practical. He is simply trying to obtain a headline. Mr Speaker, I do not support that course of action.

I believe that most members of this Assembly would recognise that the member for Barkly's bill touches on a very real problem in the community. The issue has been raised before but we cannot simply overturn the recommendations of 2 task forces on juvenile crime in which the member for Barkly had more than a passing involvement as the then Chief Minister.

Mr Tuxworth: This is juvenile justice legislation. It is community development.

Mr HATTON: Mr Speaker, I note that interjection.

I do not know the answers but I believe this bill is too simplistic. It is a fact, whether the member for Koolpinyah wants to call it racist or not, that many parents simply do not care and will not pay the bills. Such people allow their kids to wander in the streets until 2 am or 3 am and, when the police pick them up and deliver them home, they cop a mouthful of abuse from the parents for interfering with the kids' liberty. That is a fact. The member for Barkly may think that it is a simple problem but what happens in such a case? Do the police throw the parents in jail for not looking after their kids properly? It might be fair enough in such an instance. Many citizens in the community think that would be a reasonable action to take in order to make the parents recognise that they have responsibilities.

The bill will not achieve the results which the member for Barkly wants. It will not compensate the victims of crime for the damage inflicted on them. It might throw a few more kids into community service orders and it might shock the odd parent. However, knowing the statistics and knowing the sort of circumstances with which the police have to deal, I believe that, in the majority of cases, the parents will not give a tinker's cuss. We will simply have another round of summonses and court battles trying to get them to do community service orders or serve time. There is a very serious risk of the legislation being impractical. The idea is good but I think we need a total package to recognise the civil liberties of victims and to make parents and guardians more responsible for the actions of their children. I do not want to see this bill defeated. I would like to take up the offer made by the Minister for Health and Community Services and adjourn the debate tonight, and provide the opportunity for further consideration at a future sittings.

Mr BELL (MacDonnell): Mr Speaker, I rise to make several comments on this bill. At the outset, I advise the member for Barkly that the opposition will not be supporting the bill. It seems to me that the opposition members are the only people, apart from the honourable member, who have an unequivocal attitude to this particular piece of legislation.

Members interjecting.

Mr BELL: They are indeed, Mr Speaker.

I am not prepared to support the legislation because I believe that it takes a jejune attitude towards the broad question of criminal compensation. I do not believe that to legislate in this way is in step with the philosophy of correction for juveniles that has been expressed in this Assembly with the recent legislation that government members have referred to. I would advance pretty much the same arguments here as I advanced in the argument about truancy and making the police act as truant officers. Once again, it is attacking the symptoms and not the causes. The member for Koolpinyah announced to us with a sickening air of smugness that it has never been a problem she has had to face. I dare say that, if she looks at her bank

balance and the degree of material and personal security that she has enjoyed that ...

Mr Collins: She has worked hard for it.

Mr BELL: To answer the interjection from the member for Sadadeen, one does not work for personal and psychological security. Generally, one gets it from one's parents. One does not work to earn it. I get a little irritated in this Assembly when, time after time, I have to put up with this jejune understanding of what makes people tick. It is an absurd, simplistic response to a complex problem to suggest that, by making parents pay a fine, parents as a class will be made more responsible. That is patently absurd.

I have had the experience of my house being robbed by children. I do not like it any more than any other member of this Assembly does. However, I think that I better understand than many other members the circumstances under which these crimes are committed by juveniles and the family circumstances that drive them to it. I must admit that the Minister for Health and Community Services was in some trouble with this legislation, but I was particularly heartened to hear him talk about the ease with which comfortable middle-class homes, and children from those homes, are proof against these sort of offences. It is frequently questions of social and economic circumstances that are involved here.

Of course there are exceptions. There are kids from secure circumstances who kick over the traces and likewise there are kids who live in tough circumstances who rise above them and have a degree of integrity, and respect for people and property, that keeps them well out of that trouble. Often, that comes from their parents. That is something that I often wonder about. I see people in the Northern Territory who are doing life rough. I see kids who are growing up in tough circumstances, and I must admit that I never cease to be amazed that some of those kids actually grow up to be good, strong, self-respecting Australian citizens, against some of the toughest odds that anybody in this country has to face.

To refer to their less fortunate brothers and sisters and cousins who become involved in this sort of criminality, I do not believe that necessarily they or their parents are the people who are most to blame. I believe that the appropriate approach with this question is to look at the numbers involved. It is true that there is a feeling in the community and I suppose the member for Barkly or the government members opposite will say that the Labor Party is soft on crime. They will put it around the northern suburbs that the Labor Party is quite happy to see people's joints knocked off every week. The fact of ...

Mr Coulter: Political grandstanding.

Mr BELL: That is what I expect may very well happen and that would be unfortunate.

Mr Coulter: Not from this side of the House, it won't. This is meaningful legislation.

Mr BELL: Mr Speaker, let me put forward a few positive approaches. If we achieved the circumstances that the member for Nightcliff talked about, I would be quite happy. It is a responsibility on this Assembly to find out the extent of the problems. I am aware from some of my own kids' acquaintances that some of their friends are allowed to get away with being out on the

streets under circumstances that I find breathtaking. None of my kids would ever be allowed to get away with it. It is certainly true that the parents have a responsibility, but I think equally that, under circumstances where family solidarity is less strong than it was a generation or so ago, there are many more temptations for kids to become involved in such activity.

As a legislature, we ought to be assessing the nature of the problem. I recall that the member for Braitling was involved in a juvenile crime inquiry. Perhaps, in the context of a debate like this, it is time to throw this bill on the Table, and to dig out the findings of the juvenile crime inquiry and find out what the story is. That may give us a lead to the direction to be taken.

I will not take up too much more time. It is getting late and we have had many late sitting nights during these sittings. I do not believe that this is a positive approach to the problem. It is a punish-the-parent approach that will have an appeal to some people. However, let us consider not only the victim but also the juvenile offender at the same time. We should bring both considerations together.

Mr COULTER: Mr Speaker, I move that the debate be adjourned.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! I remind the member for MacDonnell and other members, that members shall not leave the Chamber once the bells have been rung.

The Assembly divided:

Ayes 16

Noes 4

Mr Bell
Mr Coulter
Mr Dale
Mr Dondas
Mr Finch
Mr Firmin
Mr Harris
Mr Hatton
Mr McCarthy
Mr Manzie
Mr Palmer
Mr Perron
Mr Poole
Mr Reed
Mr Setter
Mr Vale

Mr Collins
Mr Floreani
Mrs Padgham-Purich
Mr Tuxworth

Motion agreed to.

REAL PROPERTY AMENDMENT BILL
(Serial 140)

Continued from 24 August 1988.

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH (Koolpinyah): Mr Speaker, this legislation will provide a choice for people who are buying or selling land or property. This government talks constantly about freedom of choice. It encouraged the establishment and operation of a private hospital in order to provide people with a choice in relation to hospital services. There is no coercion

whatsoever on people to use this private hospital. Some people will never use it because they will prefer to use the Royal Darwin Hospital. That is their choice. The same philosophy applies in respect of this legislation. People will not be obliged to have persons other than solicitors do their conveyancing. This legislation will simply provide them with the opportunity of making a choice.

I have some personal knowledge of some individuals in the legal fraternity. Whilst they are all good chaps and good men and true, they know that they are on a good thing in maintaining a perceived monopoly of conveyancing. Conveyancing is the paperwork necessary to ensure that all land and property transactions are spot on and legal. Anyone with time, and a bit of knowledge and persistence can do it now, but he cannot charge a fee for doing it. So much for free enterprise! Not only will this legislation provide an opportunity for a person other than a qualified lawyer to do conveyancing for a fee, it will provide members of the public with a free choice as to whom they will employ to undertake conveyancing for them.

If this legislation is successful, many will still go to solicitors but probably will not pay the high fees they pay now because there would be more competition in the marketplace. I understand that Western Australia and South Australia have legislation permitting people other than legal people to do conveyancing and their costs are considerably cheaper than those charged in the Northern Territory. I will make a comparison between the current cost of conveyancing in Western Australia and South Australia and the Northern Territory for a house valued at \$80 000. In the Northern Territory, the recommended fee is \$555 plus disbursements, a final figure of about \$800. The disbursements cover such requirements as the title searches. The fee to search the Land Titles Office is \$3, for which I believe solicitors charge a handsome fee even including the time of a junior who always does this sort of work. Ask anyone who has a solicitor's bill for conveyancing what the title search cost. It would be quite a shock when compared to the bill from the solicitor.

In South Australia, the recommended maximum conveyancing fee charged by a land broker on an \$80 000 house or property is \$390 to the buyer plus the actual cost spent on the title search. Western Australia has settlement agents and the maximum fee on an \$80 000 house is \$288, and that is paid by the purchaser. On those figures, the cost in Western Australia and South Australia is about \$500 cheaper than in the Northern Territory. \$500 is a large sum of money in my neck of the woods and it would be a meaningful amount to people who are starting to build a house. I am well aware that the member for Sadadeen is not a supporter of price control and collusion in relation to fee setting and I believe that is his perceived view of the current Northern Territory situation. He believes that a high level of competition will allow market forces to determine the price, and I support that view.

In his second-reading speech, the member for Sadadeen stated that he believed that conveyancing clerks in solicitors' offices - and those are the people who do 95% of the conveyancing work - would be well positioned to purchase a word processor and go into business for themselves. My information is that many conveyancing clerks are most interested in the outcome of this bill. They are in a good position to give the consumer a really good deal and, at the same time, gain a sizeable increase in their own incomes and that is a truly desirable situation for most Territorians. Experienced conveyancing clerks are also in a good position to advise would-be clients that, on the rare occasion when their conveyancing is complicated, they should obtain the services of a solicitor. It is very important to consider the protection of consumers.

I expect the argument to be raised today that consumers who do not use solicitors will be told they do not have the protection of the solicitor's professional indemnity insurance. This could be considered a scare tactic. If this legislation is passed, no doubt conveyancers will make their own insurance arrangements. Honourable members should note that anybody doing conveyancing for a fee will be bound by the Real Property Act. The Land Titles Office would and must reject incorrect conveyancing work.

The other protection in law is contained in the Criminal Code wherein fraud and anything done to defraud a client are crimes and punishable. The best protection a consumer has is to be alert and to take normal, sensible precautions such as questioning his agent's work by means of a title search costing \$3 and not paying until he is satisfied that the work has been done. I have long been aware of the complaints from people, especially from the real estate industry, about the frustrations caused by slow service from solicitors. Time is money, and a speedier service would benefit Territorians as much as the potential fee savings. This is an important point.

The member for Sadadeen said last week that, if this Assembly passed the bill to assist struggling Northern Territory home owners, it would help them to meet their commitments and get started on the desirable business of building their own homes. I support that move in the belief that it will help stop the movement of people out of the Northern Territory, at least until the economy picks up, a time when the names of Hawke and Keating will be no more than a bad memory. Honourable members of this House must demonstrate their care and concern for their constituents by supporting this legislation. The right for people to choose their conveyancing agent is a freedom that we must support. To oppose this bill is to support a monopoly which has cost Territorians a great deal of money over the years and could bring real detriment to the average person. I support this bill.

Mr FIRMIN (Ludmilla): Mr Speaker, the legislation before us seeks to amend the Real Property Act and the Legal Practitioners Act. It seeks to delete section 274 of the Real Property Act which reads:

No person other than a practitioner of the Supreme Court of the Northern Territory or person whose name is entered in the register of practitioners kept at the principal registry of the High Court, shall be entitled to sue for, or receive any fees, costs or charges for work done in reference to applications, transfers or other dealings relating to land, nor to any right or setoff, in respect of any such fees, costs or charges, nor to any lien or right to retain any deed, paper or writing which shall have come into his possession in reference to any such work.

It also seeks to delete section 6 which relates to the scale of fees set by the Attorney-General.

It seeks to amend section 132 of the Legal Practitioners Act which deals with the preparation of documents and makes it an offence for them to be drawn up by a person who is not a legal practitioner or his employer. It relates to the words 'for reward'. The purpose is supposedly to enable unqualified persons to convey land from party to party, vendor to purchaser, whether it be a company or an individual. It is certainly a way of cutting costs. I do not have any problem with the underlying principles and aims of the bill. However, I should say at the outset that the government does not intend to support the passage of the legislation at the moment.

Of particular concern is the proposed new subsection (1A) to section 132 which reads in part: 'Nothing in subsection (1) shall disentitle any person from suing for or receiving fees, costs or charges for work done in reference ...'. That refers to 'any person', whether qualified or unqualified. It makes no reference to professional people whether they be conveyancing brokers, land agents or other persons in the industry who would be expected to have some knowledge of land matters and the intricacies of the law. It would mean that almost anybody could hang a shingle out the front and offer to do conveyancing. There is no requirement for them to have any qualifications or experience whatsoever in conveyancing.

Over the years, I have been involved with conveyancing matters as a manager of small and large companies. In some cases, I have been involved in some incredibly large conveyancing deals for national companies. As an individual and for some of my own personal companies, I have involved myself in conveyancing. I must admit there have been occasions when, in relation to a complicated conveyancing deal, the costs seemed to be extremely high. However, at a later date, I was extremely pleased that I had paid for the professional services of someone capable of understanding the ramifications of the deals. It certainly protected me in relation to several conveyancing matters.

The transfer of land and titles, particularly house and land packages, is probably done only once or twice in a person's lifetime. It represents an incredibly large proportion of a person's savings. In fact, it is probably the largest single item that a family undertakes to purchase. It worries me that there is no protection for those people in this legislation in the event of something going wrong. The current law requires professional people who have had a considerable amount of legal training to be involved. They have to satisfy the Legal Practitioners Registrar or the Supreme Court that they are capable of practising as solicitors. They have a code of ethics that they are required to abide by and, by and large, most practitioners do. There is the occasional defalcation in the industry, but that is very rare. There are also legal requirements in respect of the holding of trust funds. The legal practitioners are required to have a trust fund for holding payments to be transferred from one party to another. These are protected at law. They are also covered by a professional indemnity as a requirement.

The member for Koolpinyah said that she believed that having unqualified persons handling conveyancing would not be a problem because the vendors and the purchasers could purchase an insurance policy to cover them against misconduct by a third party. That is spurious. No insurance company would issue a policy to a vendor or a purchaser with respect to conveyancing. There is no choice in that. Let us get it right straight away. You cannot purchase a professional indemnity insurance policy against the misconduct of a third person. It is not possible to do it. The whole object of professional indemnity is to cover your professional competence. It relates to your ability to do correctly the things which you are entitled to do professionally. If you do something incorrectly, the professional indemnity policy covers you. That is why the premiums, even though extremely high, are low by comparison. The profession itself places certain impediments on the way in which you should operate. You are in danger of losing your professional qualifications if you breach those standards of your profession which you are supposed to uphold. You cannot simply purchase professional indemnity insurance against somebody else doing something to you.

There are many ways in which vendors and purchasers can save money, and this is what this bill is all about. Existing legislation allows an individual to do his or her own conveyancing.

Mr Collins: That spoils your argument.

Mr FIRMIN: No, it does not. An individual can do it, but not for hire or reward. The individual can do it but he cannot charge a fee. People cannot do it for a third person; they can do it only for themselves. In fact, friends of mine in Darwin have done that. I told them that it was not worth the effort. One fellow found out how to do it for his one and only house purchase. He spent 3½ weeks running around Darwin taking advice and getting everything organised to do his own conveyancing. I think that he probably spent more in time and energy than he ever would have by paying the conveyancing fee. However, the act entitles him to do that. He can do it for himself, but not for hire or reward.

The member for Sadadeen is proposing that any person, qualified or unqualified, whether he calls himself a land agent, a fee broker, a conveyancing agent or whatever, can charge a fee without having any qualifications, any financial backing, any responsibility to a trust fund and without professional indemnity insurance. That creates a great risk for the persons involved in the conveyancing, both the vendor and the purchaser.

There are other ways to save money in relation to conveyancing. The fee can be negotiated. The standard fee of \$555, plus the disbursements mentioned by the member for Koolpinyah a moment ago, does not have to be the fee paid. Of course, the disbursements apply regardless of who does the conveyancing. You have to pay your own disbursements even if you do it yourself. Certainly, if an agent is involved, he will charge disbursement fees. Any individual can go to a solicitor and negotiate a fee. It does not need to be the flat \$555 fee. In fact, I have done a considerable number of conveyancing deals with solicitors where the fee has been well below that. Indeed, it has probably been less than half that figure, with a simple disbursement with respect to the searches and the government charges involved. It is a matter of either building up a rapport with the solicitor or finding a solicitor who is prepared to do a fee negotiation. The opportunity exists for money to be saved.

I understand the intention of the bill and I have sympathy towards it. Unfortunately, I do not believe that it protects the people whom it is setting out to assist. The small amount of money which is expected to be saved ...

Mr Collins: \$500 is not a small amount of money.

Mr FIRMIN: They do not get it for nothing. The upper limit of the fee is \$555 so if they save ...

Mr Collins: That is not the upper limit. With disbursements, the figure is normally \$800.

Mr FIRMIN: The disbursements do not change. They are charged regardless. The title searches, transfers of mortgages, bank charges and so forth still have to be paid for.

Mr Collins: What are you comparing it with?

Mr FIRMIN: I am comparing it with the charges that are laid down in the act with respect to disbursements. A small fee would create too great a risk. The government will not accept this bill. If the concept underlying it is to become a reality, there will be a need for considerable regulation in respect of some form of accreditation for anybody who wished to apply for higher

reward. As I said at the outset, we will not accept it at this stage. There would need to be considerable regulation to provide a form of accreditation for anybody who wished to ply for hire or reward in this regard. It would also need to cover the provision of trust accounts to protect people's money during the transfer period. Unfortunately, I cannot support this legislation.

Mr FLOREANI (Flynn): Mr Deputy Speaker, some 15 years ago, I sold a house in Adelaide. I used the services of a land broker and the sale cost me \$50. I came to Alice Springs and purchased a house and was told that I had to use the services of a legal eagle which cost me \$700. That is what this bill is all about.

Legal practitioners are in an excellent position in relation to this matter. They have a guarantee of work. Nobody else can do it except people who wish to carry out their own conveyancing, which most cannot do. The fee is fixed by the Attorney-General and cannot be disputed. That puts legal practitioners in a very privileged position. On the other hand, this bill aims to allow free market forces to operate. It does not aim to allow inferior services to operate. The fact is, however, that the bulk of conveyancing is very routine and can be carried out easily. As the member for Sadadeen said in his second-reading speech, the Department of Lands and Housing has done its own conveyancing. Why not introduce the equivalent of a land broker or a conveyancing expert? The bill allows for more complicated matters still to be dealt with by legal practitioners.

Market forces would work to ensure that unscrupulous or incompetent persons went out of business very smartly. Land transactions always involve government departments which will not be slow in recognising any problems and bringing matters to a head. Competition would lead to better service and lower fees, as the example I gave earlier showed. Something similar happened in the accounting profession - although accountants had their fees set by market forces rather than by the Attorney-General - when companies like H&R Block and the other income tax professionals began to specialise in standard wage and salary tax returns. Accountants screamed, but eventually that approach proved to be very successful and the consumer paid a much lower price. Honourable members should remember that accountants did not have the protection of the law and did not have their fees protected.

Questions have been asked about how conveyancing agents would handle trust accounts. Obviously, they would handle them in exactly the same way as real estate agents do. If real estate agents are controlled, why couldn't conveyancers be controlled? Further, if insurance brokers can have professional indemnity, I see no reason why conveyancing agents or land brokers could not have such indemnity. The income tax professionals, such as H&R Block, made accountancy in the lower end of the market much more efficient and much cheaper. I cannot see any reason why exactly the same would not occur in relation to conveyancing if this bill were accepted by this House. I certainly support the bill.

Mr MANZIE (Attorney-General): Mr Speaker, I certainly commend the concept behind the bill. It is important that members of this House be aware of cost burdens on the community and it is part of our role in this House to attempt to assist the average person in saving on costs and obtaining value for dollars spent. The amendment proposes to repeal prohibitions which prevent non-lawyers from performing conveyancing work for a fee. The government gave this bill a fair amount of thought and, for 3 main reasons, finally decided to oppose the legislation as presented.

Before I go into those reasons, I will say that I have received representations from the Law Society expressing its concerns about the bill. Naturally, the Law Society is keen to preserve its professional monopoly. I think that it is also keen to ensure that professional standards apply in the most important single transaction that most Territorians will ever engage in. I certainly do not intend to hold up a candle for the Law Society or quote from any of its submissions. It is sufficient to say that I have read them and share some of the concerns which they raise.

My first concern with the bill is that it has a very broad scope. It permits non-lawyers to prepare documentation on a dealing relating to land, such as mortgage or a discharge of caveat. Such documents are of sufficient complexity that, in most cases, one has to be a lawyer to understand them and sometimes even then it is difficult. In some Australian jurisdictions, the conveyancing monopoly has been relaxed for some types of dealings only. I think the member for Flynn mentioned Western Australia, which is a good example of that. In Western Australia, any person may prepare a transfer of land. However, whilst in Western Australia transfers can be effected by the completion of a standard form, unfortunately, in the Territory, we are still trapped in the nineteenth century because the Real Property Act of 1883 applies to land titles here. The act is under review at present. The Land Law Committee is looking at it and I am hoping for an early result so that the act can be brought into the twentieth century.

As honourable members would be aware, do-it-yourself conveyancing kits exist in many jurisdictions.

Mr Collins: In New South Wales.

Mr MANZIE: Yes, in New South Wales. It is my hope that that will also be the case in the Territory one day. Possibly, we might even be in a position to write it.

Mr Collins: I bet the lawyers will not let you.

Mr MANZIE: It is not a matter of whether the lawyers will let us or not. It should be plain to all honourable members that it is quite possible at present for anybody to carry out his own conveyancing work or to carry out conveyancing work for any other person provided that he does not charge for so doing.

Mr Collins: That is silly. It allows lawyers to keep a monopoly on charging.

Mr MANZIE: It does not make it silly. It does not happen very often and, occasionally, when it does happen, it is mucked up.

The second reason for opposing the honourable member's bill is that, when non-lawyers are permitted to carry out conveyancing, client safeguards applicable to non-lawyers are unavailable. It is easy to say that everything can be fixed in other ways and that insurance and so forth can apply. However, safeguards do exist now and they are important. The purchase or sale of a house will often be the biggest transaction that Territorians ever make. We have to remember that safeguards such as professional indemnity insurance for negligence are available when lawyers are used. Safeguards definitely exist in respect of trust account obligations. There is a public compensation fund which operates in cases of fraudulent behaviour.

Any changes to the current situation would require suitable protection mechanisms. One certainly cannot advocate the implementation of a system which does not protect consumers. It is easy enough to say that the buyer should beware. We all know that there are occasions when well-intentioned people deal with unscrupulous individuals and are ripped off, and that is the end of them. The member for Flynn said that it would be okay because conveyancing agents would always be dealing with government departments and, if anyone did the wrong thing, he would go out of business. It is not all right for individuals to go out of business if they take somebody's savings with them. If there are 10 agents and 9 of them go out of business because they are no good, they will take 9 people down the tube with them. I cannot accept that that is appropriate.

Another quite alarming prospect is that of people holding amounts such as \$50 000 or \$80 000 in the form of cash or a bank cheque and being under no legal obligation to place that money in a trust fund so that it cannot be touched or used in any way pending settlement of a real estate transaction. I believe that, if they sat down and thought about it, most honourable members would also find that undesirable.

The final point which needs to be raised is the amount of money which would be saved under this legislation. How much would a vendor or purchaser save? It is clear that, in terms of the total transaction, the saving would not be significant. The current fee for a transaction involving an average home priced at \$80 000 would be \$600 at the most. Some of the costs are fixed, no matter who does the transaction. When an average house is sold for \$80 000, the seller pays \$3000 in real estate agent fees. The buyer pays stamp duty and registration fees of \$200 to \$2000 depending on whether the person has a first or second mortgage. The bank receives between \$600 and \$1000 in bank fees. The lawyer receives \$600 maximum. That is all we are talking about. Given that, under a conveyancing system of licensed conveyancers, it will cost around \$300, we are talking about a saving of maybe \$200 or \$300 on an \$80 000 purchase. The ramifications of its going wrong are horrendous and I do not think we have the right to condone the possibility of that happening.

As I said earlier, the underlying ideas are quite good. Possibly, if more work were done in relation to the necessary protections, professional indemnities, compensation for fraud etc, the Assembly could look at some such system. We must realise, of course, that we are talking about a saving of only \$200 or \$300 on an investment of \$80 000. For the reasons given, the government will not support the legislation, but certainly we have no problems with the concept. Hopefully, in the near future, we will be in a position to have some sort of conveyancing kit.

Mr BELL (MacDonnell): Mr Speaker, I rise briefly to indicate that the opposition will not be supporting this bill. Substantially, we cannot support it for the same reasons as those given by the Attorney-General. Given the importance of a house transaction to most people, I do not believe that this bill includes the safeguards that are vitally necessary in respect of such a transaction. I do not necessarily accept that the legal profession should hold a monopoly on conveyancing. Conveyancing kits are available in some states. Indeed, I believe that conveyancing by the purchaser can be carried out in the Northern Territory.

Mr Manzie: Yes, it can.

Mr BELL: I have not had the opportunity to confirm that. The concept of conveyancing being carried out by agents is not rejected out of hand by the opposition. However, we believe that appropriate safeguards and matters relating to certification etc need to be addressed to ensure that people who use the services of an agent in this regard are suitably protected. The opposition is not prepared to support the bill in its present form.

Mr COLLINS (Sadadeen): Mr Deputy Speaker, the Attorney-General and the member for Ludmilla suggested that trust funds would not be available for anybody who set himself up to undertake conveyancing without qualifications. As far as I know - and I am sure that I am right - when it comes to buying and selling a house, the lawyers, as the conveyancing agents, do not handle the money. It is handled by a real estate agent who has a trust fund. That has been my experience.

Mr Manzie: No, Denis.

Mr COLLINS: That is the situation.

Mr Manzie: Wrong.

Mr COLLINS: The money is held by the real estate people, not the conveyancing people. Thus, that fear is dispelled for a start.

Secondly, the honourable minister suggested that the price for conveyancing in the Territory on an \$80 000 house is about \$600. That is wrong. The recommended fee is \$555 plus disbursements. My former secretary, who was well known to most members of the House when she worked for the Chief Minister, sold her house in Alice Springs earlier this year and the cost was \$811.25. It was a very straightforward transaction. That is the level of the fees in practice.

The member for Koolpinyah has obviously made quite a study of this. She found out, as I had found out, that the settlement agencies in Western Australia have a fixed fee of \$288 on an \$80 000 sale. That is a saving of \$500. Last week, we passed a bill to alleviate problems that people are experiencing in relation to housing costs and repayments. \$500 may not be much to a person on the minister's salary level but, if your take-home salary is only \$350 a week, as is the case for many people in the community, \$500 is a considerable sum of money.

One would gain the impression from members who spoke on this bill that conveyancing is very difficult to do. Anybody who has examined the matter knows very clearly that at least 95% - and probably that is understating the matter - of the work is done on a word processor by a conveyancing clerk, employed by the solicitor. While he is off having a 3-hour sociable lunch, the conveyancing clerks in the office are doing the work. It is true and the public knows it.

This government has tried to portray itself as having compassion for home owners in the community. It is arguing that conveyancing must remain the preserve of lawyers because they have all the protection in the world. As far as I am concerned, if someone is a professional person, he does not need insurance. I think that is crazy.

Mr Finch: He might not, but his clients might.

Mr COLLINS: That would be the case only in the event of a lack of professionalism. A professional person backs up his work.

Mr Finch: There is nothing perfect in this world, Denis.

Mr COLLINS: There is certainly nothing perfect about the government's argument on this. The member for Flynn gave an example of \$50 for the land broker in South Australia and \$700 in Alice Springs 15 years ago. It is a mort. That is the only word for it. The minister is correct that there are government charges for stamp duty etc. It is a great way for the government to make revenue out of people. That ought to be looked at too. There are mortgage costs which the financial institutions charge and I remember that, years ago, in the party room, the Chief Minister said that that was something which concerned him. In addition, there are the fees charged by the real estate agents.

This is a monopoly. The government and the opposition are supporting a monopoly, and I think there is more to this than meets the eye. Naturally, the dear old lawyers will not be happy to lose something like 70% of their income. In many cases, it is very easy money, earned by their conveyancing staff. They will not give that up without a fight. Of course, they have been very quiet in the media because they know that people are waking up to the fact that those lawyers are on a sweet ride and they are taking easy money from people who are struggling to make ends meet. They have kept very quiet, but certainly they have done their lobbying behind the scenes. I recall very strongly the first time I raised this matter in this Assembly. That was some 8 years ago and I received a serve in the grand manner from the now Senator Bob Collins. I think he was the Leader of the Opposition in this House at the time. He dragged out all the hard cases that he could possibly come up with, and he condemned me roundly. I was stunned, and it took me months to come up with a possible explanation as to why he would react like that. As Leader of the Labor Party, I felt that he could have attracted votes by supporting an action designed to help those who are not so well off. In fact, I thought that he should have raised the matter himself. One day, the solution came to me in the form of 2 words: Labor lawyers. Lawyers kick the party ...

Mr Coulter: Yes, go on. Knock them when they are not here to defend themselves.

Mr COLLINS: That is their problem. They kick the party can pretty well at election time.

Mr Manzie: Denis, it is going to be defeated, mate.

Mr COLLINS: I have my time, and I will take my time.

Mr Coulter: Yes, you can. And you will leave as soon as you have finished.

Mr COLLINS: Mr Deputy Speaker, I came to the conclusion, and I will be happy to stand refuted if someone can offer a more logical reason in its place, that the former Leader of the Opposition, Bob Collins, was keener to protect his source of funds for election time than he was to attract the support which would be gained by conveyancing.

Mr Manzie: Denis, you have turned a sensible argument into the rantings of a fool. You have lost all the respect that you gained with the arguments you put forward.

Mr Coulter: Ask the previous Leader of the Opposition what he thinks about ...

Mr COLLINS: Mr Deputy Speaker, who has the floor at the moment? These people have had their chance to speak. I am astounded and very disappointed that government members should take these rather weak lines. In the Housing Commission, people do this work without any legal training. They have not been trained even as land brokers as happens in South Australia. That is something of a rort nowadays too. They are pushing more and more on to those land brokers in South Australia in order to protect themselves. That has become a protected monopoly too. Their fees are \$390 plus actual costs as against about \$800 in the Territory. The people who do that work in the Housing Commission do not have any training other than what they are taught as they proceed through the public service. They provide a free service for Housing Commission purchasers.

The honourable member for Katherine seems to think this is funny, but I am sure that there are plenty of people in his electorate who would be rather upset by his apparent attitude. There are people in the community who could benefit from this legislation.

It has been mentioned that one group of people who would be very well able to set up in business and make themselves a better living whilst giving an excellent service to the consumer are the conveyancing clerks who work in the lawyers' offices. They do 95% of the work now. They have the capacity to know when a transaction is complicated and when a client would be well advised to seek the services of a lawyer, and I am sure that sort of advice would be appreciated. The land brokers in South Australia do the same. They recognise transactions that are complicated and suggest to people that they see a lawyer.

This bill is all about choice: the right of people to choose their own conveyancing agent. There is nothing in this bill that compels people to go one way or the other. Many may accept the Attorney-General's argument that transactions of this kind are important and decide they would prefer to pay fees to a lawyer to handle the matter. There is nothing in this bill to prevent that. That is one of the choices people would have if this bill were passed. On the other hand, there are other people who would be prepared to set up business in this line. For example, I know that a fair number of conveyancing clerks are extremely interested in this. Obviously, this bill will not be passed, but those people could and would provide a cheaper service. I am not one for setting the price. Let the market forces set the price. People would learn what they could afford to do. If they charge too little, they will go out of business and, if they charge too much, they will lose clients to the competition. Competition is a great way of getting a better price. It is also a great way of ensuring a better service.

One of the arguments I have heard, and I would be most surprised if other honourable members have not heard the same story, is that people do not object strongly to paying the fee and that it is the lack of service that really upsets them. Under the present system, conveyancing takes 4 to 6 weeks. During that time, people can be left in limbo. They are not able to get on with living their own lives and that may well cost them a considerable amount of money. A cynical friend of mine suggested that the first thing the lawyer does is take your conveyancing work and put it in a cupboard for a fortnight because he can hardly charge \$800 for work that can be done in an afternoon. People would be worried by that. Therefore, the paperwork is put into a cupboard for a fortnight before anything at all is done about it. Whether that is true or not I cannot say, but it certainly seems that way.

Much of the conveyancing work could be done in a very short time and people who are specialists in that area would gain a reputation for providing quick, efficient service at a decent price ...

Mr PALMER: A point of order, Mr Deputy Speaker! The honourable member is indulging in nothing other than tedious repetition. This is a mere re-run of his second-reading speech. He has been through it all before and I do not think it is necessary for the honourable member to indulge in such a practice and hold up the business of the House.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: There is no point of order.

Mr COLLINS: Mr Deputy Speaker, if I have done that, that is a problem for members themselves.

The Territory is purely on the Torrens system, which is a simple system to handle and is recognised throughout the world. One of the arguments mounted against this legislation was the question of protection. Mr Chairman ...

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: I beg your pardon.

Mr Coulter: It is Mr Deputy Speaker.

Mr COLLINS: I am talking to you, Sir.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Through the Chair, if you do not mind.

Mr COLLINS: Through the Chair, Sir? That would be a bit difficult.

Some honourable members mentioned that they were very concerned about the apparent lack of protection. Protection is provided because titles will not be registered unless they are correct. The Land Titles Office knows what is required. It will not register a title if the work is not done correctly and that provides a very clear protection. If there were an attempt to defraud, we have a Criminal Code. Fraud is a crime and people could be charged under the code. There are a few simple precautions ...

Mr Coulter: All right, Denis, you are going home in a few minutes. You are not saying anything.

Mr COLLINS: I have time up my sleeve.

Mr Coulter: That is very clever.

Mr COLLINS: I do not go home. I was here until the end last night. You had gone hours earlier. You were not here at 2.30.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! I ask the member for Sadadeen to confine his remarks to the debate before the House.

Mr COLLINS: Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker. I would request that perhaps you might give me some protection from the nonsense from the government benches.

I am quite disappointed at the government's attitude and so are many people in the electorate. This is one matter where the government could have picked up some brownie points.

Mr COULTER: A point of order, Mr Deputy Speaker! Standing order 70 is quite specific in relation to repetition. That is the third or fourth time that I have heard the member for Sadadeen say that he is quite disappointed in the government. His tedious repetition is either of his own arguments or arguments used by other members in this debate. The member is simply wasting the time of the House by not introducing new argument into the debate. I suggest that he is simply repeating himself.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: I ask the member for Sadadeen to confine his remarks to the bill. Perhaps there is a point of order. If the Leader of Government Business thinks there is, maybe he should move that the question be put.

Mr COLLINS: Mr Deputy Speaker, one of the key aspects in all of this is that the attitude adopted by the Labor Party and the government is that people cannot be trusted to take some responsibility for their own dealings. They must be protected at any cost. The aim of the bill is to provide choice for people. If they want to choose a lawyer, they can choose a lawyer. However, the bill will allow them the option of using the services of persons other than lawyers. If that gives them a cheaper and faster service, that is great. If they wish to take that option, it should be available to them and they should be prepared to take the responsibility that goes with it.

We live in a small society and the good reputation or otherwise of agents would be known pretty quickly. People would soon learn who the experienced people were. In addition, if you have access to a fax machine, you can pay a \$3 fee to the Department of Lands and Housing for a title search. When the conveyancing agent tells you that the title has been lodged, you can check by means of this simple process. It will not be registered unless the land titles people have ensured that it is correct. Only then would you pay the fees of the person who has done the transaction. I believe the protections are well and truly available to the community. People should have the right to choose. If they want a lawyer and they want to pay his fees, that is fine. There are occasions when that would be well advised. However, in 95% of cases, people could use an agent, save themselves a considerable amount of money and make living in the Territory a little easier.

The Assembly divided:

Ayes 4

Mr Collins
Mr Floreani
Mrs Padgham-Purich
Mr Tuxworth

Noes 13

Mr Coulter
Mr Dondas
Mr Finch
Mr Firmin
Mr Harris
Mr Hatton
Mr McCarthy
Mr Manzie
Mr Palmer
Mr Perron
Mr Poole
Mr Reed
Mr Setter

Motion negatived.

MOTION

Discharge of Bill from Notice Paper

Mr COLLINS (Sadadeen)(by leave): Mr Speaker, I move that General Business Order of the Day No 4 relating to the Aboriginal Sacred Sites Amendment Bill (Serial 139) be discharged from the Notice Paper.

Motion agreed to.

MOTION

Noting Public Accounts Committee Annual Report 1987-88

Continued from 25 August 1988.

Motion agreed to.

MOTION

Noting Public Accounts Committee Report on Public Administration and Recurrent Expenditure

Continued from 13 October 1988.

Motion agreed to.

SUSPENSION OF STANDING ORDERS

Mr PERRON (Chief Minister): Mr Speaker, I move that so much of standing orders be suspended as would prevent 3 bills, the Police Administration Amendment Bill (Serial 110), the Justices Amendment Bill (Serial 107) and the Bail Amendment Bill (Serial 109), (a) being presented and read a first time together and one motion being put in regard to, respectively, the second readings, the committee's report stage and the third reading of the bills together; and (b) the consideration of the bills separately in the committee of the whole.

Motion agreed to.

POLICE ADMINISTRATION AMENDMENT BILL

(Serial 110)

JUSTICES AMENDMENT BILL

(Serial 107)

BAIL AMENDMENT BILL

(Serial 109)

Bills presented and read a first time.

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

The purpose of the bills is to provide a legislative package to deal with domestic violence in the Northern Territory. On 24 May 1988, the then Chief Minister tabled a domestic violence legislation package consisting of proposals to amend the Northern Territory Justices Act, the Police Administration Act and the Bail Act. The bills were tabled rather than introduced in order to allow public comment on their content. Since that time, numerous organisations have commented on the bills as tabled. Comments have been received from a broad cross-section of the community and from different interest groups within the community. For example, we have received

comments from the Family Law Council of Australia, the Northern Territory Bar Association, the Northern Territory Women Lawyers Association, Crisis Line, the Central Australian Aboriginal Legal Aid Service, the Women's Advisory Council, the Women's Refuge Movement and the Darwin Family Violence and Sexual Abuse Committee.

Mr Speaker, this government is greatly appreciative of the comments which have been made. In general, the comments are supportive of the Northern Territory government's intention to do something about the issue of domestic violence. However, by their very nature, the comments reflect the interests of the various organisations. For example, a number of groups expressed concern that police powers of entry, in the tabled Police Administration Amendment Bill, represented a further extension of police powers. Other organisations, such as Crisis Line, were concerned that the police should have effective powers to be able to deal with the problem. Concern was expressed that the legislative package did not give police sufficient powers to deal with the problem of domestic violence.

As I indicated in my speech to this Assembly during the October sittings of the Legislative Assembly, it is necessary to have a quick and effective means of dealing with domestic violence on a Saturday night or any other night. Because of its very nature, police intervention in cases of domestic violence does not necessarily mean the laying of criminal charges. One of the reasons for this is that, in many instances, the victim of the violence does not wish such charges to be laid. However, in the middle of the domestic violence crisis situation, the victim wishes that the law and, in particular, the police officer attending, should be able to take some positive role and at least cool the waters until such time as the parties are able to sit down and try to sort out the problems. For that reason, the laying of a criminal charge for assault, and the ability to arrest without warrant which is associated with such a charge, is not always appropriate. In a perfect world, where the victims of assault in the domestic violence situation were always willing to proceed with criminal charges, the situation would be clear-cut.

Honourable members know all too well, however, that ours is not a perfect world, which is why provision has been made in this legislative package for an ouster order procedure. The procedure enables a police officer to remove or oust the offender from the home and take the offender to the nearest police station or another appropriate place, for the purpose of making an application for a telephone order. This power would be used in circumstances where the situation at the home was still too volatile to proceed with a telephone order application from the home. The offender can only be so removed and held for a period of no more than 4 hours. Once the telephone order is obtained from or refused by a magistrate, the offender is free to leave the police station or other appropriate place. The reason for such a power is to enable police to deal quickly with a telephone order application without having to be concerned about keeping the parties quiet and non-violent while such an application is being made from the home. Put simply, it protects the victims. Naturally enough, in circumstances where the telephone order application can be made from the home, that will be done. The provisions also allow some time for the offender to calm down.

The power to remove or to oust means that the perpetrator of the violence, as opposed to the victim, has to leave the home. My government believes that, for too long, victims of domestic violence have had to flee from the sanctuary of their homes to seek the protection of the law. Hopefully, this procedure will reduce this trend. It is a compromise measure in that, at one stage, the possibility of giving the police the power to make orders was considered.

However, the view has been taken that a magistrate rather than a police officer should make an order. Because the concept of a power to remove or oust is innovative, the ambit of the legislation as introduced has been limited to disputes between spouses and former spouses, including de facto spouses. My government will be monitoring the legislation carefully to assess the effectiveness of this compromise.

In tabling the legislative package, the then Chief Minister indicated the commitment of this government to the control of domestic violence in the Northern Territory. I reiterate that commitment today. The legislation as introduced provides for the following: restraining orders with a power of arrest attached for breach; the person making the application to be a member of the police force or the victim's spouse; telephone orders; police to have a power of entry where there is belief on reasonable grounds that someone is suffering or has suffered personal injury or that a breach of an order or a breach of the peace is occurring or has occurred; and police to have a power to take the offender away from the home to the nearest police station or other appropriate place for no more than 4 hours for the purpose of making an application for a telephone order. As indicated in previous speeches to the House, the sum of \$70 000 has been included in the Department of the Chief Minister's 1988-89 budget estimates for the Office of Women's Affairs to take carriage of a public education program relating to the legislative amendments.

It is envisaged that the legislation will be passed in the first sittings of 1989. Such passage will coincide with the commencement of a Commonwealth public awareness education program dealing with the issue of domestic violence. It is intended that the Northern Territory public awareness education campaign will run following the public awareness campaign by the Commonwealth. This will mean that the Northern Territory community will be exposed to an advertising campaign on domestic violence for a period of some 6 months.

Funding has been provided to Crisis Line to enable the employment of a counsellor specialising in this area of counselling. The funding will enable people caught up in such incidents to have next-day access to the counsellor. This post-crisis counselling will provide police with a ready reference point for individuals or couples who seek their assistance. Crisis Line will coordinate training for counsellors and other agencies involved in domestic violence counselling, particularly those in the Alice Springs, Katherine and East Arnhem regions.

Mr Speaker, I now turn to the specific provisions of the cognate bills as introduced. The Justices Amendment Bill seeks to insert a new division 8 in the Justices Act. The proposed new definition section of that division, section 100AA, provides for a new definition of 'spouse', which term includes 'a former spouse of the person and a person of the opposite sex who is living or has lived with the person as if he or she were the spouse of the person although not married to the person'.

Proposed section 100AB allows a member of the police force or a spouse to make an application to the court where: a defendant causes personal injury to or damage to property in the possession of the spouse and is, unless restrained, likely again to cause personal injury to or damage; the defendant has threatened to cause personal injury to or damage to property in the possession of the spouse of the defendant and is, unless restrained, likely to carry out that threat; or where the defendant has behaved in a provocative or offensive manner towards the spouse and his behaviour is likely to lead to a breach of the peace and, unless restrained, the defendant is likely to behave

in the same or similar manner. Upon being satisfied on the balance of probabilities that any of those circumstances exist, the court can make an order for such period as specified in the order, imposing such restraints on the defendant as are necessary or desirable to prevent the defendant from acting in the apprehended manner.

In making an order, the court can restrain the defendant from entering premises or limit that person's access to premises. However, before it makes such an order, the court shall consider all relevant factors, including the effect of making or declining to make an order on the accommodation of, and on any children of, or in care of, the person affected by the proceedings. The Justices Amendment Bill enables the order to be made in the absence of the defendant. In those circumstances, the defendant shall be summonsed to show cause why the order should not be confirmed. The order will not be confirmed unless the defendant does not appear at the hearing in obedience to a summons to appear or unless the court, having considered the evidence, confirms the order.

It was suggested by a number of organisations that applications should be capable of being made by people apart from the police and the victims of domestic violence. It has been decided to restrict the applicants to the police or the spousal victim for the time being, because the police are to take a very positive role in relation to this legislation. If there is a demonstrated need for other people to be made applicants, that will be considered in the review of the legislation. It was also suggested that the legislation should be extended to enable somebody to make a complaint on behalf of a child. However, it is considered that provisions of the Community Welfare Act deal satisfactorily with the situation of children in need of care. Those provisions enable a child to be taken into care where it is believed that the child is in need of care. At this time, the legislation will not be extended to cover that situation.

Under proposed new section 100AC, a member of the police force can apply to a magistrate for a telephone order. Before such an application is made, the member of the police force is required to prepare a form setting out the grounds on which the making of the order is sought. When the legislation was tabled by the then Chief Minister in May this year, it was envisaged that telephone orders would operate only in those situations where it was not practicable for members of the police force to obtain an order from the court under section 99(1). In particular, remote communities were cited as an example. However, as adverted to above, there is a belief that people should be able to obtain orders on Saturday nights to deal satisfactorily with situations then arising. For that reason, the telephone order application procedure has been opened up so that it is not confined to remote communities.

Of course the telephone order procedure may have some severe implications for the magistrates of the Northern Territory. Naturally, my government will be keeping the implications of this decision under strict review. However the criterion applying to telephone orders is that they will operate only in situations where it is not practicable for a member of the police force to obtain an order from the court by normal means. The magistrate can make an order only if he or she is satisfied that he or she might reasonably have made the order by the normal means on the grounds set out in the form of application.

Concern was expressed that the procedures in relation to the telephone order applications were too complicated. As a result, they have been finetuned and it is envisaged that the member of the police force making the

application and the magistrate dealing with the application will fill out a pro-forma application form which will become part of the court record. If a telephone order is made, part of the order will be that the matter be returned before the court at the earliest possible date.

Under proposed new section 100AD, the police have been given the power to remove the defendant from the home to a police station or other appropriate place for the purpose of making a telephone order application. The member of the police force has this power only if he or she believes on reasonable grounds that it is necessary to apply for a telephone order and that, unless the person is removed, the spouse for whose protection the order is being sought will be in imminent danger of suffering personal injury at the hands of the person or aggravation of personal injuries already sustained.

The tabled legislation provided that the orders would have effect from the time they were made, irrespective of whether the defendant appeared or was heard on the making of the order. In order to protect the defendant in that situation, a defence provision was inserted to provide a defence that, on the balance of probabilities, the defendant did not know or had no reason to suspect that such an order had been made and was in force.

Concern was expressed that defendants would 'try on' this defence and that proceedings for breach of restraining orders would become complex arguments as to reasonable knowledge. On balance, a decision was made to pull back from the earlier provision and provide that the orders have effect from the time when they are served. However, to counterbalance this, it has been decided to introduce a number of novel service provisions including postal service by AR registered mail and verbal service by a police officer. These are referred to in proposed section 100AF(2). Both of these types of service have been recommended by the 1987 report of the South Australian Domestic Violence Council which, as I am sure honourable members will be aware, has had the restraining order model in place for a number of years.

There are 2 other defences. The first is the defence of emergency to perform a duty specifically given to or imposed on the defendant by a Commonwealth or Territory court or a court of a state or another territory of the Commonwealth exercising Territory jurisdiction to govern the situation where there may be another order in relation to the parties. This may occur under the Family Law Act where, for example, there may be an order by the Family Court in relation to access. It is hoped that this defence will rarely be used because, as part of the procedure for obtaining an order, the parties will have to disclose whether or not they are aware of an order under the Family Law Act. The defence of emergency is to deal with a situation where, for example, the matrimonial home is on fire.

Honourable members will note that the monetary penalty for a breach of order has been increased to \$2000 from the \$1000 indicated in the tabled legislation. Further, a proposed new section 100AH has been inserted to provide that the making of an order against a person under the division will not affect a person's civil or criminal liability.

Finally, proposed new section 100AJ has been inserted to provide that costs cannot be awarded against an applicant in respect of the refusal of the court to make or confirm an order unless the court is satisfied that the making of the order was unreasonable and in bad faith. Having regard to the very nature of the issue with which we are dealing, little useful purpose can be gained by the awarding of costs save in those situations where the laying of the complaint is unreasonable and in bad faith.

The Bail Amendment Bill seeks to insert an additional criterion for consideration when decisions are made to grant or not grant bail. This is that, where the offence alleged against the accused person involves the contravention of or failure to comply with an order under the new division of the Justices Act, the court shall have regard to the likelihood of physical injury being caused or threats being made to a person for whose benefit, expressly or impliedly, the order exists.

The bill to amend the Police Administration Act allows a member of the police force to enter into any premises, vehicle or vessel if he believes, on reasonable grounds, that a person on or in the premises, vehicle or vessel has suffered or is in imminent danger of suffering physical danger at the hands of another person or that a contravention of an order under the new division of the Justices Act has occurred or is about to occur on or in the premises, vehicle or vessel. The provision allows the police officer to remain on or in the premises, vehicle or vessel for such period as he considers necessary to prevent a breach of the peace or a contravention of the order. I commend the bills to honourable members.

Debate adjourned.

BUSINESS FRANCHISE AMENDMENT BILL.
(Serial 162)

Bill presented and read a first time.

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

The purpose of this bill is to introduce amendments to the act foreshadowed in the budget speech to ensure that the Territory's licensing arrangements are not at variance with the recent High Court interpretation of section 92 of the Constitution. The measures now proposed are consistent with those being taken in other jurisdictions and complement the amendments to the act made in August of this year. References to intra-Territory trade are to be removed from the act to ensure that the licensing provisions are applied in a non-discriminatory manner to all merchants, whether they purchase licensable products from the Territory or from interstate sources.

Consequential amendments are necessary and these include providing the Commissioner of Taxes with a power to refund licence fees paid on licensable products which are ultimately sold outside the Territory and attract a fee in the place where they are sold. The amendment requires all persons engaged in the business of selling tobacco or petroleum products to be licensed. Retailers will be required to pay a fee of \$10 for a monthly licence, plus an ad valorem fee of 35% of the value of tobacco purchased from an unlicensed seller. However, whilst retailers will be required to be licensed under the act and be liable to pay the ad valorem fee, under the regulations, they will be able to enter into an arrangement with their wholesaler to pay the fee on their behalf. In all instances, persons engaged in the business of selling licensable products will be required to maintain appropriate records for the relevant dealings.

I turn now to some of the specific aspects of the bill. The deletion of the definition of 'internal trade' and certain other definitions relating to wholesaling in clause 3 is directed to ensuring that the licensing arrangements are compatible with the recent High Court interpretation of section 92 of the Constitution. The amendments in clauses 4 to 9 are consequential on the changes made in clause 4.

Clause 10, which deals with the duration of licences, provides a power for the commissioner to extend the period of a licence in certain circumstances. This will reduce the administrative burden, particularly where the licensee has a small number of sales. The amendment in clause 11 is consequential on the clause 10 amendment. Clause 12 amends section 23 of the act which provides the basis for the assessment of the fees to be paid for a licence under the act. A complementary amendment in clause 13, introducing section 23A, entitles a licensee to a refund where the relevant goods are ultimately transferred interstate and sold subject to the payment of the relevant state fee by a licensed merchant in that state or territory.

Finally, the bill contains other consequential provisions relating to the marking of invoices, unlicensed sales and for the regulations to enable a person to pay the fee on behalf of another. The current licensing provisions will remain in place until the amendments have received assent. Licensable products traded after that date will be subject to the new provisions. I commend the bill to honourable members.

Debate adjourned.

PLANT DISEASES CONTROL AMENDMENT BILL
(Serial 155)

Bill presented and read a first time.

Mr REED (Primary Industry and Fisheries): Mr Speaker, I move that the bill be now read a second time.

The bill amends the Plant Diseases Control Act which came into effect in 1979. The act was introduced to prevent the entry to and spread in the Northern Territory of plant diseases. Thus, it is an important piece of legislation in that it provides protection to our emerging agricultural and horticultural industries. In particular, the importation or the possession of scheduled fruit fly host fruits produced interstate is prohibited by ministerial notices under the act.

During the years of its operation, 2 major deficiencies have emerged which have had the effect of reducing the effectiveness of the act. Section 8, which deals with the prohibition of importation, provides penalties for contravention or failure to comply with the prohibition notices. Nowhere, however, is there provision for the government to seize and dispose of the prohibited goods. I am sure honourable members will appreciate the incongruous nature of this situation. We can prohibit the importation of potentially dangerous goods but, if they do arrive, we can only punish the importers but not remove the danger. This bill therefore introduces the necessary provision to remedy this situation.

Section 14 of the current act empowers an inspector to enter premises or conveyances to inspect goods in which he suspects the presence of plant disease. However, a magistrate has found that this does not necessarily give the inspectors the right routinely to inspect host produce imported from areas where fruit fly is known to exist. I think honourable members will agree that it is not unreasonable to suspect that any or all host produce from an infected area could be infected and therefore should be subject to inspection. The bill before us now seeks to amend the act to clarify the inspector's role in this regard. The amendments to sections 8 and 14 also require consequential amendments to the definitions of 'plant' and 'fruit'. The opportunity is being taken in this bill to make an editorial amendment in

section 21. This clarifies the information relating to a person's name and address which should be provided to an inspector on request.

As I have said already, the Plant Diseases Control Act is the key weapon in our ongoing fight to protect the Territory's agricultural and horticultural industries. This bill improves the effectiveness of this weapon and can only benefit our primary producers without adversely affecting Territorians generally. I commend the bill to honourable members.

Debate adjourned.

ADJOURNMENT

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

Mr EDE (Stuart): Mr Speaker, I rise to talk about a number of matters which I think should be raised. The first is in relation to the provision of housing at an outstation in my electorate which is sometimes known as Mulga Bore. This community had fought for quite some time to obtain facilities such as water and housing and I think that I should put on the record a tribute to the pastoralist concerned, Mr Bob Purvis of Atartinga Station, who worked very closely with the community to provide an excision over part of the area. Unfortunately, there were some problems in that the water had a very high nitrate level. Initially, the government decided that it would not provide any facilities in the area because of that problem. I have spoken before about my attitude to the acceptable nitrate levels imposed by the WHO. These could have the effect of preventing people from obtaining any water at all or force them into using water that is far below the standard of water that has nitrate levels somewhat higher than the WHO limits.

After considerable negotiation, it was agreed that water tanks would be provided so that some fresh water would be available for small children and pregnant mums and that the Arapunga Health Service would check the community on a regular basis to ensure that there were no signs of oxygen starvation, which is the problem with high nitrate levels. On this basis, it was agreed that houses would be provided to the community.

I have not been out to that community for a few months. However, I received a letter from Bob Purvis asking quite bluntly who the idiot was who sited the houses. He said that he had provided a substantial area of land for the people so they would not have to live in each other's pockets. Nevertheless, somebody sited all the houses cheek by jowl with only some 20 ft between them. I went out to have a look and it is true. It is absolutely outrageous. When I saw the houses being built that close together, I knew immediately that there would be social problems. There could be problems to do with sorry business, if you like, where people have to vacate a house. It could not be confined to that house or a group of houses; it would mean that the whole community would have to leave. I talked about it to Lindsay Bird, the community leader there. He was deeply disgusted. He said that he was told that, if they wanted the houses, that was where they had to go.

I found out later that the Housing Commission has claimed that it had undertaken full negotiations. If that is the level of the negotiations, it certainly leaves a great deal to be desired. It is unfortunate that the government does not seem to be able to sit down and talk to people and find out where they want their homes. If, as in this case, there is plenty of land and the houses are placed in clusters, with different groups in different

areas, the whole community would find it much easier to live together and there would be much less friction. It is most unfortunate. I hope that the honourable minister will advise us how it came about that the houses were all lumped together in a tiny portion of the excision without any recognition of cultural and traditional factors.

I would like to pay tribute to a great Territorian, a man who played a very vital part in our history. I refer to Mr Tom Williams who was buried on 8 November this year. Tom Williams was one of the great old men of the Territory. He was born in Alice Springs some 96 years ago. His mother was an Aranda and his father was believed to have been from somewhere in the north of England. As a lad, he was what was called a 'camel boy'. He worked his way around the Centre and became involved in some of the really great cattle droves of central Australia and the establishing of some of the major properties in our area. He was a man of great strength and character.

It was a real source of pride for him that, at the Newcastle Waters Droving Australia send off, he was recognised as one of the great old men of the Territory. He saw the development and the dramatic changes in the Territory over a substantial proportion of our history. He was a self-educated man. He received only 1 year of formal schooling and yet he was bilingual. In later years, he was fond of quoting from the Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyam, Henry Lawson, Banjo Paterson and C.J. Dennis. He could reel off reams of verse by heart. He always enjoyed discussing the great religions of the world.

His contribution to the pastoral industry is too immense to indicate at the moment. I remember him telling me about the work he did with Wally Braitting, bringing cattle from the Top End to establish Mount Doreen and the work he did in setting up Anningie. I believe that he was involved also in Bond Springs with the Chisholms. They were very close friends over a period of years. He was a really great Territorian. He worked right across the north of Western Australia at Wave Hill Station, Mataranka Station, Roper Valley, Mount Skinner and Narwietooma. He worked with Jock Nelson and with almost all of the great characters of northern Australia, many of whom have already passed away.

Tom Williams was very proud of the fact that his father died as a result of being thrown from a horse at the age of 86. Tom gave up riding when he was 85. After that, he spent a lot of time fossicking around the place for gold, tantalum and tin. I first met him when he lived out at Goosy's Bore. You yourself probably knew him when he lived out there, Mr Speaker. At that time, I was standing for parliament. One of the people with me said: 'Do not finish that nomination form. Tom Williams wants to sign it'. I could not quite work that out at the time because I had never met Tom Williams. I was told that he had put the message around that I had to take the form out for him to sign. I went out to Goosy's Bore and sat down with the people there. We boiled the billy and had a yarn for a few hours and he told me some of his stories. Then he said: 'Where is that form? I am going to sign it'. After he had done that, I asked him why he had wanted to sign it. His answer was that some of his very close relatives intended standing for the Australian Democrats and that he wanted to sign my nomination form to show that he dissociated himself from that breach of faith and was supporting the Labor Party.

My daughter got to know Tom years later, when he was much older and a resident of Hetty Perkins Hostel where she was working. She has many stories to tell that demonstrate what an amazing old man he was. He was always

wanting to tell people his history. He was trying to write a book at that stage and, in her free time, she would write down some of his stories for him. Because he was 95 or 96, his stories were somewhat lacking in direction but they were clear on particular points. He wanted to make sure that people knew about some of the aspects of life in the Territory 80 years ago - such things as the methods used to get water from wells or to round up camels. Those things were very clear in his mind and he wanted to get them down on paper.

I can recall an occasion 3 years ago when Jeffrey Shaw and I were called in to Barrow Creek. We saw Tom Williams getting out of a battered old Land Rover with a friend of his whom he used to call the 'young fella'. He was some 5 years younger than Tom, which made him almost 90. We said: 'What are you doing up here? You are supposed to be at the Hetty Perkins Hostel'. He said: 'No, I cleared out from that mob. They keep trying to tie me down. I wanted to get up here'. We asked him what he intended to do in Barrow Creek. He said: 'The first thing that I am going to do is get a couple of those young women and beat you fellas to it'. With that, he went off to the pub, had a few beers and charmed everybody in the place.

Wherever he went, people would gather around Tom Williams to hear his stories. I am proud to have known him. He was a great man and I hope that his history has been recorded. I have been told that various people have recorded parts of it. People like him are the human legends of the Territory. It is important that we record their stories while they are alive because, once they are dead, it is too late. People like to relive those stories and to talk about them. They are an essential part of our history and should be preserved.

Tom Williams was a great man and I say to his family: 'Bear up. He has gone to his rest but he has taught us many lessons'. People like him should be listened to. We need their understanding of their own lives and times to help us to understand ourselves.

Mr SPEAKER: Honourable members, I would like to associate the Chair with the remarks made by the member for Stuart. As he indicated, I also knew Tom Williams and I could not agree more fully with the remarks that he made. Other members may be aware that Tommy was the stepbrother of Mort Conway and his sister Kate, who are also great characters. They all played a vital role in central Australia over a long period.

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH (Koolpinyah): Mr Speaker, recently I attended a conference in Darwin on the subject of the Greenhouse Effect. I found it very interesting. It lasted for a whole day and was attended by a wide cross-section of people from the community. I was very pleased to note that many public servants from various departments attended the meeting, together with people who attended on their own behalf and people who are strongly aligned with the environmental lobby. I found it very interesting to hear people putting forward their points of view without any animosity. Everybody appeared to be listening to the other person's point of view. The thing which struck me most strongly was the genuine concern of all people at the conference to work actively towards lessening the impact of the Greenhouse Effect at a personal level in the Northern Territory and in Australia.

One of the major causes of concern was the fact that sprays with CFC propellants were still being used in households and elsewhere and were still being sold in supermarkets. Restrictions on the use of these propellants would help lessen the problem of the hole in the ozone layer, which is supposed to be spreading from the Antarctic, and would contribute to lessening

the impact of the Greenhouse Effect which is beginning to be felt all over the world. I would like to think that the public servants who attended the conference, some of whom were senior and some of whom were not so senior, will apprise their ministers of what occurred. Incidentally, I noted that ministers and MLAs were conspicuous by their absence although I believe that the member for Barkly attended for a short time.

When I returned to my office, I realised that it contained 2 fire extinguishers, 1 of which is a halon extinguisher which uses CFCs. Having been told at the conference that it is in our interests to inhibit the use of CFCs in our daily life, I decided to make inquiries about the use of this type of fire extinguisher by the Northern Territory Fire Service. I wrote to the Chief Fire Officer, who kindly sent me an interesting reply which mentioned action which the Northern Territory Fire Service is considering. The letter stated:

The Australian Assembly of Fire Authorities, of which the Northern Territory Fire Service is a member, recognised the need to develop a national policy which addressed the use of BCF and other halon fire suppressants. There is also a bill before federal parliament, which I believe has been through a first reading, and broadly restricts the import, export and manufacture of both CFCs and halons to a quota system.

The letter goes on to say that there is a representative from the Northern Territory Fire Service on the Australian Assembly of Fire Authorities' working party and that that representative has advised the Chief Fire Officer that BCF and other halon-type extinguishers will not be recommended by the Northern Territory Fire Service in future where a viable alternative is available. I believe that this is an initial step in the right direction.

I believe that it is time for the government to consider restricting the sale in the Northern Territory of substances using CFC propellants. We have legislation dealing with drugs and poisonous substances which can and cannot be legally sold or used and we have similar legislation dealing with the use of pesticides in the horticultural and agricultural industries in the Northern Territory. We have legislation which deals with food products which are produced from such things as eggs, milk and meat as a result of manufacturing processes. Such legislation establishes specific standards. Although I never like to suggest restrictive legislation, nevertheless, as time goes on and we realise that certain people are not doing the right thing by themselves or the community, restrictions have to be introduced to restrict their behaviour. It is not outside the bounds of possibility for the government to introduce legislation to restrict the use of these propellants in substances that people buy from supermarkets and other places. Many firms have themselves restricted the use of CFCs in their products and now put out the same product with a hand pump adaptor. These are firms that are committed at all times to preserving the environment.

I would like to touch on another matter which I have publicised in our local press in the rural area. We have 2 newspapers in our rural area, both of which are very widely read by people there. I write a column in each newspaper. Usually, before I write, I try to ensure that my information is correct and only on one recent occasion was it apparent that I might have led somebody up a wattle as a result of remarks I made in reference to the subject about which I intend to speak. The authority on which I relied for the remarks I made was a publication presented initially to this Assembly by the Chief Minister. Certain facts were refuted in a press statement attributed to the minister responsible for the Power and Water Authority.

Mr Deputy Speaker, on 4 October 1988, the Chief Minister presented a publication to the Assembly entitled 'The Territory on the Move'. At page 22 of that document, under the heading 'Water', there is a paragraph which states: 'Both Katherine and Darwin have considerable potential surface water sources. Planning is well advanced to reserve dam sites to meet the long-term needs for water. The government has decided that, when required, the next dam site to augment the Darwin water supply will be the Warrai site at Adelaide River'. The comment refers to a government proposal to build a dam in the Darwin rural area and/or at Adelaide River and/or in the Batchelor area to augment the Darwin water supply. Some 6 sites were indicated, 2 in my electorate and the other 4 in the electorate of the member for Victoria River - Acacia Hills and Tumbling Waters.

That statement was made in a document presented on 4 October. On 27 October, 2 or 3 weeks later, a statement attributed to the minister responsible for the Power and Water Authority appeared in the Litchfield Times, which is a well-known rural newspaper. That statement said: 'Warrai and Marrakai on the Adelaide River and Mt Bennett on the Finnis River are the preferred sites for the new dams to meet Darwin's long-term, future water requirements'. Thus, in 1 publication, the Chief Minister indicated that only Warrai would become a dam site and, a few days later, the Minister for Mines and Energy stated that 3 sites are still being considered.

Mr McCarthy: You didn't read that Noel. That is not right. The first statement says Warrai will be the next.

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH: You can speak later. The information provided by the Chief Minister indicated that Warrai is the site. Later, the Minister for Mines and Energy indicated 3 preferred sites for dams to meet Darwin's long-term water requirements. The government is not going to build 3 dams. It will build 1 dam on 1 of those 3 sites. What sort of a confused situation does that present to the people whose land will be affected? It is only right that these 2 senior ministers should at least get their act together and tell the people exactly which dam site is to be chosen. We know that neither the Tumbling Waters site nor the Acacia Hills site will be chosen. We know that the Batchelor site will not be chosen, but we do not know which site will be chosen.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I think that it is ridiculous that we are still sitting here at 10.50 pm tonight. I left the House at 2 am this morning. I understand that the House continued sitting until 2.30 am. Last week, the House did not adjourn until 12.30 am on 2 days and 10.30 pm on the third. In my view, the government is not running these sittings properly. It should have more consideration for proper government in that sitting days should finish at a proper time. Look at the number of members sitting here listening. There are 3 members on the government side, 3 members on this side and yourself, Mr Deputy Speaker, out of a total of 25 members. I think a contributing reason for the absence of other members is the fact that these sitting days are extending too late into the night. I am sure that, with the application of a little intelligence, of which there does not seem to be a great deal on the other side, and a little thought for good government, these sitting days could finish at a more respectable time, and definitely much earlier than they have.

If there is so much government business to be done and so many statements to be made, it would make much more sense if we sat more frequently during the year and finished at a reasonable time. I do not believe that anybody can give of his or her best after sitting in this Chamber listening to

proceedings, waiting around and doing this and that, from 10 am until this time at night. A person needs to walk about from time to time and to take nourishment if he or she is to remain alert. It is not good enough. I hope that the Leader of Government Business and other honourable members of some seniority in the party on the other side of the House will consider the point of view that I have put forward. I deprecate these late sitting days most strongly. Not only are they of great inconvenience to the actual members of the Assembly but also to the staff of the Assembly, particularly the staff of Hansard. I think it is time that serious consideration was given to this vexing subject.

Mr REED (Katherine): Mr Deputy Speaker, I rise tonight to talk on an article that appeared in the Weekend Australian of 26-27 November. It relates to an Australian Broadcasting Corporation threat to axe rural radio services. These services provide popular programs throughout rural Australia and they are a very effective means of communicating information, some of which is quite essential. People in the rural areas are dependent on programs such as the Country Hour to obtain this essential information. Mr Deputy Speaker, you would be aware that the Country Hour is broadcast throughout the Territory on 5 days a week. It includes a news broadcast and, of course, it provides an opportunity for people in the rural regions of Australia to listen to a news service. In fact, it is fair to say that many people in rural Australia focus the activities of their day on the Country Hour. They head back to the homestead to have lunch and attend to a bit of business, and to tune into the ABC Country Hour program so that they can pick up on the news of the day and other essential services and information that are provided by that program.

This news article of last week contained some quite alarming statements which should be drawn to the attention of the ABC. In fact, I will be doing that on behalf of the people of the rural areas of the Northern Territory. One statement was: 'The head of ABC rural programs, Mr Colin Munro, told the National Farmers Federation Council meeting that the decision to change the format of the Country Hour had been taken on the basis of falling audience numbers in the metropolitan areas without any survey data from regional areas'.

I find that too much to believe. It seems incongruous that the principal reason for reducing a program which is an essential means of communicating with rural Australia is that metropolitan audiences are dropping off. Apart from the news, the program includes important information such as weather reports. People on the land are very dependent on rainfall advice, flood warnings and road reports. Such information can save lives in certain circumstances. At other times of the year, fire warnings, fire reports etc are provided through the Country Hour. Another important component of the program is public notices. These services are of the utmost importance to people in rural areas.

Equally as important is marketing advice to agriculturists and horticulturists, information on cattle sales and fish marketing advice. There is every reason to assume that people on the land are dependent on information in programs such as the Country Hour for the marketing of their products. Another important component of the program is that it provides information and discussion on topical subjects such as the use of new chemicals and advice on innovations within the industry. The program provides a forum for suppliers and government agencies to provide to rural producers important information that has a fundamental effect on their day-to-day activities.

According to this article, there has been no consultation with principal industry groups. Past surveys have shown that the Country Hour had one of the highest audience ratings among rural listeners of any radio program. The Country Hour is really an institution in rural Australia. It is a reliable and well-established program. It could be argued that such information could be provided at other times throughout the day, but the fact that the program is well established contributes to its effectiveness. To have an alternative whereby information of this nature may be disseminated throughout the day's broadcast may well suit the people of the metropolitan areas of Australia but it will not suit the people in the rural areas, particularly the people scattered throughout the Territory on pastoral leases. The people of rural Australia should be concerned about this. On their behalf, I will certainly be writing to the Australian Broadcasting Commission to indicate my concern about the matter and to draw its attention to the fact that this program is of extreme importance to the people in the rural areas of the Northern Territory.

Mr McCARTHY (Victoria River): Mr Speaker, on 8 February this year, John and Jenny Whatley of Tortilla Flats received the following letter:

Dear Whatley family,

May I extend to you my congratulations for the recognition you received in the recent publication 'Farming the Australian Way'. I was interested to read about the way you have tackled your particular property's potential and constraints, and the management practices you have adopted. My task sees me mainly involved in broader policy activities on commodities and matters of economics, trade, resources and infrastructure. It is always refreshing to learn about what is happening on a particular farm and gain a human perspective of the farm's operation. With every best wish for the future,

Yours sincerely, John Kerin

Mr Speaker, that is in direct contrast to a letter received by the Whatleys from a colleague of the Hon John Kerin, Hon Kim Beazley, Minister for Defence. I will get around to that letter in a little while.

John and Jenny Whatley, being good Catholics, called their farm Prague. Because it was their life's dream, they prayed to the Infant of Prague in order to be able to own their own block of land. Through what they believed at the time to be the good graces of the Infant of Prague, they were able to purchase their property at Tortilla Flats. They purchased the property from one John Wilkes in 1978. John Wilkes had purchased it from the federal government. At the time, it was leasehold and, apparently, the lease included a clause indicating that there were bombs on the property. However, prior to the sale to the Whatleys, that clause had been removed when the land title had changed. The Whatleys were not aware that the property that they had purchased was covered, quite literally, in live war-time bombs.

In 1984, a former Chief Minister, Paul Everingham, wrote to the Minister for Defence requesting that he take some action to overcome the problems the Whatleys were experiencing. Following that, other Chief Ministers, other Ministers for Primary Production and Bernie Kilgariff, a former Senator for the Northern Territory, wrote to the Minister for Defence. I have written twice. Only recently were any replies received. These were copies of a letter sent to the Whatleys in October 1988 telling them what stance the federal government would take with regard to the bombs.

Early this year, the Whatleys viewed and read with a great deal of interest media reports of the Auditor-General's findings with regard to some difficulties that the Minister for Defence, Hon Kim Beazley, was having in getting information from his department. In fact, at that time, he had been misled. The Whatleys wrote to the Auditor-General putting the case that they had previously put to the Minister for Defence and asking that he investigate on their behalf.

Mr Speaker, I have a copy of the Auditor-General's report of March 1987 in which Tortilla Flats is directly referred to. I refer to clause 7156:

A more recent case which has not been finalised concerns Tortilla Flats in the Batchelor Adelaide River region of the Northern Territory about 100 km south of Darwin. In this case, the owner of a property of about 4000 ha first made representations to the department in July 1984.

An air force explosive ordinance disposal team inspected the property in October/November 1984. The team reported that the area had been used by army and air force during World War 2 and that a number of UEXO found would make cultivation of the property dangerous. The department estimated that a UEXO search of the property would take 4 years and would cost \$3m. Furthermore, the former range area was believed to cover about 10 000 ha and therefore neighbouring properties may also contain UEXO.

Audit investigations concerning this case have revealed that, in the early 1960s, following inquiries by the Northern Territory administration and the then Department of Territories, the air force undertook a clearance of arable lands in the locality that could be used for development and released as experimental farms. The task did not involve below the surface clearance of the major impact zone and this was indicated by permanent signposts.

The clearance was undertaken on the understanding that no guarantee could be given that all the UEXO had been removed. The Department of Defence has advised that the actions taken to reduce hazards in the area at the time were considered by both the Departments of Defence and Territories to be all that was reasonably necessary for the projected use of the land. The department was also advised that it agreed to deal with the subsequent discovery of UEXO as and when found.

In 1966, the property was leased for farming development and was first occupied by the current owner in 1987. In March 1985, in response to a departmental request, the owner of the property advised of his intentions to develop the property further. At that time, the Minister Assisting the Minister for Defence was informed of the situation regarding UEXO contamination at Tortilla Flats. In October 1985, the Department of Local Government and Administrative Services advised details of a title search of the property, including advice that there were no conditions indemnifying the Commonwealth in respect of UEXO. In December 1985, the owner again made representations to the department in conjunction with ministerial representations. As of December 1986, the response to the owner has not been given.

Mr Speaker, as I said before, that response did not turn up until last month. There is no indemnity. The Auditor-General's report continues:

Legal advice is that, while it controlled the land, the Commonwealth may have been able to take measures to protect itself but, once the land passes into the control of another, the Crown Solicitor points out that protection would be much more difficult. In these circumstances, the Crown Solicitor suggests the giving of a full notice of the risk to any purchaser and the obtaining from a purchaser of an indemnity in respect of any liability that the Commonwealth might incur as a result of the UEXO.

At the time when the Commonwealth transferred the title to the Whatleys, it did not seek that indemnity and it does not have such an indemnity. The Whatleys have written to an enormous number of authorities in their effort to obtain some satisfaction. On 22 August this year, they wrote to the Secretary of the Department of Defence. The fourth paragraph of their letter says: 'During 1987, 38 UEXO were located within 1 km radius of our home and several of these were 60 lb high explosive missile heads'. Mr Speaker, I have been on site when disposal experts have been on the property to explode that ordinance and I can attest to the fact that they get quite panicky about it. They make it very clear that you have to get the hell out of the area and not go anywhere near the stuff, which is so dangerous that it could go off at any time. They will not let anybody near it. Of course, the Whatleys are tilling that land which is literally covered with high explosive missiles.

The Auditor-General's report refers to injury or damage caused by UEXO. The Whatleys' property is not the only place in Australia where this problem exists. The report says: 'The incidence of injury or damage arising from UEXO in Australia appears to be low although the department does not maintain consolidated records of such injuries and damages'. The report notes, however, that in 1970, an accident at Mortar Point in New South Wales led to 2 children being injured, 1 of them seriously, and that departmental records 'disclosed that settlement of this case resulted in payment of \$116 100 plus costs by the Commonwealth and indicated that there were other substantial costs incurred for the employment of legal counsel, medical examinations and administration. These latter costs were not quantified'. To my way of thinking, that indicates that the Commonwealth saw itself as legally responsible for the harm done to those children. I believe that it would also be found to be at fault if any injury befell a person on the Whatleys' farm.

Recently, the Whatleys received a reply from the Secretary of the Department of Defence. Copies have been sent to all people who have written on behalf of the Whatleys over the years, including the Chief Minister, myself and others. The letter says:

Dear Mr and Mrs Whatley,

I refer to your correspondence dated 22 August, correspondence dated 15 July 1987 from your solicitors Cridland and Bauer and my correspondence of 9 February 1987. I also refer to your previous correspondence.

I might say here that that correspondence goes back ad infinitum.

In my correspondence to you of 9 February 1987, in response to your concerns about the presence of unexploded ordinance UEXO on your property, I stated that officers of my department had been asked to

examine the prospect of the eastern area of your property being searched to a depth consistent with rice-growing and I also stated that I was seeking the advice of the Australian Government Solicitor.

I am informed that personnel of the Royal Australian Air Force later searched a 450 ha section of the area in 1987 and did not then find any UEXO. You state in your letter dated 22 August 1988 that you were orally advised by RAAF officers that your river floodplain was safe to cultivate. This area is approximately 700 ha, of which 100 ha is under rice cropping. As confusion clearly exists in relation to the section searched, I have requested officers of my department, as a matter of priority, to provide you with the necessary detail to identify accurately the section searched. However, I repeat the statement that I made in my correspondence of 9 February 1987, that no amount of searching could provide a guarantee that every item of UEXO would be found.

I am concerned that you be made fully aware of the dangers that exist on your property as a result of the presence of UEXO. I have to inform you that a large area of land in the Batchelor region, of which your land forms part, was used by Australian and allied forces during World War 2 as an aerial bombing, rocketing and artillery live-firing range. A proportion of the aerial bombs, rockets and artillery rounds referred to above would not have exploded upon impact with the ground and would have been left above and below the surface of the ground of your property.

As you are aware, UEXO has been found on many areas of your property and it is likely that items of UEXO now lie upon or below the surface of your property. UEXO is considered to be extremely dangerous as it can explode if disturbed, causing loss of life or injury to persons and can cause damage to property.

The letter continues with statements such as: 'The exact extent of UEXO contamination of your property is not known ... I am aware that searches for UEXO have been undertaken on various areas of your property prior to that undertaken in 1987'. It refers to an area of 121.4 ha which was signposted when the Whatleys bought the property. The Whatleys were aware that the area was contaminated and have never desired to till it. The letter says: 'With respect to the warning signs placed on the 121.4 ha area of your property, the Commonwealth is prepared to continue to bear the cost of their continued maintenance'. In other words, it is happy to continue painting them:

Should any one of these signs become illegible or be destroyed or damaged or the vision of them become obstructed by the growth of flora, you are requested to contact the local defence authorities. It should not be implied from the erection and maintenance of these warning signs that it is only this area of your property that is in danger.

That means that there probably are bombs outside the signposted area. The letter continues:

It should also not be implied that, by the erection and maintenance of these signs, the Commonwealth accepts any liability for loss or damage to persons or property or any economic loss resulting from the presence of UEXO at this or any other UEXO-affected area. In fact, any such liability is denied. No doubt, you will seek your own legal

advice as to your responsibility for any UEXO which may be on your property.

In your correspondence dated 22 August 1988, you in fact requested that I advise as to what steps my department will take to render your property safe from risks presented by the presence of UEXO.

At this stage, the Whatleys do not want \$3m to clear their property. They want the Commonwealth government to purchase it. They would happily move off the property because they are fed up to the back teeth. They have been lied to and they have now been given the ultimatum: 'Take us to court'. The Commonwealth government knows that the Whatleys cannot afford to take it to court, but it says that that is where the matter has to be decided. That cannot happen and I believe that all members of this Assembly should demand that the federal government compensate the Whatleys by purchasing their property.

Mr TUXWORTH (Barkly): Mr Speaker, in speaking in the adjournment debate tonight, I seek the leave of the House to table a report on law enforcement training centres, maximum security prisons, operational units and armed forces depots, by a Mr Desmond Morrison.

Leave granted.

Mr TUXWORTH: Mr Speaker, the report is the work of a senior correctional services officer in the Northern Territory. I do not know Mr Morrison well, but he has been in the Territory for many years. Indeed, I believe that he worked in the cattle industry in central Australia 20 or 30 years ago. He has since returned to the disciplinary core of correctional services where he has been operating as a senior training officer for many years. His experience is so broad that he has been chosen on various occasions to represent Australia in training teams for correctional service staff in Hong Kong and Britain, study tours in the USA and a range of other pursuits. In fact, it would be fair to say that Mr Morrison is widely respected as an efficient officer in his field.

During a period of study leave and, I assume, at his own expense, Mr Morrison has compiled a report detailing his views on the flaws in correctional services administration, not only in the Northern Territory but in Australia generally and other parts of the world. Certainly, the symptoms which he identifies seem to be consistent throughout. Some of the views which Mr Morrison expresses in his report are undoubtedly quite controversial and I have no doubt that the Department of Health and Community Services will attempt to get rid of him for speaking out. Of course, that would be a case of shooting the messenger instead of listening to the message.

I rise tonight to indicate that the report should be considered seriously by the government for several reasons. Firstly, whatever views individuals may hold about correctional services and how they should be run, many of Mr Morrison's points are valid and should be taken seriously by the government. Secondly, there are many points of view in the report that do not necessarily relate to the administration of prisons but certainly reflect the feeling of the general community towards the way correctional services are being run, not only in the Northern Territory but throughout the country.

I would like to deal with a couple of aspects of Mr Morrison's report because it is important to highlight them to the government. They are ongoing concerns and they would be easy to correct if the government had the will to

do so. Firstly, before self-government, the Northern Territory was run by mega-departments. One of the things we learned from that was that they were an absolute disaster and only a clubfoot would recreate mega-departments. In fact, that happened in 1986. We formed mega-departments. One of the smaller departments, which had autonomy, its own Chief Executive Officer and its own budget line, was put into the Department of Health and Community Services. The weakness in doing that is that the smaller departments and the less politically-sensitive and attractive ones finish up having to fight every other person in their bureaucratic system for a share of the cake.

I do not have to tell you, Mr Speaker, that prisons attract no votes. Nobody really cares about them and everybody hopes that they run themselves pretty well. However, the people in prisons sections are always in an adversary role with their bureaucratic peers over who will obtain the slice of the cake and where the funds should be spent. There are always areas more attractive than prisons for government to spend money on.

Thus, by putting correctional services into a mega-department, you immediately create that competitive environment within the bureaucracy that makes it difficult for correctional services to stand on their own. The other thing is that correctional services is a disciplinary service. It is similar to the police and the fire brigade. It is not run like the rest of the public service and it needs to be autonomous in its operations from what it calls the lounge-suit brigade. One of the problems that has been identified in Mr Morrison's report is very simply that the correctional services is now being used as a repository for the lounge-suit brigade who are making their way along their public service career path. They do not have any real affinity for the service. They do not expect to be there a long time. It is a promotion stop for them and the service itself suffers as a result of that.

That is debilitating to all the people in the service who have to try to maintain a good disciplinary service. Any member who wants to talk to the prison officers themselves, informally or formally, will get the same story. The senior officers say that, with this sort of environment, it is very hard to maintain discipline with junior officers because discipline becomes a dirty word and it is not acceptable. Not only that, the situation arises where officers then find it difficult to maintain discipline between themselves and the prisoners. In their own way, the prisoners are becoming a law unto themselves. Every time officers try to maintain discipline, they find that they have Legal Aid breathing over their shoulders for having used a measure of discipline on the prisoners.

I raise this matter tonight because, before Mr Morrison's report was issued, it was quite obvious to me and to other people who were talking to the prison officers that there was great concern in the service about the way the department was going. They would like to see a return to their section of government being established as an autonomous disciplinary core and part of the service where they could operate and effect discipline in the prisons without the fear of having Legal Aid and other inspectorial services breathing over their shoulders to see if they are doing the right thing. It is important to acknowledge that the people who are sent to prison are not being sent to holiday camps. They are not sent to prison because they are nice people. They are sent there because the courts have decided that they should be removed from society for a period of time. I do not believe that they should be incarcerated but, certainly, they should not have the run of the mill to the degree where prison officers find it hard to maintain discipline.

I urge the government to examine the report over the next few months. From what I hear from the prison officers and, if Mr Morrison's feelings are to be taken seriously, there is a need for a review to be undertaken by the government at the earliest possible time. The government will probably be tempted to have Mr Morrison hounded out of the service for speaking out so frankly. In reality, shooting the messenger over issues like this is not likely to have any impact at all on improving the service. The government would probably be doing everybody a great service if it considered his report and did something about it.

Finally, on that point, I will touch again on the feeling in the community. There is a feeling in the general community that prisons need to be run effectively. The people who are sent to jail should stay in jail for the periods that the courts determine. There is a great concern that people are sentenced to terms of imprisonment and, before you can say Jack Robinson, they are back out on the street due to overcrowding or because parole times have been reduced or whatever. That makes the community feel very uneasy.

The last point I want to touch on tonight is one that was raised by the Minister for Primary Industry and Fisheries in relation to ABC radio. It is curious that the honourable minister should raise this point, and it highlights how the attitude of the government waxes and wanes depending on who is sitting behind the driver's wheel. One example that I will quote for the honourable member is that, earlier this year, the government introduced a bed tax. There was a great deal of opposition from the community over that, particularly from the tourist industry, but that did not stop the government. Then the Commonwealth government said: 'If it is good enough to have a bed tax, we will put a tax on entry to parks and reserves'. The moment the Commonwealth did that, all bets were off and the government complained about what a terrible thing that was.

Mr Speaker, we have a similar situation in relation to communications. I note the minister's comments on how rural people are being disadvantaged by changes and cuts to programs such as the Country Hour, but I would say to him that it would be a very helpful exercise for himself and the government to look in their own backyard. There are many small communities which would love to have the benefit of a commercial television signal that could come off the satellite. With a small amount of money for each community, the government could make funds available to the Elliots, the Borroloolas, the Ti Trees, the Pine Creeks and the Matarankas. The government could help make funds available to those communities so that they too could have the benefit of a television service.

What the honourable minister is saying is probably right, but there is a double standard and it is appropriate for the Northern Territory government to try to assist Territory communities to obtain the benefit of the satellite signal. It is totally inconsistent for the government to pay millions of dollars to Imparja to cover the cost of getting the signal from the ground to the satellite and then not provide any assistance at all for those people in remote communities who could receive services via the satellite but are not in a position to do so because they cannot afford it. I would say to the honourable minister that representations that have been made by these communities have been give the big shove ...

Mr McCarthy: No, they have not.

Mr TUXWORTH: They have been given the big shove, in reply to the honourable minister's interjection. They have not forgotten it and they will

bear it in mind for quite a while. They are not communities that have a base from which they can organise raffles and raise funds or enter into arrangements for long-term fund raising. They are communities that are doing it pretty hard, and it would be very simple for the Northern Territory government to say to any one of them: 'We will lend you the \$20 000 or the \$30 000 for 4 or 10 years so that you can have the benefit of the satellite signal or we will help you in a number of other ways'. However, to cut them off in the way the government has done and refuse to have any communication with them on the matter is totally unreasonable. Against that background, for the minister to complain tonight that the ABC might be failing in its duty to remote areas just leaves me cold. It really makes me wonder ...

Mr Reed interjecting.

Mr TUXWORTH: What a load of nonsense! How inconsistent can you be, what double talk and what double standards! It is time to practice what we preach and, if it is good enough for the government to lean on the ABC, it is good enough for the government to practice something in its own backyard that would do the Territory a great service. I would welcome any announcement that the minister might like to make that would give small communities in the Northern Territory an opportunity to receive the same commercial satellite signal that the bigger centres receive, because they deserve it as much as everybody else.

Motion agreed to; the Assembly adjourned.

Mr Speaker Vale took the Chair at 10 am.

PETITIONS
'The Last Temptation of Christ'

Mr SETTER (Jingili): Mr Speaker, I present a petition from 719 citizens of the Northern Territory praying that the Assembly request the responsible government to ban the showing of the film 'The Last Temptation of Christ'. The petition bears the Clerk's certificate that it conforms with the requirements of standing orders. I move that the petition be read.

Motion agreed to; petition read:

To the honourable the Speaker and members of the Legislative Assembly of the Northern Territory, the humble petition of the undersigned citizens of the Northern Territory respectfully sheweth that we find the film 'The Last Temptation of Christ' to be offensive in every sense and an attempt to erode the strong Christian beliefs held dear by the majority of the community. Your petitioners therefore humbly pray that you request the responsible government to ban the showing of this film in the Northern Territory.

Strip and Lingerie Shows

Mr BELL (MacDonnell): Mr Speaker, I present a petition from 166 citizens of Tennant Creek requesting the Assembly to enforce voluntary codes of ethics for strip and lingerie shows. The petition bears the Clerk's certificate that it conforms with the requirements of standing orders. I move that the petition be read.

Motion agreed to; petition read:

To the honourable Speaker and members of the Legislative Assembly of the Northern Territory, the humble petition of certain undersigned citizens of Tennant Creek respectfully sheweth that the children of our town are not being protected from the degradation of the so-called sex industry. Your petitioners therefore humbly pray that the Legislative Assembly of the Northern Territory give the voluntary code of ethics for strip and lingerie shows the force of law, and your petitioners, as in duty bound, will ever pray.

DEPUTY CHAIRMAN OF COMMITTEES

Mr SPEAKER: Honourable members, I lay on the Table my warrant appointing the member for Nightcliff, Mr Hatton, as a Deputy Chairman of Committees.

OATHS AMENDMENT BILL
(Serial 163)

Bill presented and read a first time.

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

The purpose of the Oaths Amendment Bill is to provide, first, that children under the age of 14 years are able to give unsworn evidence upon the court being satisfied that the child is competent to do so and, secondly, to provide a new test of competency for children under the age of 14 years to give unsworn evidence.

Currently, the Department of Law is undertaking a review of children giving evidence, with particular reference to children who are victims of sexual abuse. That review is in its preliminary stage only. Some of the issues that the Department of Law is considering include: (a) the difficulties facing a child giving evidence in a formal courtroom atmosphere and whether there are any viable alternatives to that; (b) the desirability or otherwise of the current requirement that a child's evidence needs to be corroborated by some other material particular; and (c) the desirability or otherwise of the current prohibition against the admission of a child's complaint to another person.

All of these issues are controversial. Any proposed amendments to the law which may be recommended as a result of the current review will need to be circulated for public discussion and debate before they are introduced in the Legislative Assembly. However, a problem has arisen, as a result of a recent Supreme Court decision, which requires a more immediate legislative response. The Oaths Amendment Bill has been prepared to remedy this problem. The starting point for the giving of evidence by any person is that it be given on oath or affirmation. However, section 25A of the Oaths Act allows the court to receive evidence from a person, being unsworn evidence, if that person does not understand the nature of an oath or affirmation, but the court must be satisfied that the person understands that he will be liable to punishment if the evidence given is false.

It would seem that, in enacting section 25A of the Oaths Act in 1967, the legislature intended that it would allow all persons, including children under the age of 10 years, to give unsworn evidence. At the same time that section 25A of the Oaths Act was enacted, sections 9A and 9B of the Evidence Act were repealed. Section 9A provided for the reception of evidence from Aboriginals and section 9B provided for the reception of evidence from children under the age of 10 years. However, in the aforementioned recent Supreme Court decision, it was held that section 25A of the Oaths Act prevents a child under the age of 10 years from giving evidence if the child does not understand the nature of an oath or affirmation. It was held that the words 'liable to punishment' in section 25A applied only to people who were amenable to prosecution. The minimum age of criminal responsibility, pursuant to section 38 of the Criminal Code, is 10 years. Therefore, children under the age of 10 years are not amenable to prosecution and are incapable of being 'liable to punishment' in the court's reasoning.

The effect of the decision is that, if children under the age of 10 years do not understand the nature of an oath or affirmation, there is no legislative provision in the Northern Territory for their evidence to be received at all. This is a serious deficiency in the law. If, for example, a child of 6 years of age had witnessed a murder, the child would be unable to give his or her account of the incident if he or she did not understand the nature of an oath or affirmation. It is unlikely that many children under the age of 10 years would be capable of understanding the nature of an oath or affirmation.

Therefore, the Oaths Amendment Bill confirms the existing situation that, where a child understands the nature of an oath or affirmation, that evidence will be received on oath or affirmation. However, it provides also that, where a court is not satisfied that a child under the age of 14 years understands the nature of an oath or affirmation, the child's evidence may be received if the court is satisfied that, first, the child responds rationally to questions and appears capable of giving an intelligent account of his or her experience and, secondly, the child promises to tell the truth and understands the duty of telling the truth.

The bill provides further that, where the child has attained the age of 10 years, the court must be satisfied that the child understands that he or she may be liable to punishment if the evidence given is false. This provision is consistent with section 38 of the Criminal Code which provides that, where a child has attained the age of 10 years but has not attained the age of 14 years, the child may be criminally responsible for an act if the child has the capacity to know that he ought not do the act.

The Oaths Amendment Bill does not alter in any way the rule, contained in section 9C of the Evidence Act, that a person shall not be convicted of an offence on the unsworn evidence of a child unless that evidence is corroborated by other material evidence. The Oaths Amendment Bill will retain the court's discretion to allow or not to allow the child's evidence to be received even if the child satisfies the court that he or she is competent to give unsworn evidence on the test provided for in the bill. A child who is over the age of 10 years, and who gives unsworn evidence pursuant to the Oaths Amendment Bill, will still be liable to be convicted of perjury as if the evidence had been given on oath.

The Oaths Amendment Bill brings the position relating to the competency of children to give unsworn evidence in the Northern Territory more in line with the position in other jurisdictions in Australia. Until recently, most Australian states had legislation which provided that children could give unsworn evidence if they satisfied the court that they had sufficient intelligence to justify the reception of their evidence and understood the duty to tell the truth. However, some states have legislated recently to provide different competency tests to enable children to give unsworn evidence. Queensland has introduced a bill which abolishes the requirement that a child must understand the duty to tell the truth while retaining the tests of sufficient intelligence. The bill also provides that expert witnesses may be called to give evidence on whether a child has sufficient intelligence to justify the reception of his or her evidence. The bill also abolishes the court's final discretion to exclude the child's evidence.

Recently, South Australia enacted amendments to the Evidence Act which now provides a competency test in similar terms to the Oaths Amendment Bill except that, in South Australia, the court must be satisfied that the child has reached a level of cognitive development which enables the child to respond rationally to questions and give an intelligent account of his or her experience. The Oaths Amendment Bill does not alter any existing rights of an accused person and its purpose is merely to remedy a deficiency in the law, as it currently exists, which prevents children under the age of 10 years giving unsworn evidence. I commend the bill to honourable members.

Debate adjourned.

SPECIAL ADJOURNMENT

Mr COULTER (Leader of Government Business): Mr Speaker, I move that the Assembly, at its rising, adjourn until Tuesday 14 February 1989 at 10 am or such other time and or date as may be set by Mr Speaker pursuant to sessional order.

Motion agreed to.

STATEMENT

The Future Direction of Batchelor College

Mr HARRIS (Education): Mr Speaker, in his recent White Paper on higher education, the federal Minister for Employment, Education and Training, Mr John Dawkins, gave long-awaited recognition to Batchelor College. After years of lobbying from the Territory government, the federal government accepted that triennial Commonwealth funding is vital to the future of Batchelor College.

At Batchelor, the Territory government has established an institution with relevance to traditional Aborigines in the Territory. The Commonwealth has contributed to Batchelor College in previous years, but it has been the Territory government that has provided the lion's share of funding. For the current financial year, the Territory government's allocation to Batchelor College amounts to \$2.53m. With our financial and philosophical support, Batchelor College has been the primary catalyst for a rapid increase of interest among traditional Aborigines in education and in developing opportunities for the future of Aboriginal communities throughout the Territory. In his White Paper, the federal Minister for Employment, Education and Training, Mr Dawkins, praised our achievements at Batchelor College. He said:

One institution with an impressive record in tertiary education for Aborigines is Batchelor College in the Northern Territory. This college has specialised in meeting the needs of traditional Aborigines from remote areas and has attracted widespread support for its programs, particularly in teacher education.

Mr Speaker, the federal minister acknowledged that progress at Batchelor has been constrained by the need to lobby constantly for an annual allocation of Commonwealth money. I am pleased that era is at an end, but I am concerned that, in the process of fighting for appropriate federal funding, the direction of progress at Batchelor College has fragmented. Now is the time to restate the objectives that have made Batchelor College such a success. With secure levels of funding at its disposal, the college needs to build on its record of success and its reputation.

As part of the successful campaign for recognition from the Commonwealth, a proposal to develop Batchelor College as an institute for Aboriginal tertiary education was prepared. That proposal was discussed at length and has generated a great deal of feedback from Aboriginal people. Representatives of Batchelor College discussed the proposal with Aboriginal communities and asked for input on the ideas it contained. They canvassed the views of Aboriginal communities in every region of the Territory. The Northern Territory government was extremely interested in that document and it has taken note of the feedback it generated. The comments and attitudes expressed about Batchelor College by those in traditional Aboriginal communities underline the importance of sensitivity in the way we progress at Batchelor College and the need for a firm statement of our direction. The government's list of goals and priorities for Batchelor College reflects the issues of greatest concern to traditional Aborigines, those to whom ceremony is a vital part of life, which must be accommodated in the process of education, growth and development.

I will now list the government's guidelines for Batchelor College in a series of points:

- The prime function of Batchelor College must be to serve traditional Aborigines and their communities in the Northern Territory.
- Aborigines from traditional communities interstate will have access to Batchelor College.
- The unique sensitivities of traditional Aboriginal communities must be respected by Batchelor College in its course structure, curriculum and general activities.
- Batchelor College is a vital pillar of support for the future of the outstation movement among traditional Aborigines. The government endorses the crucial role of Batchelor College in helping to foster personal and community development in outstations.
- The Remote Area Teacher Education program (RATE) plays a key role in the relationship of Batchelor College with remote communities and in the success it has achieved. The RATE program must continue to operate and to fulfil this function. It must not be put at risk.
- Plans are to be laid to encourage the extension of the RATE program through to East Arnhem, Barkly and the southern region of the Territory.
- In considering the future role of Batchelor College, attention is to be given to the need to further develop the annexe in Alice Springs to serve traditional Aboriginal people and their communities. The opportunity should exist for other providers of training for traditional Aborigines to become an annexe or centre associated with Batchelor College by agreement with the government.
- The secondary function of Batchelor College is to serve Aboriginal Territorians. In that way, access for urban Aborigines from within the Territory will be provided. Where possible, urban Aborigines, with a background in the mainstream education system, those with experience in higher education and a growing number of Batchelor College graduates, should be encouraged to move on to other higher education institutions, particularly the Northern Territory University.
- Urban Aborigines from interstate will not normally have access to Batchelor College. However, they will have access to other tertiary institutions in the Northern Territory, particularly the Aboriginal Task Force within the Northern Territory University and other programs of the Northern Territory University.
- Batchelor College should work constantly towards strengthening its standing in traditional Aboriginal communities by developing a much wider range of suitable courses and providing access to traditional Aborigines wanting to use their education for the betterment of their community.

- ° It is essential the Aboriginal people study for awards which have credibility in the wider community. Batchelor College should develop, teach and offer nationally-registered awards in its own name to associate diploma level. Higher level awards offered by Batchelor College should be awards of the Northern Territory University, taught at Batchelor College by agreement.
- ° The development of a range of courses offered at Batchelor College, and at the Katherine Rural College, the Alice Springs College of TAFE, and the NT Open College, including the Territory Training Centre, should reflect the need to attract Aborigines into courses at which they will succeed and from which their community will benefit.
- ° The development of higher level certificates and diplomas should generally evolve in parallel with the increase in participation of traditional Aborigines in tertiary education.
- ° As the record of success and benefit develops, Batchelor College courses will progress to higher levels of education. The important factor is not to outstrip the preparedness of traditional Aborigines to participate and to emphasise the positive value of education for the individual and the community in general.
- ° It is important that broad access to Batchelor College for traditional Aborigines be provided. For this reason, a demonstration school planned for Batchelor College will help ease access for supporting parents and others.
- ° The School of Australian Linguistics is to be incorporated into Batchelor College.
- ° Batchelor College must not be used by other institutions or individuals as an object of study. It is not a place where traditional Aborigines are to be watched or studied by anthropologists, sociologists or others. Batchelor College is not a fish bowl.
- ° In the past, traditional Aborigines have shown they will leave en masse from higher education institutions where they are not made welcome or where they feel their culture does not fit in. That is why Batchelor College must remain completely responsive to the needs of traditional communities. However, efforts to help all Aborigines feel at home in the broader sphere of higher education must go on.
- ° The Aboriginal Task Force has achieved some success in the process of easing access for Aborigines at the Darwin Institute of Technology and it will continue in this role as the Northern Territory University develops.
- ° The present D-BATE teaching qualification arrangements will be phased out. It will be replaced by a similar agreement between Batchelor College and the Northern Territory University. This will make the qualification even more relevant to Northern Territory Aboriginal communities. It will help encourage cooperation between the 2 institutions. Among traditional

Aborigines, it will encourage a greater degree of familiarity and a sense of 'ownership' of the course and the institutions involved. The role of the task force will be enhanced.

- Cooperation with the Commonwealth Department of Employment, Education and Training and other Northern Territory departments, including the Departments of Labour, Administrative Services and Local Government and Health and Community Services, should be further fostered and encouraged.
- Batchelor College will be given appropriate autonomy under the proposed colleges legislation. This legislation is designed to allow for the flexibility required in colleges catering for various mixes of technical and further education and higher education.

Mr Speaker, in the past 5 years, Batchelor College has achieved many things which are unique. These guidelines are essential to ensure that, in the achievements which lie ahead, Batchelor College continues to cater first for traditional Aborigines, their culture and ways in which it can be enhanced through education. Within those guidelines, I wish to make some specific references to existing courses and their future potential. Batchelor College began as a centre training traditional Aboriginal teachers. It has demonstrated that Aboriginal teachers have potential to promote demand for education in remote communities. Work must continue to attract an increasing number of traditional Aborigines into the teaching profession.

In recent times, a great deal of work has gone into the development of the Batchelor College Associate Diploma of Applied Science in Broadcasting and Journalism. The development of the Batchelor College radio broadcasting facility is an important step forward for the college. It must provide greater support for students such as those in the RATE program who are involved in practical training in remote communities. Together, the associate diploma course and the radio facility will help open up communications between Aboriginal communities, particularly those in the Top End. Both will serve the needs of traditional Aborigines and will encourage the development of new services at the community level. However, the development of advanced media studies at the diploma level is something which does not deserve priority at this stage of growth at Batchelor College. Such a course should be developed by the Aboriginal Task Force at the Northern Territory University. It should be articulated with the associate diploma at Batchelor College and, in that way, credibility for the course at Batchelor College will be enhanced.

In advocating progress and working to meet the increasing demand from traditional Aborigines who are seeking further education at Batchelor College, we must provide courses which will be suitable for many of those likely to apply. Batchelor College must provide relevant courses and its awards must be recognised as being equal to similar qualifications available elsewhere. That is a very important point. In the government's guidelines, I have outlined a plan for major development which will see Batchelor College courses extended throughout the Territory. The RATE program will be extended and consideration will be given to the development of other courses in professional and para-professional areas, using RATE as a model. The Alice Springs annexe is developing as the first new learning centre in what will emerge in time as a network providing Batchelor College courses in different parts of the Territory.

At Batchelor College itself, the number of students is set to double. New facilities are planned which will provide improved access for traditional Aborigines, including the establishment of the new demonstration school. I am happy to praise the excellent work of the staff and students at Batchelor College and wish them well in the exhilarating process of growth and development which lies ahead.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I move that the Assembly take note of the statement.

Mr EDE (Stuart): Mr Speaker, I hope that this debate will be adjourned after a couple of members have spoken because a number of members on this side of the House would like to contribute to the debate after having the opportunity to discuss some of the issues with people in their electorates and at the Batchelor College. However, I want to place a number of points on the record so that they can be taken up by speakers on the other side or addressed by the minister in his reply.

As is well known, over many years we on this side of the House have given strong support to Batchelor College and its development. My predecessor in the shadow portfolio of education, Senator Collins, was a champion of that institution and I have continued in that vein, working with successive NT Ministers for Education to persuade the federal government to acknowledge the needs of Batchelor College and its courses and to establish triennial funding.

It is true to say that the lack of triennial funding of Batchelor College has been a major hindrance to the institution. It has created uncertainty. Many staff would have loved to have stayed there for quite a number of years. However, when funding for their positions was endangered year after year, that placed them under constant pressure, particularly when they were offered positions elsewhere which were substantially more attractive economically. Many were willing to forgo economic advantage because they wanted to stay and be part of the development of Batchelor. However, when faced with the possibility of finding themselves suddenly without a job and the prospect of remaining in that situation for a semester or a whole year, with all the implications that would have for their families, many staff members felt that they had no option but to leave.

I welcome triennial funding. Certainly it has not come before time. Indeed, I hope that the Northern Territory government will look at that aspect of its own funding as far as Batchelor College is concerned and will itself provide funds on a triennial basis in order to give the institution continuing flexibility and security. As I said, we support the development of Batchelor College as a tertiary institution. For a long time, we have talked about Batchelor College in terms of the model provided by colleges of advanced education throughout Australia which operate under their own specific acts.

I was rather surprised to hear the minister say that, in recent times, the direction of progress at Batchelor College has fragmented. He did not go into any detail in terms of what he believes has occurred or how he sees it. Perhaps the issue is sensitive and involves particular individuals. He may be willing to advise me on that matter outside the House.

The proposal for the development of Batchelor College is being put together by people associated with the college. It is true that they have been travelling around the Territory seeking comment. I would hope that, following comment, the proposal will be tabled in this House so that all honourable members will be able to see what it entails and what the views of the community are. It needs to be debated so that the minister is able to

have the benefit of the views of all honourable members on how Batchelor College should develop.

The minister talked about traditional Aboriginals, urban Aboriginals from the Northern Territory and urban Aboriginals from interstate. I am disturbed by the way this matter is being handled and I believe that the minister may have put the cart before the horse. Like the minister, I recognise that the style and organisational structure of the college has to be such that it fits in with Aboriginal traditional life to the extent that people are able to empathise with the college and its aims and so feel comfortable about staying there. The minister is concerned that, if substantial numbers of the people whom he describes as urban Aborigines come from interstate, the college will be flooded with Michael Mansells and others of that ilk. The danger is that the style and content of the college will change so that it reflects a cultural bias towards the lifestyle and beliefs of interstate urban Aborigines rather than the lifestyle and culture of traditional Aboriginal people within the Northern Territory.

Mr Harris interjecting.

Mr EDE: That is correct. We agree that far. I do not believe, however, that we should attempt to limit or ban people from interstate from attending Batchelor College. Rather, we should enable a dominant structure and style to develop within the institution so that, if 1 or 2 people from interstate attempt to change the style, they will come up not against some sort of departmental block but against the other students who will themselves say: 'We are not going to allow the changes that you are trying to make to Batchelor College because the way it is now reflects our wishes and our views'. I believe that has to be developed through the way the organisational structure operates. I cannot go too far in relation to this or I will be in danger of being pulled up under standing orders because it relates to a bill that is now before the House. In the final analysis, it will be the organisational structure and style of the college, the people who are employed there and the way traditional Aboriginal people are welcomed and made part of the college's operation which will ensure that the college fulfils its ultimate aim, which is the provision of education and skills at a tertiary level for traditionally-oriented Aboriginal people from right around Australia.

The minister suggested that the college's awards would be awards of the Northern Territory University, taught at Batchelor College by agreement. As honourable members would know, Deakin University has been providing this service for a couple of years. I would like to pay tribute to the work done by Mr John Henry in developing those courses. A great deal of time and energy has been given to the development of the courses and to the very close relationship which has been built up with people right throughout the Northern Territory. I know that Mr Henry's work in Yuendumu and on the development of courses was recognised by the community which saw him as a breath of fresh air. I know that the member for Arafura feels the same about the work Mr Henry did in the Top End.

Mr Speaker, the minister says that the new agreement between Batchelor College and the Northern Territory University will make the qualifications even more relevant to Northern Territory Aboriginal communities. In his statement, the minister said: 'It will help encourage cooperation between the 2 institutions. Among traditional Aborigines, it will encourage a greater degree of familiarity and a sense of "ownership" of the course and the institutions involved'. On the face of it, that proposition means nothing.

Maybe that will occur; maybe it will not. We cannot say simply, ipso facto, that, because the courses are accredited with the Northern Territory University, traditional Aboriginal people will feel a greater degree of familiarity and a sense of ownership. The governing factor is the way the courses are developed and the way that the curriculum reflects traditional lifestyles. For example, patterns of methods of teaching are very important. There are well-developed methods of traditional teaching.

Mr Harris: We still have to maintain the standard, and there has to be an elite.

Mr EDE: It is not necessarily a question of standards. If the honourable minister will hang on for a minute, I will explain. He is always asking me to explain and to educate him, and I am doing that now.

Mr Harris: Well, you are not doing a very good job.

Mr EDE: Mr Speaker, there are well-developed, traditional methods of imparting knowledge. It is a process that has been going on for thousands of years with older people imparting knowledge to younger people. Because it is an oral culture, it is absolutely essential that that information is communicated, and there are processes to enable that. Those processes of imparting knowledge to younger generations need to be developed within the program that we are developing for Aboriginal teachers to impart knowledge or information to the students. It is pointless if we simply say: 'Because you are a black teacher, if we put you through a complete white system, you will experience a quantum leap forward in your ability to teach'. That applies to a certain extent, but we can take a step further and utilise traditional Aboriginal teaching methods also.

Aboriginal teachers can then use traditional Aboriginal teaching methods which have been tried and proven over thousands and thousands of years. Let us bring those into the classroom, adapting them to the actual curriculum content. That is where we will make the real breakthrough and start to ensure that the transfer of that knowledge from teacher to student is occurring. That work was done by Mr Henry. When he spoke of this concept to people in the communities, people immediately accepted it. They were pleased because that was what they had been talking about and they were very happy to hear him speak of it.

Mr Harris: We also have to ensure that it enables them to teach in any primary school in Australia, not only traditional Aboriginal areas, Brian. Goodness me.

Mr EDE: Mr Speaker, to take up the point made by the honourable minister, it is the same as the argument about bilingual education. If a person learns to read and write in his own language first, later he can make the transfer to reading and writing in English and will end up far better off than if he had attempted to learn to read and write in a language that he did not understand and to learn the language afterwards. It stands to reason, and it is well documented.

If the teachers coming from the traditional communities learn the teaching methods which they see as being relevant and which draw on principles which they learnt when they were acquiring traditional knowledge from their elders, when they undertake an upgrading course, which we have at the moment, where there are diplomas and degrees, the skills they acquire under the 2 systems will enhance each other. Having once become qualified to teach in Aboriginal

schools, if they wish then to obtain further qualifications which will enable them to teach in non-Aboriginal schools, I think that is a possibility.

At the moment, we do not have a problem with finding teachers for non-Aboriginal schools in the towns. We have a real problem in finding positions for the teachers that are graduating from the Darwin Institute of Technology this year. I am told that most of them will not get jobs because there are no positions for them. However, out bush, there are many positions for teachers and there is a very real need there. We have to get teachers for those schools first. If, later on, there is a spillover and some of those people wish to move into the mainstream education system to teach in town schools, we can assess whether a bridging course is required or whatever, but we must not ruin the fundamental concept.

The honourable minister said that it was important 'not to outstrip the preparedness of traditional Aborigines to participate and to emphasise the positive value of education for the individual and the community in general'. That does not mean anything. He may be able to enlarge on that later. He said also that 'Batchelor College must not be used by other institutions or individuals as an object of study'. How could anybody disagree with that, Mr Speaker? Definitely, Batchelor College should not become a convenient source of raw data for anthropologists and sociologists to study in order to prepare for their doctorates or whatever. I support that statement wholeheartedly. It is something that the college must be ever mindful of when it is recruiting staff. It must ensure that it does not recruit people who wish merely to do some basic research for their own purposes so that they can prepare for a PhD and say that they are experts in Aboriginal education.

Mr Perron: At least we agree on something, Brian.

Mr EDE: Mr Speaker, the minister said that people leave education institutions where they are not made welcome and where they feel their culture does not fit in. I agree with him on that. It bears out everything that I said before.

The honourable minister said that Batchelor College will be given appropriate autonomy under the proposed colleges legislation and that that legislation is designed to allow for the flexibility required in colleges catering for various mixes of technical and further education and higher education. Once again, I cannot go into that in too much detail because the bill is before the House and I would be out of order. However, we will be debating that particular aspect and the degree to which that statement is true in the new year when that piece of legislation comes up for consideration.

The statement says that 'the development of advanced media studies at the diploma level is something which does not deserve priority at this stage of growth at Batchelor College'. First let me say that I have not had a look at the curriculum of the proposed diploma level in media studies. However, I would like to make the point that the level of qualification should not be adequate merely to enable people to qualify to enter a traineeship somewhere else or whatever. It should be a very real qualification which allows people to obtain meaningful employment in the media centres which are developing in traditional communities and which allows people with practical experience to get a job with CAAMA or Imparja. I know that Imparja is crying out for Aboriginal staff. As I said, I have not looked at the curriculum for the current qualification but I hope that the level is high enough to ensure that that happens.

I was disappointed that there were glaring omissions in the statement. I refer to community management and health administration and service. If they were mentioned, it must have been a small or oblique reference to them. Apart from education, those are 2 essential areas that Batchelor College needs to be involved in. We must get better management into the communities. We need to train Aboriginal people to manage their community governments of whatever style. The people need management skills. They need skills in financial management, data interpretation, day-to-day administration, staff and resource allocation, planning for development, contracting, fund raising and so on. Such skills are essential to the growth of any community.

One of the major disadvantages that Aboriginal communities have is that such skills are not embedded in the community. Some communities are lucky enough to attract for some period of time a non-Aboriginal person who may have those skills. Sadly, very often that person utilises those skills to their full and, when he departs, leaves behind a situation which is sometimes worse than before. The reason for that is that he has raised expectations and put programs in train which the people are unable to continue. When he leaves, the system collapses and that results in frustration and loss of esteem etc. I hope Batchelor College will assist with overcoming this problem.

Health workers and health administration are fundamental to communities. At the moment, the area appears to be fragmented. I hope that Batchelor College will develop courses which will provide lifetime careers in this regard. People may be undertaking basic courses elsewhere, but they need to be able to attend Batchelor College to upgrade their qualifications and return to the job. This relates not only to health workers but also public health, nutrition, hygiene and health administration. We must develop courses in these subjects so that people can become involved.

One of my communities has 10% employment and 90% unemployment. If the positions held by non-Aboriginal people are included, there is 25% employment. I have considered what standards of service a community of that size would expect if it were a non-Aboriginal community. Provision of those services would bring the employment level up to 45% without even including the private sector. Once you have that level of employment, more income is generated and flows through the economy, which makes it more attractive for the private sector. People with real skills are in management positions. Such people can move from the public sector into the private sector and engage in metal work, carpentry or whatever. It has been shown time and time again, not only in Aboriginal communities but among American Indians, that the problem has not been the absence of skills. There were people who could work as carpenters, painters and metal workers. What was missing was people with management skills, people with the ability to estimate, to manage cash flows, to place orders, to design the specifications for tenders and so forth. Management skills were lacking.

Many people who do the community management course, having acquired the skills needed to run a council, will move out of that area. Some of them will even move into private enterprise. They will find business opportunities within their own communities which can reward them better than their work in community government. That is all right. We should not see that as a loss to the system. We should see it as a plus. I often hear people complaining about Aboriginal teachers who, having been trained, move out of the education system to work elsewhere. That is fine. It does not matter if people move into other areas as long as they use the skills which they have learned. If they move into the private sector or areas of government or local government, good on them. They are people who have gained their skills and are contributing.

We appear finally to have bipartisan agreement on the Alice Springs annexe. I know it has been an issue of principle on previous occasions as the discussion flowed back and forth. The problem was not so much that the minister did not agree with the concept as that, for a long time, he found it very difficult to obtain the resources for it. I hope that the Alice Springs annexe continues to develop, not only in teaching but also in other areas such as health and community management. It is very difficult for people from central Australia to spend long periods at Batchelor. There are still problems with communications. Thankfully, some of those will be solved as telephones are installed at the communities and people at Batchelor College will be able to maintain contact with their families. That may overcome their sense of isolation. The development of the Alice Springs annexe is essential for central Australia. I support wholeheartedly the minister's movement towards the development of that annexe.

Debate adjourned.

STATEMENT
Droving Australia Mementos

Mr REED (Primary Industry and Fisheries)(by leave): Mr Speaker, before honourable members are plaques that have been designed as personal mementos of Droving Australia, the Northern Territory's major bicentennial project.

I will give a short explanation of some of the brands. Specific requests were received from honourable members. The member for Karama requested the brand QTQ. I think he was intent on doing some work around the VRD and saw an opportunity to over-brand someone else's brand. The member for Stuart did request BTB but, on account of his outspoken statements recently, we thought it might be a bit much to give him that as well. Mr Speaker, it is a pleasure to present to honourable members the brands that stand before us today.

The program started on 2 April in Alice Springs, when the first group of young riders gathered for a camp at Muckaty Station, and ended on 3 October with the sixteenth group leaving Darwin after camps at Wave Hill and Tipperary Stations. Over 400 young riders from around the world and 130 volunteer support staff made the station camps and the pony trek segment of Droving Australia the experience of a lifetime, and most of the participants intend to return at some later stage, either to see more of the Territory and further sample our hospitality or to work here on a property.

Whilst many honourable members would have had little to do with the youth program, I am sure they all followed the last great cattle drive with interest. On a memorable weekend in May, 1214 head of cattle left Newcastle Waters for a 2000 km, 18-week drive to Longreach. 5000 people attended the weekend's activities and many a story was told and old mate found at the Junction Hotel that weekend. To the great credit of boss drover, Pic Willetts, and his droving team, the mob arrived on time and delivery took place at the Australian Stockman's Hall of Fame and Outback Heritage Centre on 3 September, with several thousand people in attendance. The generosity of northern pastoralists saw 934 head in the mob donated, with nearly 800 coming from Territory properties. When auctioned the next day, a cheque for \$307 107.75 was presented to the Hall of Fame to assist with its future development. In fact, that was its largest, single donation.

Droving Australia was a tribute to the early pioneers of the cattle industry who did so much to open up the Territory a century ago and, among the thousands of events that have been staged throughout the bicentennial year, it

has been recognised, both in this country and overseas, as one of the most spectacular and, more importantly, relevant contributions to the nation's calendar of events. I trust members will display their plaques, complete with personalised brands, with pride thus acknowledging the contribution made by those early men and women and the continuing contribution made by our many modern-day pioneers in the Territory.

It would be remiss of me if I did not pay tribute to and record in Hansard the names of some of the people who played prominent roles in the Droving Australia activity. Mr Syd Saville, Mr Col Fuller and Mr Don Darben, secretaries at various times of the department, were at the helm of the program. There were Mr Pic Willetts and his sons Dennis and Brigalo and cook Rod Watson and all the other people who worked on the drive from Newcastle Waters across to Longreach. Mr Alan Hagan and Mr Peter Roper were very closely involved with the youth who took part in the cattle treks. Those young people came not only from Australia but also from a number of overseas countries. They had a very enriching experience and some of them intend to come back to Australia. We have in the gallery, Mr Peter Plummer, Mr Peter Herden and Mr Alan Hayes. I would like to pay tribute to them because they really did put a great deal of effort into Droving Australia. Because of their efforts, the program was an enormous success.

Members: Hear, hear!

Mr REED: In addition, I would like to pay tribute to the people of Longreach. I had the privilege of being at Newcastle Waters to see the cattle depart and of seeing them arrive in Longreach at the end of the drive. I would like to record my thanks to the people of Longreach for the hospitality they extended to the Territorians who drove and flew in for that weekend, which was most enjoyable. The hospitality with which we were received was warm indeed.

I offer my heartiest congratulations and thanks to the cattle donors, the people in the pastoral industry of the Northern Territory without whom the drive probably would not have taken place. I also thank Elders Pastoral and all Territorians who took part in the celebrations at Newcastle Waters and followed the progress of the drive.

I trust that honourable members will treasure their brands and, Mr Speaker, it is my pleasure indeed to present you with a Brahman hide.

Mr Coulter: Seek leave to table it!

Mr REED: Mr Speaker, this hide bears the Droving Australia brand and I hope that it will hold pride of place somewhere in this building. Of course, we can look forward to the new Parliament House of the Northern Territory where, no doubt, it will be ...

Mr Coulter: A point of order, Mr Speaker! The honourable minister is not speaking from his proper place.

Mr SPEAKER: There is no point of order and the Leader of Government Business is skating on thin ice.

Mr REED: Thank you, Mr Speaker. No doubt the hide will hang in some place of pride in the new Parliament House.

Mr SPEAKER: I thank the minister for the gift which, I am certain, will be treasured by this parliament as a memento of the massive contribution made by many sectors of the Northern Territory community to that grand project. As the minister said, I am a member of the Stockman's Hall of Fame and I attended a meeting recently in Sydney. I can assure honourable members that what the minister said about the donation was accurate. The meeting was delighted with the Northern Territory's contribution.

Mr TUXWORTH (Barkly)(by leave): Mr Speaker, I would like to contribute to the minister's statement this afternoon and to thank him, or whoever was responsible, for having these plaques made for us to keep as mementos of Droving Australia.

I noted with interest the comments that the minister made when paying tribute to those involved in the compilation and the organisation of Droving Australia. It was a truly remarkable feat and a great occasion for Territorians to remember in this bicentennial year. However, when all of these things are put together, there was always somebody at the beginning who dreamt them up and I would like to pay tribute this afternoon to the people whom I believe were responsible for doing that.

At the Primary Production Ministers Conference in Cairns, I think it was in 1983 or 1984, John Kerin, the federal minister was the chairman and, as the meeting concluded, he went around the room and said: 'I would like a response from ministers on what they think we could do from the primary production area to celebrate the bicentennial in 1988'. The New South Wales minister at the time, whose name quite escapes me, sat back in his chair and said: 'I reckon we ought to have a big drive from the Kimberleys through to New South Wales and Queensland'. That was one of the suggestions that was put forward among others and, when the federal minister had received the contributions, he thanked everybody and we all dispersed and went home. About a week later, the then secretary of the department, the former Public Service Commissioner, Syd Saville, came to me and said: 'You know that suggestion about the big drive? Well, I would like to put this proposition to you'. Apparently, Syd had gone back to the department and he had spoken, in particular, to Joy Hooper, an employee of the department, and given her an outline of what was in the people's minds. Joy Hooper put together a scenario that eventually went to Cabinet and was approved as an event to celebrate the bicentenary that the Northern Territory could join in.

I must confess that, if it had been left to me, I would not have had the breadth of imagination to think up something like a big drive and the way to put it together as it was done. I have to pay tribute particularly to Syd Saville, for taking the initiative, and to Joy Hooper who seems to have had the vision at the time of how it should all work. Without people like that, events such as the Droving Australia celebration do not come to pass.

As the minister said, it transpired that many hundreds of people contributed their expertise, time and money. Many organisations were involved in supporting the drive, and it was a great experience for us all. As the member from whose electorate the big drive started, I can say that it brought a great sense of pride to the people in the electorate. It was a great country day for those Territorians who were there when the big drive started at Newcastle Waters, because there were so many people there who had a chance to get together and relive the past.

The statue commemorating the commencement of the drive was not there on the day of the drive, although it should have been. However, at the ceremony

and the unveiling of the statue, the organisers called forward those people who had been involved in drives in the early part of this century. I was quite astounded to see the people who were called to the front as the Territory's pioneer drovers because many of them I had known all my life and I had had no idea that they had been in the droving business and contributed in the way that they had. For me, that was a great experience and a great learning opportunity.

On behalf of the people of my electorate which took great pride in being involved in the drive in the way that we were, I say again that it was a great experience. I tender to those people involved, particularly the gentlemen in the gallery whom the minister mentioned a moment ago, my congratulations on the successful conclusion of the drive. It is unlikely that we will see another drive like that within another 100 years but, if anybody were prepared to try to put one together, I think it would be good for the Northern Territory.

Mr EDE (Stuart)(by leave): Mr Speaker, first, I would like to place on record the thanks of members of the opposition to the people involved in Droving Australia. I was very upset actually that, on the day of the start, I was forced to attend a Labor Party National Conference. There was not really much of a comparison to be drawn between the 2 events.

Certainly, Droving Australia was a great program that went off well in spite of a glitch with BTEC. I would like to place on record our thanks for the youth programs that were run during that period and to say that it was great that it was able to raise so much for the Stockman's Hall of Fame. Like yourself, Mr Speaker, I am a member of the Stockman's Hall of Fame and have been for some years, and it really is a great project.

In conclusion, again I place on record our thanks to those people involved in the organisation of the project and the drove itself, and compliment yourself, Mr Speaker, on the most handsome momento that you have there behind you. While it does give you more the aspect of a Zulu chieftain than the Speaker of this House, it is certainly something that we will look forward to seeing in the new Parliament House. As to the plaques that honourable members have received, possibly, with my well-known reputation for parsimony, as a Treasurer I might have found it hard to have provided those to all the members of this House. I assume that some have been provided for the people who were actually involved in the organisation and operation of Droving Australia because they are the people who deserve a memento of this kind.

Mr Reed: Knock, knock, knock.

Mrs Padgham-Purich: He was not knocking you.

Mr Tuxworth: He wasn't knocking you.

Mr EDE: Knocking, Mr Speaker!

However, these mementos will remind us of the work that was done by the organisers of Droving Australia and of the great work done by the pioneers in that industry. Hopefully, this event will spur us all on to ensure that that industry survives the traumas it is experiencing at present and emerges stronger than ever so that, once again, it is able to be the economic generator of the north.

COMMITTEE OF PRIVILEGES

Mr SPEAKER: Honourable members, I have received a letter from the Chief Minister requesting that he be discharged from further attendance on the Committee of Privileges. I call the Leader of Government Business.

Mr COULTER (Leader of Government Business)(by leave): Mr Speaker, I move that the Chief minister, Mr Perron, be discharged from further attendance on the Committee of Privileges and that the member for Sanderson, Mr Manzie, be appointed to that committee.

Motion agreed to.

STATEMENT

NT Participation at World Expo 88

Mr COULTER (Industries and Development): Mr Speaker, it is well worth setting down in the Parliamentary Record the outstanding success achieved during the Northern Territory's participation at the World Expo in Brisbane this year. Like Droving Australia, the Northern Territory's participation in World Expo has been an outstanding success. May I add that, it would be a good idea if more hides such as the one that you are now sitting against, Mr Speaker, could be included in the decor of the new Parliament House because I believe it would add a real Territorian flavour to the Assembly.

As I said, the World Expo has been an outstanding success and I will deliver a brief statement which addresses the results obtained by Territorians. It should be remembered that the Territory went to Expo with small misgivings about the expense involved and whether our efforts would return sufficient rewards. In fact, we decided to take part only 10 weeks before the opening. However, these misgivings were quickly swept away and the rewards, as I will show, have been handsome.

World Expo closed its gates on 30 October after 6 heady months and after 18 million visitors had passed through them. It was decided from the outset that as much of the Territory exhibit as possible would be produced in the Territory. The spectacular Devil's Marbles display was manufactured at Winnellie and the video, brochure design and the joinery were all done in the Territory by local businesses. Most of the \$500 000 budget for our Expo exhibit went back into the Territory economy. The display consisted of 4 m-high, fibreglass rocks, a backlit industry display, a 25 m mural of the Olgas, a homestead featuring Droving Australia, the School of the Air, a retail shop, a theatrette and a stage. The public response was better than had been imagined. During a good week, more than the entire population of the Territory passed through the display. During a slow week, more than the population of Darwin paid a visit.

As a result, about \$168 000 of goods was sold. This money went back into the Expo budget and into the coffers of the Territory manufacturers who produced those goods. It is estimated that 1 Territory stickpin was sold every 60 seconds towards the end of Expo. More than 15 000 were sold, all supplied from Stuart Park. More than 200 Darwin Stubbies were sold every week. Territory jewellery was popular and 1 company is now distributing throughout Australia as a result and negotiating export orders to the United States and Canada. Tens of thousands of people made inquiries at the on-site tourist office to plan future holidays and, as a result, 1989 and 1990 should be bumper years for Territory tourism.

The theme weeks, and there were 16 of them, allowed the Territory government and private organisations to present the Territory's assets to Australia and the world. Themes were widely varied with topics including wildlife, tourism, mining and petroleum, and business investment. The official Northern Territory Day, on 2 October, was considered one of the great highlights of World Expo. Expo visitors declared the Territory show to have been the best presented by the Australian states and this view was endorsed enthusiastically by the media. Honourable members, I have a compilation of some of the press cuttings and some of the photographs taken of the Territory Day for those who have not seen them. I will circulate them for perusal.

World Expo is over now but the flavour has been retained for the benefit of Territorians who were unable to make it to Brisbane. The display was dismantled and hauled back to Darwin. It will be re-erected at the NT Expo 89 at the Darwin Showground in May. It will form the centrepiece of the government's contribution to NT Expo and it will be established at no net cost to the government. After NT Expo, it is expected that suitable elements of the display will be auctioned.

With the wisdom of hindsight, we can say that it was a brilliant - if late - decision to participate in World Expo. The benefits of that participation cannot be measured in dollar terms but it can be said conservatively and safely that the Territory will do well out of it for many years to come. I believe this Assembly should offer its congratulations to all who went to the considerable effort of establishing a popular and influential Territory presence at World Expo, particularly officers of the Department of Industries and Development. I would like to pay tribute also to all those officers from all departments who went to Brisbane and manned the stand. It is not an easy task to be present on a stand with thousands of people coming through every day, but typical Territory good humour and hospitality was exhibited by all persons who participated on that stand. I would like to give them my personal thanks and, I am sure, the thanks of all honourable members. It was a job well done.

Mr Speaker, I move that the Assembly take note of the statement.

Mr EDE (Stuart): Mr Speaker, I must admit that I thought expressions of interest had already been called for from people wishing to purchase parts of the Expo display. It is pleasing, however, to see that it is being brought back for NT Expo 89. Unfortunately, my pocket could not stand a trip to Expo and I was unable to see our display in its full glory alongside the other exhibits. I have heard various comments about our display from people who attended Expo. The Leader of the Opposition was most enthusiastic about it and said that it was superb. Other people have belittled it, saying that it looked rather cheap. They probably did not realise that there was a very substantial cost differential between our exhibit and those of Queensland, Victoria, Western Australia and so on. When the display appears at the NT Expo, people will be able to make up their own minds. I certainly hope to have a look at it.

One lesson which Expo has taught us is that it is essential for the Northern Territory to take up every possible opportunity to get its name out in front when there are major events which attract large numbers of people. We need to remind people, whether they are travelling on business or for tourism purposes, that the Territory is a place which is well worth investing in or visiting.

Mr Speaker, I look forward to seeing the display in Darwin in May. I hope that the subsequent sale of the various components will recover the costs of transportation to and re-establishment of the exhibit in Darwin. I am sure that will happen.

Mr COLLINS (Sadadeen): Mr Speaker, I have discussed the Territory exhibit at Expo previously. However, I would like to place on record again my appreciation of the work done by the people who staffed our display. I had the good fortune to visit almost all pavilions and I was really struck by the very smart appearance and the good manners of the young men and women from our government departments. They were well-dressed. They looked tall and proud, and they were happy. They made an impression which to me was greater than that made by the exhibit itself. The exhibit was good and I heard many good reports about it. However, the attitude of the young people, guided by our former Speaker, Mr Roger Steele, deserves only the highest tribute. Wherever one goes as a tourist, no matter how marvellous the sights are, the way one is treated can put the cream on the milk. I pay great tribute to those young people from the Territory who really did us proud.

Mr COULTER (Leader of Government Business): Mr Speaker, I thank honourable members for their contributions. I comment that there have been numerous requests for the Devil's Marbles display. I spoke to the Chief Minister recently about this. I remarked that it was a pity that we did not make them inflatable because we could have sent them around the Territory with ease. In fact, the Tennant Creek people have also asked that the Expo exhibit be made available to them.

It was a really magnificent exhibit, a magnificent exercise, and it went hand in hand with Droving Australia. Once again, we were able to present a profile of the Northern Territory of the high standard which people throughout Australia have become accustomed to.

Motion agreed to.

STATEMENT
Overseas Trip by Deputy Chief Minister

Mr COULTER (Deputy Chief Minister): Mr Speaker, as requested of me by the member for Nhulunbuy throughout these sittings, I rise to provide members of this House with a brief report on my recent trip overseas and what it could mean to the people of the Northern Territory. Honourable members would be aware from comments I made in this House last week that I spent time in Paris, Moscow, Germany, Hong Kong and Beijing. My time out of the Territory covered the period from 6 to 12 November 1988. The purpose of my visit to Paris was to meet with senior executives of the large international oil and gas firm, Elf Aquitaine. Members of this House have heard myself and former Ministers for Mines and Energy speak, both inside and outside this Assembly, of Elf Aquitaine in its capacity of operator of the highly prospective Bonaparte Gulf gas field, and I would like to circulate the Bonaparte Gulf gas project pamphlet to honourable members.

This government is committed to the development of the Petrel field located some 250 km west of Darwin and I have been working closely with Elf executives to bring this about. For a number of years, this government has actively supported Elf Aquitaine in its attempts to secure international markets for some 2 million tonnes of LNG. Recent well reports indicate that, because of improved deliverability, the field may be capable of supplying a domestic market for the Northern Territory. The Department of Mines and

Energy is continuing to assess data on field reserves. Elf Aquitaine is keen to discuss commercial gas deliverability to Darwin and has already made an indicative proposal. My visit to Elf Aquitaine's operations in Paris was made primarily to review the field's capabilities as well as Elf's assumptions for a development infrastructure.

Early indications are that the gas supplied to Darwin from Petrel may be considerably cheaper than gas supplied from the Amadeus Basin. To be considered is the construction of an offshore platform with 185 km of sub-sea pipeline from the Petrel field to the Territory, coming onshore in the vicinity of the Daly River area, and 110 km of onshore pipeline to Darwin. The total project cost is estimated to be \$300m to \$700m over 20 years.

The Secretary of the Department of Mines and Energy and the Chairman of the Power and Water Authority were also present in Paris for this series of meetings. I have spoken in the Assembly previously about the government's commitment to increase Territory gas utilisation. This is because it would achieve so many of the goals we have set for continuing Territory growth and expansion. It would establish new manufacturing industry in the Territory. It would provide new jobs in quantity, and it would provide spin-off benefits to the existing business community and new business opportunities. It would bring about also the economies of scale necessary to stabilise or even to reduce the cost to government of producing electricity for the domestic and commercial markets. I stress this considerably important point: there is probably no better thing that this government could do in its present term of office than to obtain cheaper electricity for Territory consumers, and that is our primary target.

As the next step in the progression towards that target, I announce today the formation of a Northern Territory task force to coordinate future offshore gas development. This task force will bring together the technical, economic and environmental considerations necessary to assist development of gas reserves in the Joseph Bonaparte Gulf. It will comprise representatives from the Departments of Mines and Energy, Industries and Development, Treasury, Lands and Housing, Transport and Works and the Conservation Commission, along with the Power and Water Authority. If this project to bring product on shore proceeds, and I am optimistic that it will, it will be constructed and operated by private enterprise.

Current indications are that the reserves at Petrel could be supplied to the Northern Territory market at a competitive price which could be attractive to other gas projects currently under consideration. These include supply to Gove, Mt Isa and, in the longer term, South Australia. The Petrel field could also be the source of energy for chemical plants proposed for Darwin. It will be of interest to honourable members to be aware that the pipeline authority of South Australia has commenced a further feasibility study regarding sales of NT gas to South Australia. I am advised that the cost of these studies is in the order of \$500 000 and this is certainly a demonstration of the South Australian government's commitment.

A potential end user of this gas led to my visit to Essen in Germany. By arrangement with Australian-based corporations, I met with the president and senior staff of Ferrostaal and the vice-president and senior executives of UHDE, a subsidiary of Hoechst. Both companies have worldwide reputations, and Ferrostaal is the third largest steel producer in Germany, with steel production representing 50% of a company turnover of 4000 million DM. Ferrostaal is a general contractor in industrial plant construction and is working as consortium leader for a group of overseas and Australian companies

towards the development of a chemical complex in the Darwin region. UHDE is the company that provides the technology. Because of the sensitive stage the negotiations are at, I am not in a position to provide more details at this point. These negotiations involve the Northern Territory government, the project proponents, gas producers and the federal government. I am hopeful that I will be able to provide honourable members with more detail during the next sittings.

I turn now to my visit to the Soviet Union. Let me say that this trip was undertaken at a particularly interesting period in the development of Soviet foreign policy. It was personally illuminating to observe this development at close quarters. There is no doubt that, under Premier Gorbachev, the Soviet Union is seeking to establish new and fresh commercial relationships with the western world. According to advice I received from senior Soviet ministers and officials, a major motivation for this is the primary task of the Soviet Administration to provide better standards of food and housing for the Soviet people. It was impressed on me that those standards were viewed largely as inadequate and that great improvements could be forthcoming as a matter of urgent priority.

It was within this policy framework that I was welcomed warmly in Moscow to discuss mutual trade interests. At the invitation of a commercial company, Licensintorg, and by arrangements made through Austrade and the Russian Embassy, I spent some time in Moscow meeting with senior government ministers and officials. The purpose of my visit was to discuss investment potential and trade opportunities which may exist between the USSR and the Northern Territory. On many occasions during my meetings, I found parallels being drawn between the far east region of the Soviet Union and the Northern Territory. The similarities centred on vast, isolated areas which lack infrastructure but have splendid natural resources and great potential for development.

The Soviet Chamber of Commerce and Industry sees the development of a far east zone as a priority and has been set up to provide maximum service to foreign activity. This includes the promotion of trade, economic, scientific and technical relations of the Soviet Union with other countries. It was significant that I met with this group because it acts on behalf of companies involved in import-export transactions. In a similar regard, the foreign trade association, Rosvneshtorg, is responsible for the import and export of goods and services within an allocated range of 15 Republics of the Soviet Union. It is charged also with enhancing the quality and competitive value of Soviet merchandise. I met with the director of Rosvneshtorg who was able to advise me of the established commercial contacts with foreign trade agencies and firms in more than 40 countries in Europe, Asia, America and Africa.

The significant question is what all this means for the Northern Territory. Subsequently, I met with the Deputy Minister for Foreign Economic Relations, Mr Chumakov, and his officials. Because of his willingness to develop a positive political and commercial relationship with Australia and the Northern Territory, he discussed with me the ways in which technical exchange for goods and services may take place. Honourable members would be aware that the Soviet Union is yet to come to grips with meaningful foreign currency exchange. To this end, I met with the Deputy Minister for Ferrous Metallurgy of the Soviet Union, Mr Antonenko. The Soviets already import 100 000 t of high quality manganese from BHP's Groote Eylandt operation and are keen to see this quantity increased substantially. Since my return, I have written to BHP seeking its views on increasing sales in exchange for the establishment of a ferro-manganese plant in the Territory.

Another Territory project of interest to the Soviets is the railway. It is also of interest to Territorians. The Russians have been involved in railway construction since 1953, in more than 20 countries. Their interest in the Territory railway has been known for some time and, to this end, I have approached the Chairman of Railnorth to acquaint him with my discussions with the Soviet Minister for Transport Constructions. Indeed, some 18 months ago, myself and the member for Jingili met with a Soviet representative to discuss the issue. Discussions have been ongoing. The Soviet minister is prepared to send a delegation to the Territory to further discussions on the project. He envisages exchanging expertise in railway construction for raw materials and commodities.

My meetings with the Ministry of Non-ferrous Metallurgy, and Mr Airapetov in particular, centred on mining developments. I was able to obtain more information on such matters as the kyfset technology which the ministry believes is the solution to metallurgical problems such as those experienced at McArthur River. The Soviets are particularly interested in diamonds and, at this time, a Russian delegation is visiting the Argyle deposit in Western Australia. The Soviets believe that a geological trough containing diamond deposits extends from west to east across the Territory.

The latter stages of my trip focused primarily on Trade Development Zone activities and furthering our commercial relationships with the Hong Kong business community and the People's Republic of China. This stage of the trip was most successful and demonstrated to me again the enormous potential for trade and investment opportunities which can be gained through our northern neighbours. The Northern Territory is becoming well known in South-east Asia and it is generally acknowledged by residents of that area that our contacts are far better developed than those of any of the Australian states. Our aggressive marketing and regular follow-up are paying dividends and the level of commercial interest in the Territory is most encouraging.

However, I should say that the debate in Australia about Asian immigration is having a negative impact in the region. Business migration applications are down some 50% and there is widespread concern about what our attitudes really are. The Northern Territory is fortunate in this regard, however, by virtue of our demonstrated commitment to the region over a period of some years. Potential investors are further comforted when told, for example, that Chinese make up 10% of Darwin's population, that we have a Chinese Lord Mayor and even that government ministers work in a central office known as the Chan Building. Whilst with some talking we can generally convince Asian people that they are welcome in the Northern Territory, it is disappointing that such assurances should be necessary in the first place.

During my short stay in Hong Kong, I visited and met with various business people and business association representatives, including the Australian and Hong Kong Chamber of Commerce. I took the opportunity of further briefing Australian High Commission staff on our activities in Hong Kong and China, and received valuable feedback on the impact we are having in these areas. The prime purpose of my visit to Hong Kong was to participate in a seminar organised by the Trade Development Zone Authority. This seminar took place on Tuesday 15 November and was attended by more than 70 representatives of the Hong Kong business community, many of whom attended also in their capacity as industry association representatives. I was very pleased at the seminar's outcome as it was apparent before, during and after it that the level of interest in our trade zone, and in the Territory generally, was very high. I am confident that various of those who attended the seminar will convert their interest into action and that eventually we shall see them establish ventures in the Northern Territory.

A highlight of the seminar was speeches made by Mr Y.C. Lam of Darwin International Textiles, and Mr G.T. Chow of Camelot Trading. Both these gentlemen spoke from experience as Hong Kong businessmen who have now made a commitment to the Trade Development Zone. Their testimonies were glowing, and the audience was appropriately impressed. The success of Darwin International Textiles at the TDZ has acted, and will continue to act, as a catalyst for further Hong Kong investment. The growth of that interest will be exponential and, as I have said previously in this House, 1989 will be a memorable year for growth at the TDZ.

Our group then travelled to Beijing on Wednesday 16 November, where we met with numerous senior representatives of the municipal, provincial and central governments. Separate and productive meetings were held with such groups as Bitic and Citic, which are investment finance organisations similar perhaps to our Investnorth but on a massively large scale. As was Hong Kong, the mainland Chinese were well aware of the Northern Territory as an attractive, potential location in which to do business. Real interest was expressed in finding additional avenues for joint venture participation in Australia and in the Northern Territory specifically. Such joint ventures are likely to include Hong Kong partners. Massive mainland resources, combined with Hong Kong commercial expertise, give rise to the possibility of potential huge projects which could be realised in the Northern Territory. One such project, which cannot yet be announced, is at an advanced stage of negotiation. The numbers and quantities involved are quite staggering. The range of possible investment opportunities which are of interest to China includes textiles, tourism, minerals and petrochemicals.

Whilst in Beijing, and during contact with our embassy officials, I was privileged to be present at the signing ceremony between Gove Aluminium Limited and the China National Non-ferrous Metals Industry Corporation. The contract concerned, over a 3-year period, was for the supply of 100 000 t per annum of alumina worth approximately \$120m. This was a particularly important occasion as it was the first such long-term contract from an Australian supplier direct to the Chinese end user. It represents a considerable contract for Gove and an important avenue for the future prosperity of Gove's mining operations and the people in the region.

Mr Speaker, I have endeavoured to be as informative as possible in this account of my recent business trip overseas. There is much that I have been unable to address in this statement because of commercial confidentiality and the risk that disclosures at an early stage might pose to potential future projects. I have said in this Assembly before that it is vitally necessary for ministers to get out of their offices in Darwin and go to the world to find business for the Territory. Standing at East Point and waiting for something to happen is a recipe that will not work. The more contacts that are established in foreign countries, the more trade and investment potential that is discovered, the more it becomes necessary to go overseas and keep going. There will be many more such trips for me and even then probably I will not make half as many as I need to.

The opportunities are there to establish significant industries, with substantial foreign investment and joint development. It is a very competitive world and, if we are to produce results, it requires us to be active and competitive in the major world capitals. It is my intention to provide many more such reports on future occasions in the continuing drive for Territory growth and expansion.

Mr Speaker, I move that the Assembly take note of the statement.

Mr EDE (Stuart): Mr Speaker, I rise briefly to say a few words on the honourable minister's statement. It is most heartening to all of us to hear that movement is afoot on the Bonaparte Gulf gas project even to the stage that we have heard about. The Petrel and Tern fields carry many of our hopes for the future in relation to electricity costs and the redevelopment of the Northern Territory economy. As we all know, it is what is termed a very lean gas. It contains virtually no hydrogen sulphide and is very low on carbon dioxide and nitrogen. This gives it specific characteristics which make it appropriate for many applications that we should be able to develop in the Northern Territory.

Of course, more gas does not necessarily mean cheaper gas and therefore cheaper electricity. I note from what the honourable minister said that, bringing Petrel gas ashore here will be cheaper than bringing gas from central Australia. That opens up the initial possibility that South Australia may take gas from central Australia. If that occurs, the Darwin power station can receive less gas from the Centre and more from the Petrel field, with a marginal cost reduction. Indeed, ultimately we may be moving Petrel gas all the way to South Australia as the southern fields peter out. The real needs, however, are in relation to industry. I am heartened by the continued remarks that we have been hearing about petrochemical industries. Certainly, we all hope that something will eventuate. We also hoping for the gas-stripping plant to come to fruition.

I am very heartened to hear that the minister went to Russia and talked about the kyfset technology. I believe, and the minister may be able to correct me if I am wrong, that that process is used in Sardinia on an ore body which is quite similar to that at McArthur River. The technology is not completely untested and possibly we will be able to look at how it is going there and see if it offers any possibilities in terms of assisting us to get McArthur River going.

I have said before in this House that I believe that the next massive growth region of the Territory will be the area around Borroloola. It has enormous potential for growth in the tourist and leisure industries as well as for the development of a major mining and industrial area which will finance infrastructure which will be of benefit to the tourist industry. Of course, such development has to be managed carefully in terms of environmental impact statements and environmental health issues relating to mining activity. We certainly do not want mining activity to have a negative impact on tourism. We must ensure that we do not kill the goose that lays the golden egg.

I am pleased that the minister attended many meetings in South-east Asia and made more contacts. However, I believe that, whilst those initial contacts are very good, after all the glad-handing, lunches and discussions about what everybody would like to do, we have to get the professionals in to get down to the hard nitty gritty of what is actually feasible. Seminars are often a good way to do that. They can bring together large numbers of people, and people who have been involved can talk to those who are basically just having a bit of a nibble and we can try to get them on the line.

Like all members on this side of the House, I share an abhorrence of the Asian immigration wrangle. It has done us an incredible amount of damage. One of the best things the government has done in 1988 has been distance itself completely from the remarks of the federal Leader of the Opposition and the subsequent wrangle which has done us an incredible amount of damage in Asia. The Minister for Primary Industry and Fisheries has said that people overseas see Australia as a whole. They do not see only the Northern

Territory. That is much truer in relation to racial attitudes and policies than in terms of the prevalence of various animal diseases. In attempting to get the Trade Development Zone off and running, we have to do a very special job. We have to get Asian people to see that Darwin is different and that we in the Northern Territory are different to the rest of Australia. Our society includes Aboriginal people, people from China and the South-east Asian nations, the Middle East and many other parts of the world and we have to demonstrate that, whatever difficulties we may have from time to time, we are always moving forward. We have to build up a spirit among Territorians which involves giving each other a helping hand and, at the same time, building up our Territory.

I am glad to see that the honourable minister has spent some time in getting that message across. Members on this side of the House will do all in their power to ensure that that message is spread and, hopefully, together we will be able to ensure that it is understood in South-east Asia. That is not relevant only for the Trade Development Zone. It relates also to the development of small business, particularly in the area of supply of materials, and it relates also to education. We are trying to attract Asian students to our university and high schools to help reduce our unit cost and to build up contacts which will be of benefit in the future. For all those reasons, we have to get the message across that, no matter what people in Asia hear about arguments in the rest of Australia, those arguments do not relate to attitudes in the Northern Territory, where everything is excellent in that regard.

I was very interested to hear of the minister's visit to China. I have heard that the Chinese are interested in some aspects of our gold extraction technology. Apparently, they have heard of the different types of ore bodies from which we are extracting gold economically. They have similar ore bodies which they consider to have real potential. However, they cannot develop that potential with their existing technology and they are very interested in our technology. That may present an opportunity for cooperation.

Mr Speaker, I will not go further. I know that other members on this side intend to speak later, when they have had a chance to study the statement. Hopefully, some of the possibilities that have been raised by the Deputy Chief Minister will come to pass. I look forward to hearing fewer statements about places that he has visited and more about investment dollars that will get the economy going again and bring down the unit cost of electricity so that Territorians can really start to benefit.

Mr COULTER (Deputy Chief Minister): Mr Speaker, I thank the member for Stuart for his comments and I ask all honourable members to be patient. Some of these gas projects are enormous in size. The capital outlays amount to \$600m and it is not easy putting \$600m projects together. They do not happen overnight. I remind honourable members that the gas pipeline and the power station combined did not cost \$600m and it took many years to put that project together. The negotiations on these projects are at an advanced stage.

The international market is extremely competitive and the Indonesians have the advantage of having large gas reserves onshore. We are in an extremely competitive international marketplace and we are talking of a capital venture in the vicinity of \$600m. In fact, some of the modifications to the pipeline total some \$200m. It cost us only \$275m to put the pipeline in. We will have to modify it with 13 compressor stations plus looping to bring these projects to fruition. Negotiations could collapse at any moment because of commercial

sensitivity to a range of things, including Commonwealth excise and some of the Commonwealth charges on gas.

I would like to pay tribute to the Minister for Resources, Senator Cook, the Minister for Primary Industries and Energy, Mr Kerin, and the federal Treasurer, Mr Keating, who have been working with me on some of these projects, and to express my appreciation of the help and assistance that I have been given, particularly by the departments responsible for resources and energy in Canberra, which have done a complete feasibility study on some of these projects and have reported to their respective ministers about them. Some of the proponents of these projects will be in the Territory next week from Germany and also from interstate. I ask for patience because these are huge projects that require extensive and sensitive negotiation. I am in there endeavouring to do my best.

The trade prospects with China and the USSR are exciting. They are very similar to us in a number of ways. In particular, they do not have a great deal of hard currency, but they do have expertise. Their technology is fairly simple but practical in many cases. I believe that the way is open for us to do much more business in that particular region.

The Trade Development Zone and some of the opportunities available to us with mainland Chinese participation through Hong Kong entrepreneurs is very exciting. As I said earlier during these sittings, the fact that we have welcomed 27 mainland Chinese women into the Northern Territory to work in the Trade Development Zone and to impart their skills in and their knowledge of the textile industry to Territory workers is an exciting development that has the full cooperation of the trade union movement and the Immigration Department in Australia. I am very appreciative of the commitment that we have been given by all those organisations to further enhance the viability of the Trade Development Zone. I would like to place on record, once again, my personal gratitude to all those people who have made that happen.

Mr Speaker, I will not talk any longer about the trip except to say that somebody has to do it. It is not easy standing in customs queues and waiting to see whether or not your baggage will turn up. There are problems with your health and becoming accustomed to different water and food. I am confident that our aggressive marketing, particularly in the South-east Asian region, is paying off. We will continue to play a role in that region and let us hope that, in 20 years time, the Northern Territory will take its rightful share of those huge markets that are available to the north. I thank the member for Stuart for his words of encouragement and for his support for some of the projects which I have spoken about today.

Motion agreed to.

TABLED PAPER
Review of TDZ Marketing and Promotion Activities

Mr COULTER (Industries and Development): Mr Speaker, I rise to table the much-anticipated Review of Trade Development Zone Authority Marketing and Promotion Activities, compiled at my direction by the respected management consultant, Mr Fergus Simpson. I believe it is necessary to remind honourable members of the terms of reference of Mr Simpson's commission, given that the focus of his review may well have become lost to them as a result of the hectic period of debate on Trade Development Zone activities during the last sittings. The consultant's review was carried out during September and October with these terms of reference:

The report should take into account the following factors:

- (a) industries suitable for establishment in the Trade Development Zone and target markets;
- (b) a review of the Trade Development Zone Authority's marketing strategies and the marketing programs as they relate to Asia and Australia;
- (c) a review of the use of consultants or appropriate alternatives; and
- (d) a review of the adequacy or otherwise of incentives and assistance packages able to be offered by the Trade Development Zone Authority.

Mr Simpson has fully addressed these requirements in a comprehensive and valuable report which will be of immeasurable assistance to the ongoing successful establishment of the zone as a major manufacturing and employment centre in the Territory. He has given much considered and sound advice. Much of his report endorses the general direction that the TDZ Authority has been following and some of it is critical of its effort in some areas. However, it must be stated clearly that Mr Simpson's document will give the Leader of the Opposition no particular comfort in his highly visible position as a trenchant and voluble critic of the zone and anything connected with it. The Leader of the Opposition needed a negative document if he was to continue his attacks, and he has not got it. Instead, Mr Simpson has produced a report which deals with the positive aspects of the zone and how it can perform better to meet its charter.

It is not my intention to provide honourable members with an instant critique of the Simpson report. That would not give due credit to the report itself, which I urge all honourable members to read and consider. In particular, I put that request to the Leader of the Opposition and perhaps the Deputy Leader of the Opposition would like to pass that message on when next he sees the Leader of the Opposition. The Leader of the Opposition has demonstrated consistently his complete failure to understand the nature and objectives of the zone. However, I will extract a few points from the report which will give a general guide to its contents. Mr Simpson deals with the activities of the zone in sections and it maybe illuminating to look at his brief, 1-line summaries of those sections and his recommendations in regard to them.

He examines our relationship with Asia and recommends that the Territory build on its very good understanding of and developing relationship with the Chinese communities throughout the region. He looks at Australia's export trade with Asia and outlines the potential of Darwin in that regard. Mr Simpson reviews the competitive environment in which the Darwin Trade Development Zone is bidding for investment funds. He finds that other zones offer more beneficial incentive packages than Darwin is able to provide within the limited resources and powers of the Northern Territory government. In fact, he notes that the Commonwealth government has played no role at all in establishing the Darwin trade zone or the incentives it can offer to potential investors, and that the ability to broaden those incentives rests with the Commonwealth. Mr Simpson recommends that, in this situation, Darwin should set out to differentiate itself on critical issues from the rest of Australia, concentrating on areas like industrial relations, labour productivity, and skills and experience in dealing with Asian business. The consultant

identifies a need for more precision in targeting potential investors - in other words, he recommends that we be more selectively strategic. He recommends that the focus for short-term marketing activities should be Singapore, Malaysia, Hong Kong and southern areas of Australia.

Mr Simpson looks at what Darwin has to offer and his conclusion, in a 1-line statement is: 'Not quite good enough'. He refers here to the incentive packages that I mentioned previously and to the all-round attributes of the zone and the city of Darwin itself. He says that, while we have much to offer, it may not be essentially different to what is offered by other regions of Australia or other regions in the world. Therefore, he says, we should concentrate on our attributes: freedom from racial or cross national tensions, welcoming of and assistance with business migration; and, the ability to sell private land which can be a very difficult achievement in parts of Asia. He says we need to improve transport infrastructure, upgrade the availability of technical and trade skills, and build up a better support network and maintenance, technological and testing services.

Mr Simpson concludes that the zone's marketing strategy is basically sound. He says that it is clear that we have gained a solid understanding of the markets in the region, that we have created a strong awareness of Darwin and the trade zone within the Asian business communities, and that it is of great importance that Asian companies have made a successful transition to the zone. He notes that the zone's success cannot be measured in immediate terms and that the establishment of a fully-operational, fully-successful zone is a 20-year project.

Mr Simpson's examination of the zone's marketing performance brings forth the recommendation that it needs to concentrate more on efficiency. He outlines a case for a greater effort in Australian promotional activities and, in particular, the building up of awareness of the zone in the Darwin community, a proposal that I wholeheartedly endorse and that I am pursuing. He examines the matter of employment by the zone authority of K.K. Yeung Management Consultants and analyses the payments to that firm. Mr Simpson stresses the point that the payments have been made to a company and not to an individual, and he says that this essential point has been missed in media coverage of the recent public debate about this matter. In general terms, he finds K.K. Yeung Management Consultants an appropriate choice as chief consultant in the Asian region.

In his section on the role of consultants, Mr Simpson finds them effective but says there is a need for a focusing of their activities. He makes a number of recommendations about payment to consultants and a restructuring of the financial relationship between consultants and the zone authority. He says that this should assist in the setting of specific targets and sharpen the degree of focus on representation activities. Mr Simpson's conclusion in this regard is that the representation network currently in place is effective and should be retained, with modifications and upgrading of financial relationships where appropriate. He says that it is generally acknowledged in Asia that the Territory government, through the Trade Development Zone Authority, has done more than any Australian state to promote business opportunities in Australia. Indeed, Mr Simpson says that some of that work has resulted in business migration to parts of Australia other than Darwin.

He looks at the incentive packages in some detail and compares those to packages offered elsewhere in the world. He recommends that the authority monitor its incentive program with a view to providing greater flexibility. Finally, Mr Simpson examines the organisational structure and finds it

basically sound and well-oriented. He finds a need to tighten up on marketing coordination and control, but otherwise regards the administration as competent and in keeping with the objectives of the zone.

I must record my thanks to Mr Simpson for a job well done. I believe he has made sensible and practical recommendations and they will be addressed seriously and thoroughly. Having spent a deal of time myself on zone activities in Asia in the past couple of months, I find little in Mr Simpson's report with which I can disagree. Earlier this week, I said in this House that 1989 will be the year of the Trade Development Zone, and that is not just a throwaway tag line. Obviously, I am in a position to know what is coming up in the next 12 months, and I can assure honourable members of exciting and meaningful manufacturing developments that will hold great employment opportunities for the Darwin work force. However, I am deeply conscious of the fact that the zone has suffered previously as a result of an understandable enthusiasm in pre-announcements about its activities, and I will go no further at this stage. I will let results tell the story.

In the measurable future, those results will bring about a manufacturing region on the outskirts of Darwin which will be a major employment centre for Darwin and Palmerston residents. We will look back to those who tried to tear the zone to shreds and shake our heads in wonder. We will not forget descriptions of the zone like those uttered by the Leader of the Opposition who has described it as 'a financial sinkhole' or that of the member for Stuart who has described the zone consistently as 'a disaster area'. Those honourable members would be well advised to read through the Simpson Report, word by word, and absorb the message it contains. It would not be a political reality for them to stand up and admit they were wrong, and I do not expect them to do that but maybe, just maybe, they will discover the damage that they do to the zone and its future, and its potential for the future employment of thousands of people, and at least stop their senseless knocking. I say to honourable members, by all means speak up if you have something worthwhile to contribute but, if you have not, then take a back seat and let the zone get to where it is going.

Mr Speaker, I move that the Assembly take note of the report.

Mr EDE (Stuart): Mr Speaker, I certainly hope that the optimism of the honourable minister bears fruit during 1989. However, Mr Speaker, as you would know, previous ministers who have been responsible for this area, for example the member for Casuarina, made predictions of the same type and, most unfortunately, largely they failed to come to fruition. Those that did come to fruition went broke soon after, leaving a bad taste in the mouths of many Territory businessmen who, through resultant bad debts, were forced to fund those failures - if it can be expressed that way. That has been one of the main reasons why many members on this side of the House have come to doubt whether it could be a success in the short term.

The honourable minister has said that, next year, many wonderful things will come to fruition ...

Mr Coulter: I did not say that.

Mr EDE: Well, you said that it was ...

Mr Coulter: The year of the Trade Development Zone.

Mr EDE: The year of the Trade Development Zone. Mr Speaker, that can mean a number of things ...

Mr Collins: For the Chinese, I think, it is the year of the snake.

Mr EDE: Next year is the year of the snake. This year is the year of the dragon.

Mr Speaker, we hope that the honourable minister is correct. I have glanced quickly through the report and, from what I have seen, in some ways it does damn some aspects of the zone with faint praise. The report talks about the need to have a more flexible system of incentives rather than a standard package which may not be appropriate in all situations. Who can argue with that? It is surprising that that approach was not adopted in the first place. Obviously, some people have different needs to others and what is offered in one area can be recovered in another.

In comparing our zone with those in other places, when push comes to shove, the consultant's opinion is that they have cheap labour as a primary inducement and tax incentives as a secondary inducement. The report says, at page 68: 'Darwin cannot compete with low-cost labour countries and the Northern Territory government has no powers to provide inducements in the form of tax relief'. That is disheartening. He does go on to say at page 70: 'A revised package has been prepared in consultation with the authority's consultants and it is difficult to envisage what more can be done. There is no doubt that the incentives offered appear to be greater in many cases than the equivalent available elsewhere'.

Mr Coulter: No.

Mr EDE: That is what he says. It appears that he is rather worried about the scheme. He is putting the best front on it and saying that it is in place. The government has given a commitment and the Trade Development Zone will not disappear and therefore we have to endeavour to make the best of it. I suppose that, as long as the minister sits where he sits and we sit where we sit, that will be the case. It may be that, when we are in government and we look at the sums and all the commitments which have been made, we will decide to turn the area into a manufacturing zone with local industry able to buy in with incentives so that the benefits flow directly into the Darwin business community. That may become the situation, but it is very difficult to make such commitments.

A certain federal Leader of the Opposition made a commitment about the Alice Springs to Darwin railway. When he became Prime Minister and looked at the books, he found that the previous Treasurer had been understating the national deficit and he was forced to drop the railway project, an act for which he has not been forgiven by members of this government. Obviously, we would need to know more about exactly what commitments have been entered into before making any decision as to what should occur at the zone. In the meantime, we have to carry out our function of examining the zone in the context of the information we are able to obtain and seeing whether its operations stand up to rational debate in the cold light of day.

I believe that some of Mr Simpson's observations are quite accurate. For example, at page 56, he makes this statement: 'For example, it is claimed that the Chinese in Hong Kong accept the practices of negotiating through intermediaries whereas those in Singapore prefer to deal direct with principals as do Australians'. I can certainly verify that negotiating styles

vary markedly. Although I am not familiar with the Hong Kong approach, I know that there are great differences in the approaches to business of the Bumiputras of Malaysia, the Singaporeans, the Filipinos, the Japanese and the Americans. Different nations develop different negotiating styles and, if one does not want to come undone, one has to understand them.

The decision was made to use Mr K.K. Yeung in Hong Kong. That may have been the correct decision as far as dealings in Hong Kong were concerned although there seems to have been more difficulty in other parts of South-east Asia. It is not clear whether that occurred because of ineffective consultants and difficult conditions in certain markets because of political influences, or whether it was because an attempt was made to transplant the Hong Kong style of negotiation and establishment of business contacts to other countries. The same thing occurs sometimes when businesses which have been successful in the Australian context move into South-east Asia thinking that they have the game sewn up.

Each South-east Asian country is different even though the ethnic Chinese may control large parts of the regional economy. Clearly, Mr Simpson understands that negotiating styles differ and it would appear that the Trade Development Zone Authority has come to realise that also. Hopefully, now that it is aware of the need to adapt to different ways of doing business, its efforts may begin to bear fruit. When we talk about the economies of places like China, Russia and Hong Kong, they seem very large in comparison to that of the Northern Territory. We often forget that some of the smaller economies in the region are also extremely large in comparison to our own and offer opportunities in terms of markets to which we can relate.

The 3 essentials of any business are money, management and markets. In the case of establishing manufacturing industry in the Trade Development Zone, we do not have the money here. We are relying on money from elsewhere. We hope to import the management expertise as well as knowledge of the markets. Hopefully, what we are providing is a stable political climate, land and a series of incentives. It is clear that we are not the only ones doing that. Other countries are doing the same thing and some of them are able to offer both cheap labour and tax incentives. They will not stand back and just let us have it all our own way. We have to be extremely active in our promotional work and very competent in our management. The people we are competing with are not a mob of fools. We are up against some top promotional and management brains. We talk about our proximity to the markets but the fact is that free ports like Singapore and Penang are much closer and are able to offer considerably more than we can.

At one stage, it appeared that the handover of Hong Kong to mainland China would result in a fairly substantial movement of capital out of Asia into Australia. It appeared that the Northern Territory would be able to take advantage of that move. However, 2 things have happened in that regard. The first is that the negotiations between Hong Kong and mainland China are proceeding much more smoothly than many people thought at the time. People seem to forget that many people living in Hong Kong have maintained many contacts with mainland China. They are not really worried about the arrangements that will occur at the end of the century. The second is the development of the immigration debate in Australia. Certainly, that has had the effect of causing many people to choose places like Hawaii and Canada in preference to Australia. I commend the work all members of this House have done in trying to convince people that that is not the way things are here and that the Northern Territory has a very different type of society. I would hope that various polls which indicate a groundswell of support in Australia

for Mr Howard's extremist views reflect the fallacy of the validity of that type of polling rather than the genuine view of Australians.

Mr Speaker, I will conclude my remarks there. The minister has said that next year will be the year of the Trade Development Zone. When he says that, I hope he does not mean that it will be a year of more scandals and more disasters. I hope that the headlines will be of a different nature and that finally we will have growth and jobs and start to obtain a return on some of the funds that we have invested, and that some of the dreams that were there when it was first envisaged will finally come to fruition.

Mr SETTER (Jingili): Mr Speaker, I have been listening for the last 15 minutes to comments by the member for Stuart who, for quite some time, appears to have been the only representative of the opposition present in this House. It is very encouraging to see the Leader of the Opposition return to the Chamber.

One thing became evident whilst the member for Stuart was making his comments regarding the Trade Development Zone. He stands there and says how much he supports the zone and what a great idea it is, but the reality is that, when the zone has been debated here on other occasions, his attitude has been entirely different. There is no doubt in my mind that the member is a mere political opportunist who seizes on every opportunity to denigrate every idea that the government puts forward.

In regard to the debate on multiculturalism, I share the concern of most members of this House about the damage that it has caused, not only for Australia as a whole but for the Northern Territory in particular. We are much closer to that Asian economic zone than the rest of Australia. Our policy and our strategy for some time has been to attempt to market into that area. It will affect us more than anybody else and far more quickly than anybody else. I was very pleased to hear the minister say earlier that business people and government officials in South-east Asian countries are well aware of the marketing thrust that we have made in South-east Asia over the last few years. It is very pleasing and rewarding to note that we are highly respected throughout South-east Asia.

Last evening, I was watching television and I saw the Prime Minister addressing a multicultural conference down south. Once again, he was hyping up that multicultural debate. That is a great shame because, more than anybody else, he should recognise the damage it has already done and the potential it has to do further damage to the economic development of this country and to the opportunity to attract investment into Australia, particularly from South-east Asia. I was very saddened to note that he forgot about that as a goal and took the opportunity to score some political points against the federal opposition. I think that was pretty low.

Mr Ede: The federal opposition could have backed off.

Mr SETTER: That debate took place a month or 6 weeks ago. It is out of the political arena now. It has come and gone but he is trying to hype it up again to suit his own political ends and, obviously, to embarrass his opposition. It is politics. But, in pursuing his political goals, he is deliberately overlooking the damage that will do to Australia. I was disgusted when I heard that he had brought that debate back to the front pages once again.

The Trade Development Zone was designed to spearhead the establishment of a sound manufacturing base in the Northern Territory. For a long time, the urban areas of the Northern Territory have been dependent on the construction industry. Over the last several years, because of the reduction in federal government funding of the Northern Territory coffers, the construction industry has fallen on hard times. This government is doing the best it can to boost that construction industry. The State Square project is about to get off the ground. The home construction industry, on which most of the builders and subcontractors in the Northern Territory have survived for so long, has almost disappeared, partly due to the reduction in government funding but also because of federal government policy. Because of the elimination of the negative gearing facility that was available until 3 or 4 years ago and the considerable increase in interest rates that we have all had to suffer, construction of homes, flats and units has dropped through the floor and that industry has to be replaced with something. This government is doing all that it possibly can to boost the construction industry.

I am pleased to note that private enterprise is taking its rightful role and has been investing in construction over the last few years, particularly in Darwin and in Alice Springs. We have seen a number of private enterprise buildings going up around Darwin. The latest one, which will open its doors very soon, is the Galleria, a Paspalis investment in the Mall. Several million dollars have been invested in that venture, and there are quite a number of others. The construction industry has supported the Northern Territory for a very long time. It is this government's policy gradually to withdraw support from the construction industry and ask private enterprise to pick up the slack. That policy was enunciated in this House 18 months or more ago and honourable members would be well aware of that fact.

The other thrust of the government's direction with regard to developing manufacturing is the Trade Development Zone. When we talk about the Trade Development Zone, we are talking about a unique situation in Australia because no other such zone exists at this time in this country. I understand that the Queensland government has negotiated to establish a development zone in north Queensland, but that proposal has not really got off the ground yet.

One reason why it is very difficult to develop manufacturing in the Northern Territory is that we can manufacture the same sort of products that can be and are manufactured in the south. Due to the freight factor and the fact that the main market is in the southern part of Australia, it is not economical for the Territory to develop the industry to service that market. Our opportunities are to the north. One unique way to get this industry off the ground is by way of a trade development zone such as that which we have beyond Berrimah. The concept was first floated in 1984-85, and I recall being present in 1986 when the member for Casuarina, who was the responsible minister at that time, climbed on a front-end loader and turned the first sod. That was a significant day in the history of the Northern Territory. Since then, there has been considerable activity on site. We have seen the construction of an administration complex and a number of warehouses which, in some cases, have been divided up and leased off to the various companies which now occupy them.

I understand that, at this point, 5 companies are operating there. The most famous of those is the textile company which is manufacturing garments for sale overseas in the European and North American markets. I believe that quite a number of companies will be entering the Trade Development Zone in the not-too-distant future. I understand that one will be engaging 150 ...

Mr Coulter: 140.

Mr SETTER: 140 employees ...

Mr Coulter: Before Christmas.

Mr SETTER: Before Christmas, also in the textile ...

Mr SMITH: Mr Speaker, I call your attention to the state of the House.

Mr SPEAKER: A quorum is not present. Ring the bells.

Mrs Padgham-Purich: It does not matter.

Mr Smith: It is a major government statement. You would think that the government would maintain a quorum at least.

Mr Setter: Where are your other 5 people?

Mr Smith: We do not have to maintain the quorum. It is not our statement.

Mr Coulter: They do not have to.

Mr Smith: That is right.

Mr Setter: No, you are trying to say it is a major government statement. One would think that your people would be interested enough to attend.

Mr Smith: You put your house in order and I will worry about my house, right?

Mr Coulter: It is up to the government to maintain it.

Mr Smith: Yes, that is right it is too. Change your Whip.

Mr SPEAKER: A quorum is present.

Mr SETTER (Jingili): Mr Speaker, I can assure you that that delaying tactic on the part of the Leader of the Opposition has not unsettled me at all.

Mr Smith: I will have to do another count in a minute.

Mr SETTER: I anticipate that, by the end of next year, several hundred people will be employed in the Trade Development Zone, and that will be several hundred people who were not employed 2 years ago. The boost to the economy of the Northern Territory, particularly in Darwin, has been quite significant. Take it another 5 years down the line and it will be tremendously significant.

There is no doubt that the Trade Development Zone has had its growing pains, but that is no different from the experience of any other new organisation when it is getting off the ground. What has disappointed the government, particularly myself, is the way in which the Leader of the Opposition and his colleagues have taken the opportunity to seize on the zone and use it as a political football. They are not just playing politics. They are hell-bent on destroying the Trade Development Zone because it has been

good news. As I explained, we will have 300 employees there by the end of next year. That is good news, and these people have to knock anything that is good news in the Northern Territory. It is well known in the community and in the media that the Leader of the Opposition knocks everything that this government puts forward, regardless of its merit. Just look back, Mr Speaker. In September, his latest little trick was to call for a Royal Commission. On 22 September 1988, the NT News headline read: 'TDZ - Smith Calls for Royal Commission'. Of course, the article referred to a Royal Commission into allegations that Hong Kong TDZ consultant, Mr K.K. Yeung, was granted a large ex gratia, advance payment etc. Boring, Mr Speaker!

This government has always had full confidence in the Trade Development Zone, its management and its future. The report that was commissioned recently by the honourable minister, which was put together by Mr Fergus Simpson, has totally vindicated the government's position on and support for the Trade Development Zone. All accusations made by the Leader of the Opposition and his colleagues over the past 12 months or so have been shown to be inaccurate and wrong. We never doubted that for one moment but, of course, he has been attempting to sow disquiet among the Northern Territory population at large in order to suit his own political ends. He is no different from the Prime Minister who was pulling the same stunt 24 hours ago with regard to the multicultural debate.

The unfortunate point is that, while the Leader of the Opposition plays his political games, he does enormous damage to the image of the Trade Development Zone. We have heard before that Asian investors and Asian business people want to be about their business. They want to invest their money. They want to get on with the job, and they want to invest overseas. However, the last thing they want is to be involved in a political brawl or to be used as pawns in the political game of the opposition here. They want to come to a place that has a stable political climate. They do not want to have their names raised in this place. They do not want to have people querying them, investigating them and making accusations against them.

Mr Speaker, you will recall the accusations that the Leader of the Opposition made about Mr K.K. Yeung. They were totally unsubstantiated and totally inaccurate, but that did not stop him from making them. We are very fortunate indeed that Mr K.K. Yeung did not say to the honourable minister that he did not want to be involved in this and that he can make his money over in South-east Asia without the hassles that exist in the Northern Territory. It is a wonder that he did not advise us that he did not want to represent us in South-east Asia any longer. We are fortunate that Mr Yeung did not adopt that approach. He supported us and we supported him. I am sure that Mr K.K. Yeung believes as strongly as we do in the future of the Trade Development Zone.

Whilst Mr Fergus Simpson did support the government's strategy with regard to the Trade Development Zone, he drew attention to the fact that there was an opportunity to improve some of the efficiencies in the zone. The good thing was that he vindicated the government's continued support for the marketing strategy that has been adopted over this past several years. The Trade Development Zone has been operational for only 2 short years and, in terms of the development of a trade development zone, that is a very short time. There are plenty of examples around the world. Shannon was mentioned a while ago. I believe that Shannon was opened in the late 1940s.

A member interjecting.

Mr SETTER: Well, the late 1940s. I am sure I read recently somewhere that, at this time, some 90 companies operate out of that zone. We have been going for only 2 years and we have 5 companies at the zone, and that is not a bad start when it is realised that we started from scratch. I predict that investment in the Trade Development Zone by companies from South-east Asia will be like a rolling snowball. It starts off small but, as it rolls, it grows larger and larger, and as it rolls down that hill it gains speed. That will be the story of the Trade Development Zone.

I believe, and I know my colleagues believe, that the Trade Development Zone has a very bright future indeed. I would like to hear an undertaking from the Leader of the Opposition that, from this day forward, he will cease to knock the Trade Development Zone. That Trade Development Zone and its staff, and those companies that are established there at this moment deserve the full support of all members of this House.

Mr SMITH (Opposition Leader): Mr Speaker, it is interesting to note the evolution of the Simpson Report. The Simpson Report was commissioned by the Chief Minister when he was the responsible minister, and in somewhat strange circumstances. He went to a board meeting on day 1 and promised a full inquiry and, on day 2, after consideration, he opted for a partial inquiry. The result of that partial inquiry is the Simpson Report.

At that time, there was considerable concern in the community and obviously in the minister's mind about what was happening at the Trade Development Zone. We know now that, for 5 or 6 months, there had been continuous dissension within the Board of the Trade Development Zone Authority, dissension so disturbing that the chairman of the board went to the minister and said: 'Look, this is not working. Let us restrict ourselves to 4 board meetings in 1988'. Hungerford Refrigeration, the bad choice that the government made, and that the TIO particularly had made, was starting to unravel and there were concerns among members of the mechanical engineering industry in Darwin that they were suffering unfair competition from the operations of Hungerford at the zone. All of those circumstances help to explain the genesis of this report.

Mr Speaker, I have not had an opportunity to study the report thoroughly.

Mr Coulter: I gave it to you earlier.

Mr SMITH: Yes, you gave it to me 3 hours ago. I find it passing strange that, after lunch on the last day of these sittings, the minister has brought on this particular debate. However, he has his own reasons.

Mr Coulter: When do you suggest I should have done it?

Mr SMITH: Mr Speaker, if the minister wanted a full debate on the Simpson Report, its implications and its findings, he could have given the report to us last week and brought on the debate some time earlier this week.

I want to suggest to the government a couple of areas that it might look at. The one interesting aspect of the speech made by the member for Jingili was his constant reference to seeking investment and investment opportunities in the zone for business from Asia. I want to put forward a proposition that I hope that the minister will take seriously. We might do equally as well or better if we widened our scope and looked at possible sources of investment in the zone from other places. We have done that, I accept, with Skycom. Skycom has come from the United States.

I want to refer to a document issued by the Economist Intelligence Unit on Investors and Their Needs in the Export Processing Science. The document is from 1984, but its conclusions are still valid. It says that most investment in EPZs, which are roughly equivalent to the Trade Development Zone, is from developed countries. It says: 'The USA is by far the most important source. The US investor is represented in most zones and in all geographical areas'.

The point I want to make is that the market for products from the Trade Development Zone is undoubtedly Asia. There is no doubt that we are wonderfully placed geographically to open up the Asian market for products coming out of the Trade Development Zone. However, investment in the zone does not necessarily have to come from Asia. I accept that Hong Kong is a special case and that we ought to be making a major effort in Hong Kong to seek investment in the zone.

Experience has demonstrated that it is quite difficult to attract investors from other parts of Asia. Thailand has a booming economy. In fact, it is engaged in the same sort of search for capital that we are. Singapore and Malaysia have their own schemes to attract capital, and really are not exporting capital to any great extent. However, we offer a unique opportunity for established firms in Europe and the United States of America, who want to penetrate the Asian market, to do so from our Trade Development Zone. We could say to them, as obviously we said to Skycom: 'Come to Darwin. Live in a European-style country, have the creature comforts that you are used to, but be very close to the Asian market. Instead of travelling halfway around the world to reach Singapore, you could be there in 3 hours'. I think that there is enormous potential if we promote a proper marketing exercise in the United States of America, Canada and even some parts of Europe.

The other aspect of this report that struck me is how its findings describe quite well what is happening in the Trade Development Zone. It says that electronics are by far the most dominant activity in EPZs and I do not have any doubt that, when the zone does take off, the majority of the activities will be in electronics. It goes on to say that the second major area is textiles and clothing. However, it warns that the failure rate of textile and clothing manufacturers in zones like this is quite high. It then goes on to say, however, that there are always plenty of people who are willing to replace those who fail.

In relation to factors determining location, it talks about political stability ranking highest and preferential access as being important. Quite clearly, preferential access into the European market is of great benefit for textile manufacturers. Thankfully, it says that cheap labour is a general rather than a specific drawback. It says that transport costs are a significant factor and, because of our geographic position, transport costs and the short supply routes are an advantage. It says also that the financial consequences of bureaucratic delays are a problem. Obviously, the one-stop-shop idea that the Trade Development Zone offers can only be a positive attraction.

It then goes on to talk about the economic benefits that EPZs have. It says that the experience is that employment opportunities in EPZs increase in line with the activities, which is almost self-evident. However, the telling point is that most of the jobs that had been created in the EPZs surveyed had been low-level jobs for females. I think that is a pattern which is developing here at present. We are developing jobs, but they are mainly low-level jobs for females. I am not critical of that but it is something that we might need to keep our eye on in the longer term. We need to develop industries there that can attract skilled people in the higher income areas.

Mr Perron: The women's movement might not like that.

Mr SMITH: I am sure that the women's movement is able to accept that the highly-skilled activities that would occur there could be filled equally well by women as by men. Unfortunately, people like the Chief Minister have problems in accepting that.

Another feature of the EPZs has been that local purchases of raw materials are very limited and that the success rate is highest amongst multi-national firms. That point worries me a little as well. In the Trade Development Zone, we need to target industries that will create some sort of economic spin-offs in the broader community. Again, I think that the Skycom venture ...

Mr Coulter: We are signing that tomorrow!

Mr SMITH: That is great! Hopefully, it has a capacity to do that because, unless we can generate activity outside the zone in Darwin by activities in the zone, the benefits we will obtain from the zone will be more limited than they should otherwise be.

Mr Speaker, from the quick scan that I have made of the report, it seems that Mr Simpson has picked up one of the concerns that we have had: that the initial high rate of contact that has been made by the Northern Territory in Asia has resulted in a less-than-satisfactory conversion into bricks and mortar in the Trade Development Zone. That is a proposition that we advanced during the last sittings. There have been faults in the marketing side of the Trade Development Zone. Until recently, the Chairman of the Trade Development Zone Authority had reserved exclusively for himself the marketing arrangements in Asia and that approach had obviously not been working. One of the consequences of the failure of the TDZ Authority itself to provide an adequate marketing arrangement - and by 'marketing' I mean the detailed, follow-up work - was that K.K. Yeung Management Consultants was required to take on duties and activities that Mr Yeung did not expect to undertake in the first instance. My information about K.K. Yeung Management Consultants is that it is a very good first contact but that it is not Mr Yeung's forte or within his capacity to undertake the detailed, follow-up marketing work. Neither, it must be said, is it within the demonstrated capacity of the Chairman of the Trade Development Authority.

I hope that the Trade Development Zone Authority has recognised that there is a need for specialists to follow up, on a regular basis, the initial contacts that have been made. If that is done on a thoroughly regular basis, we will obtain a higher hit rate from the initial contacts that are made. A general complaint of exporters from Darwin is that, in the past, the government has been very good at establishing initial contacts but, when it comes to following them through or building on them to support potential exporters, the government is nowhere to be seen. I know that considerable frustration has been experienced by potential exporters as a result of that and, hopefully, the government will address that aspect.

The Trade Development Zone Authority needs to be careful that it does not attract any more companies which will compete directly with companies already existing in the Northern Territory, as occurred in the unfortunate case of Hungerford Refrigeration.

Mr Perron: Who else was manufacturing ice-making machines?

Mr SMITH: Who else was manufacturing ice-making machines?

Mr Coulter: In Darwin.

Mr SMITH: I know several companies in Darwin which could have manufactured and supplied air-conditioning equipment to schools like those at Milingimbi and Sanderson.

As Fergus Simpson has identified, there is a potential for Australian firms to be assessed and encouraged in terms of their entry into the zone. Once again, that requires a well-organised and persistent marketing effort.

Mr Speaker, due to the lateness of the hour, I will not persist much further. However, it seems to me that, although the language he has used is somewhat bland, Fergus Simpson has identified what seems to have been a major problem in the Trade Development Zone - the marketing effort after the initial contacts had been made. There is no doubt that the Northern Territory government has been extremely successful in making initial contacts. The problems have occurred in following up those contacts and, as I said earlier, translating them into bricks and mortar. Hopefully, with the new minister in charge and the new direction provided by the implementation of the Simpson Report, that weakness can be addressed and the Trade Development Zone will be able meet the expectations which we all had when the bill to establish the zone was first introduced and debated in this parliament.

Mr COULTER (Industries and Development): Mr Speaker, I thank the member for Jingili for his contribution to the debate and I note the pirouette which the Leader of the Opposition has performed in relation to the Trade Development Zone as he quickly tried to tidy up the public record to save his bacon next year.

Mr Speaker, I have a book here which lists a whole range of subjects. It is a case of 'Pick a subject, any subject'. Let me pick No 11: Yulara. What did the member for Stuart say about Yulara on 18 May 1988? It is recorded at page 3084 of the Parliamentary Record. He said that the Yulara Corporation was doomed to failure! Let us have a look at what the Leader of the Opposition, the member for Millner, said about Yulara and the railway in particular. When talking about the railway, he said that he did not want it to be another problem, like the Sheratons and Yulara. Pick any subject!

Mr Smith: Tell us about the pipeline!

Mr COULTER: Do you want to know what members of the opposition said about the gas pipeline? It is in my other book which is over in my office. My staff are listening and they will bring the book over so that I can tell the Leader of the Opposition what Bob Collins and John Reeves said about it.

Mr Smith: When you have finished, I will seek leave to table a document about the gas pipeline.

Mr COULTER: You will need to because, as in the case of the Trade Development Zone, you need to protect yourself. You are looking pretty stupid in the community at the moment in relation to the Trade Development Zone.

Mr Smith: You will look pretty stupid when I table the document.

Mr COULTER: You knocked the zone. You caused unnecessary debate. You caused a lot of unnecessary damage which I have now to repair. That is what

you did by bringing on the debate on the Trade Development Zone, and now you are ducking for cover and anxious to get on the public record as saying that you think it is a great thing.

The Leader of the Opposition mentioned the North American market. In fact, we have been talking to Austrade in Vancouver. Honourable members will be aware that the Austrade representative in Vancouver is a former lobbyist for the Northern Territory government whom we stood behind during his period of crisis in Australia, one David Coombs. The Northern Territory government did not abandon him, as did his colleagues in the Labor Party. He has spoken to us about the Canadian market and the North American market. Indeed, moves are afoot to examine those markets in February or March next year, although the proposal does not have the Chief Minister's approval as yet.

It was interesting that, when the Prime Minister of Singapore was here recently and was discussing business migration, he spoke about what Vancouver and Toronto have been able to achieve. Complete blocks in those cities have been bought by people from Hong Kong. We should not forget the effort and cost which is involved in mounting a campaign in the North American region and I certainly hope that the Leader of the Opposition will be supportive in that regard. Of course, Air Canada flew loads of people from Hong Kong to Canada in 747s. They were given free tickets and flown over to look at the place, and that is how Canada obtained that investment. It was not easy to obtain. It required a great deal of hard work and dedication and a considerable amount of money was spent on the venture. If we make efforts to move into the North American scene, we do not want to hear the carping criticism which we hear so often from the opposition.

I mentioned the pipeline in this speech, and the Labor Party's attitude to it. The opposition is always saying that it has continually supported the pipeline. On 8DN radio talkback on Monday 12 May 1986, the then Leader of the Opposition, now Senator Collins, said: 'Many of the proposals that we have put forward have been adopted by the government. The gas pipeline from Alice Springs to Darwin and the gas-fired power station was one that Jon Isaacs proposed in 1981'.

Mr Smith: How come that is not support?

Mr COULTER: I am trying to demonstrate the 180° turns which the opposition makes.

In an interview on ABC radio on 16 April 1984, Senator Collins said: 'They are now talking about constructing a pipeline from Palm Valley to Darwin. Now let me assure you that the information I have got from the gas industry itself is that, apart from that being a ludicrous proposal in any case, if they get the gas at the end of the pipeline for nothing, which of course is not going to happen, but if they got it at no cost, it will still not justify the expense of the proposal'. That is typical of the members opposite. They are not consistent. They do not have a line. They do not believe in anything. The electorate understands that and that is why it does not vote for them. The opposition controls just 1 urban seat and even that is looking pretty shaky at the moment under the present leadership.

Let us look at what the then member of the House of Representatives, Mr Reeves, said about the pipeline: 'I think it is just part of the usual CLP bash line'. He also said: 'The other major problem is that the Stokes Hill Power Station's life is to expire in 1988. It will no longer be able to keep up with Darwin's electricity demands and the Territory government has decided

to change to gas powering for Channel Island. There is no guarantee that the new power station will be ready in time to take over the burden of Darwin's power supply'. There are many statements like that, Mr Speaker. I have books of them. As I said, I will make them available to anybody who wants to peruse some of the stupid, ludicrous, contradictory statements that the opposition makes from time to time. We have witnessed that again here today as the opposition has tried to cover its bets. It wants to have 2 bob each way and it is trying to get its latest stance set down in the Parliamentary Record.

I am looking forward to seeing the document which, I understand, the Leader of the Opposition intends to table shortly. I can demonstrate, on any subject which the opposition wishes to name, that it tries to have 2 bob each way. Mr Speaker, everybody on this side of the House knows what happens to people who take the middle of the road. They get run over. That is what happens to them and that is what will happen to the Leader of the Opposition, the Deputy Leader of the Opposition and some of their colleagues on the opposition benches.

Mr Ede: You have not got a big enough truck.

Mr COULTER: We will see.

Mr Speaker, as I have said, the Trade Development Zone is a success story. When I became the minister responsible for the Trade Development Zone, the very first thing I did was to contract Fergus Simpson to prepare this report. He did not do it from an office block in South Australia. He travelled in Asia. He visited the officers of K.K. Yeung Management Consultants and spoke with them. He prepared a thorough report. It contains some criticism and I do not deny that. That, in fact, is what reports are all about - to identify problems and to recommend remedial action to improve the efficiency, effectiveness and success of an organisation. That is what Mr Simpson has done. And he has done it in a much more constructive way than has the Leader of the Opposition who brought on MPIs and censure motions. He is now saying what a fantastic operation it is and that we should spend money seeking investors not only in Asia but also in North America and Canada.

Mr Smith: Do you want it to work or not?

Mr COULTER: A little while ago, he was worried about how much we had spent in Asia, yet he now wants us to spend more money. That is the type of hypocrisy that we have become used to from members opposite. The public record is full of this 180°, 2-bob-each-way strategy of the opposition. It is the same with the State Square project. We are standing behind that project, like it or lump it. We will build it. That is what people want: they want definite statements. Let us see if it will result in our being thrown out of office and whether the TDZ, the Sheratons or the pipelines will result in that. Wait and see what happens when there is debate on the petro-chemical plant. During the budget session, we had questions about gas stripping plants and the member for Nhulunbuy tried to indicate that nothing would happen.

When the petro-chemical plant debate comes on, I guarantee that the Leader of the Opposition will find something wrong with it. There will be financial problems, there will be people in bed with other people, there will be scandals, there will be allegations that land is being given away for nothing - there will be any number of complaints. We will be out there at the opening and I put the Leader of the Opposition on full notice that I will be mentioning him. I doubt very much whether he will turn up to the opening.

Mr Smith: The opening of what?

Mr COULTER: The opening of our petro-chemical plant.

Mr Smith: When will that happen?

Mr COULTER: It will happen. Let us be patient, that is all.

Mr Speaker, if the State Square project, for example, is such a port and such a disaster that it will result in our being thrown out of government, members of the opposition should be rejoicing in the streets. What are they worried about?

Mr Smith: We are not.

Mr COULTER: You are not worried about the State Square project now? That is good. I am sure that information will come in handy later. It is now a matter for the public record. But, Mr Speaker, do not take any notice of that because he can change his mind faster than we can change shirts.

Mr Speaker, I will not continue this line of debate for much longer because we have things to do. The Trade Development Zone will be one of the major planks of the platform for the re-election of the CLP government in the next election. We will trot out some of the tripe that has been ...

Mr Smith: Want to bet?

Mr COULTER: You were handing around \$50 bets yesterday. Do you want another easy \$50 on this?

Mr Smith: On the expanded majority?

Mr COULTER: Do you want to have \$50 on it or not?

Mr Smith: All right, I will see you afterwards.

Mr COULTER: Come on, make it now. Put it on the public record. If you are a man and you have these theories, throw up a lazy \$50 now.

Mr Speaker, we are committed and that is another example of the commitment on this side. We will put our money where our mouth is when we come up with these types of statements. The Trade Development Zone will be a major plank in the re-election platform of the CLP government with an expanded majority at the next election. The electorate will not put up with this knock, knock, knocking and canning of every major project that turns into a success story. People are not silly. They have seen what has happened with Yulara, the Sheratons and the pipeline etc. They will keep on voting for us on those grounds.

I thank the member for Jingili for his contribution. I have put on the public record just where the members of the opposition stand on these major projects and how they try to cover their backsides on all these major issues. They do not have a position and, as I said, middle-of-the-roaders get run over.

Motion agreed to.

TABLED PAPER
Article from Katherine Advertiser

Mr SMITH (Opposition Leader)(by leave): Mr Speaker, I table a piece of information contained in the Katherine Advertiser dated 1 May 1980. I wish to read a piece out of a weekly column called 'Paul's Weekly Column'. Paul, of course, was a Chief Minister 4 or 5 Chief Ministers ago. It reads, in part:

The energy issue which was raised in the Legislative Assembly again this week provides an interesting comparison between the credibility of my CLP government and the Labor Party. Our announcement of plans for a coal-fired power station for Darwin is based on a sound, realistic approach to a critical problem. On the other hand, Labor has put up in this election year a half-baked scheme that is shot through with mistakes which means it simply would not work. Their whole policy is based on natural gas reserves which they claim will meet our needs well into the next century.

Mr Speaker, at least he had the courtesy to go red.

CANCER (REGISTRATION) BILL
(Serial 160)

Continued from 23 November 1988.

Mr BELL (MacDonnell): Mr Speaker, I indicate at the outset that the opposition has no problem with the Cancer Registration Bill. We appreciate the consultation the minister has been able to provide in respect of what is, quite obviously, important legislation. For the benefit of members who may not have read the minister's second-reading speech, this bill is designed to provide for the mandatory notification of diagnosed cancer. It would have the effect of obliging those in charge of hospitals, nursing homes and pathology laboratories to provide requisite information on prescribed forms. That was in the original bill that was introduced. There have been subsequent changes.

One change to the new bill establishes that only 2 classes of people, namely pathologists and the Registrar of Births, Deaths and Marriages, are able to notify the registrar. This is a welcome improvement to the initial proposal which provided that people in charge of hospitals and nursing homes would undertake this role also. The provisions have been tightened up in that regard. It is felt by the opposition that this is an appropriate privacy arrangement. Quite obviously, with a database for epidemiological research of this sort, the question of personal privacy is of vital concern. I draw attention to the statement from the National Health and Medical Research Council which provides a note on guidelines for epidemiological research. I quote a paragraph from that document where emphasis is placed on the importance of privacy:

The use in epidemiological study of confidential or personal information should not be allowed to cause material, emotional or other disadvantage to any individual.

It goes on to point out that:

Such information, if it is confidential or personal and obtained for research, must not be used for purposes other than those specified in the approved protocol for that particular research aspect.

It provides certain guidelines, and it is quite appropriate that the Assembly take into consideration questions of privacy and confidentiality of that sort.

In the former bill, the provisions would have enabled the Registrar to authorise the release of information to someone approved by the head of the department responsible for this legislation. This has been changed to the Chief Medical Officer which is, in the view of the opposition, more appropriate. I should point out that the State Ethics Committees that are referred to in the National Health and Medical Research Council guidelines that I have quoted before are overseen by that body. Honourable members will be interested to know of the input into that area of Professor Matthews of our Menzies School of Health Research. I am sure that it is with confidence that this Assembly can pass this legislation.

With those comments, I am pleased to endorse the legislation. As the honourable minister said in his second-reading speech, the question of cancer research is one of great importance to this country. I think that there are few of us who have not had personal experience of friends or even those closer to us who have suffered from some form of cancer. I recall that, when I was a student, I worked during a vacation period as an orderly in the Peter McCallum Clinic in Melbourne and, at that time, I had opportunity to find out a little about direct work with cancer patients. Obviously, since that time, many forward steps have been taken in cancer research and it is to be hoped that this registration process that the Territory is joining into with other states will assist that process in helping us to conquer this particular disease.

Mr FIRMIN (Ludmilla): Mr Speaker, I rise to support the introduction of the Cancer Registration Bill. Some members of the Assembly know of my close association with the Northern Territory Anti-Cancer Foundation and my continuous and ongoing interest in research into, and hopefully at some time in the future, the reduction of the incidence of cancer both in the Northern Territory and elsewhere from studies that can be undertaken into causes of cancer. When I was looking at this bill recently, preparatory to making some notes about what I wished to say today, I was interested to find something that I said in a letter to yourself, Mr Deputy Speaker, in 1984 when you were Minister for Health. It is worth while reiterating some of the things that I said at the time.

I said that it was time to take another look at our existing situation in respect of the voluntary collection of cancer data that was being undertaken in the Northern Territory at the time and also the voluntary reporting, through the private pathology laboratories at the time. However, as I said, if the data that was being provided voluntarily was to have any effect at all on the research into and discovery of new methods of controlling or mitigating cancer in the Northern Territory, we were wasting our time with the information that we were then receiving if we did not take the full step and have total reporting of incidences of cancer in the Northern Territory. I will reiterate that. The voluntary reporting system was, and in my view still is, a total waste of time and people's energy because the number of reports is so small and it is too selective. It gives no indication of whether the voluntary reporting relates to the same person at regular intervals, with different parts of the cancerous growth being reported or whether, in fact, it relates to a group of individuals. It gives no indication of where, when or how the cancer is being picked up. Indeed, it gives very little other information at all in relation to research.

I went on to say that we had all lost close friends and colleagues in recent months and it would be very sad if, in hindsight, we found that, by

accelerating our information gathering and dissemination of this data to research institutes, major breakthroughs occurred which would have been very helpful to them ...

Mr Collins: How?

Mr FIRMIN: It might have helped to save their lives or to reduce future problems with cancer operations. We have some classic cases in the Territory today, including our own Minister for Health and Community Services who, for example, might not have had the benefit of what I believe, and hope for his sake, was extremely successful surgery undertaken last year with respect to cancer had he not had the benefit of previous medical experience in respect to the sort of cancer that he had ...

Mrs Padgham-Purich: That does not have anything to do with reporting.

Mr FIRMIN: It may not have anything to do with reporting at the moment. All I am saying is that, as you would well know, over the centuries that medical research has been undertaken, there have been breakthroughs in many fields for many reasons, and a very large majority of those breakthroughs have occurred as a result of constant identification and collection of data concerning those medical problems that were occurring at the time. In many cases, it was the collection of data that highlighted the lead that led the medical fraternity into an area where it could attack the root cause.

I believe that it is highly likely that, somewhere along the line in the future, we will find a method of curing cancer. I have the greatest faith in the fact that we will probably finding a cure at some stage for cancer, and the collection of data is one way in which researchers are able to look at all the symptoms of cancer and, hopefully, to unravel the skein of tangled webs that will lead them into an area where a solution is found.

The member for MacDonnell supported the bill and mentioned the problems connected with confidentiality. I support his views on those problems that he felt existed in respect of confidentiality. They have been shared by all of us over the years. Hopefully, those concerns have been put to bed by this legislation which allows for confidentiality of information. In fact, even some of our own members in the Northern Territory Anti-Cancer Foundation and our support groups, who support anything to do with research into cancer, had fears about the confidentiality aspect and wrote to the minister not so long ago outlining those fears. That was in respect to the former bill. Now most of those people are completely satisfied that the confidentiality aspect is well and truly covered under this bill. Certainly, since it was explained to them that, with respect to the gathering of information, whilst the names of individuals will go into the register in the first instance, the computer record of the case or the incidence is protected by the coding of that person's information on a stand-alone computer. The Northern Territory government mainframe computer will not be used for the recording of information that is gathered. A stand-alone PC will be used to prepare and maintain the data bank. Apart from the Registrar, only 1 other person will have access to the computer key into that data, and that will be the nominated head of the Department of Health. Those provisions will allow the person whose data is being presented to the data bank to be absolutely certain that confidentiality will not be breached.

With respect to the research that will be undertaken as a result of the collection of the data, when the data bank is sufficiently ready to be able to give out meaningful data, that data will be released only by the Registrar

and, under the provisions of this legislation, that will have to go before the Ethics Committee before any of the data is released. It will not be released with names attached. It will be data with respect to the number of incidences and the area, the age groups involved and possibly the nationality and other matters that are relevant for purposes of gathering statistical material. It will not make any reference whatsoever to any person's name.

Mr Speaker, as I have said, I have been involved with pressuring for the introduction of a bill of this type for some considerable time, and it gives me a great deal of pleasure to support the minister and the legislation we have before us.

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH Koolpinyah): Mr Speaker, at the outset, could something be done about the temperature in this Chamber? It is extremely cold this afternoon.

Mr SPEAKER: Perhaps the honourable member would like my robe?

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH: Yes, I will take you up on that, Mr Speaker.

Mr Speaker, I am of 2 minds about this bill. First, I wish to ask the honourable minister a question. He does not say so but, when all this information is to be gathered, I assume that people's anonymity will not be maintained in that a person's name will go with his particulars. Is that correct?

Mr Dale: Yes, it does.

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH: If that is the case, I have an objection to the way in which this bill is written. I have no objection at all to a person who has a fatal disease, in this case cancer, having his or her details recorded as would be done with a notifiable disease, and passed to the relevant authorities. But that is an anonymous notification. In this case, I fail to see why it is necessary to include the person's name with the details of the cancer that caused his or her death. I am assuming ...

Mr Dale: What if they are not dead?

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH: That makes it even worse. I have a great suspicion about this. Perhaps I am just old-fashioned, but my suspicions have been borne out over the years and have proven to be correct. I have great suspicion about the confidentiality of any documents in the hands of the government. The population of Darwin and the Northern Territory is small. I find it extremely hard to believe that this confidentiality would be maintained. If it was necessary to include the person's name while he or she was still living, I believe that would add considerable mental trauma to the medical condition of the person. To bring it closer to home, if I or one of my family contracted cancer, there is no way that I would want all and sundry to know about it. My immediate friends may ...

Mr Dale: Why?

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH: Because I want to maintain my personal privacy. It means a great deal to me and it means a great deal to many people.

Mr Dale: If I can guarantee that, would you be happy?

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH: It will not be available if this bill is passed which it will be because of the weight of government numbers.

I find it very ironical that, on the one hand, the honourable minister wants to register all the details of these poor people who are affected with cancer - which will be quite traumatic for them while they are alive or for their families when they are dead - but, on the other hand, he surrounds the people who have AIDS with elaborate secrecy - not having names taken, not having lists taken, not doing this, not doing that. I cannot understand the complete contrast in these 2 instances.

It seems rather unusual to me that a person who wants to undertake scientific research of this kind needs to know the name of the person who has contracted cancer. I have no objection to the researcher knowing the sex of the person affected, where it was in his body, perhaps his age or perhaps his ethnic origin, but why does he need the name? I object to that strongly, Mr Speaker.

Mr Dale interjecting.

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH: If I hear correctly, the minister is now saying the name will not be attached to the information. Previously, he said that it would. I think that this will work adversely on those poor people in the community who have cancer. I believe that many members of the medical profession are in agreement with me.

Of course we need information on the incidence of disease so that we can assist future sufferers. With various diseases, each generation has discovered more and more information. I ask the honourable minister again to reconsider the subject of anonymity in so far as a person's private details are involved.

Mr SETTER (Jingili): Mr Speaker, I would have been interested to hear the member for Koolpinyah's ideas in relation to the motion on freedom of information.

Mrs Padgham-Purich: Not with a person's name attached to all the personal details. That is what I am on about.

Mr SETTER: Mr Speaker, Noel Coward once said that mad dogs and Englishmen go out in the midday sun. I would suggest that it would have been more appropriate if Mr Coward had said that dogs and mad Englishmen go out in the midday sun. In this day and age, people with fair skin like myself would have to be crazy if they spent much of their time in the sun. The days of the sun-bronzed Australian, if you like, really have gone even though many of our young people lie on our sandy beaches at times. Have a talk to those people 20, 30 or more years later and look at the incidence of melanoma and skin cancer among them. I think you will find, Mr Speaker, that it is quite high.

I am told that the incidence of skin cancer in Queensland is the highest in the world. In fact, the Courier Mail of 3 October 1988 says:

Cancer Kills 4000 a Year in State. 'Cancer killed about 4000 Queenslanders a year and the death rate was continuing to rise', the Queensland Cancer Fund said yesterday.

It goes on to say:

Queenslanders suffer the highest incidence of skin cancer in the world. 170 Queenslanders die from it each year.

It is interesting to note that 170 die from skin cancer but 4000 die from cancer annually. That indicates that a considerable number are dying from other forms of cancer.

What is cancer? The bill says that 'cancer' means a neoplasm of human tissue that is malignant, that if unchecked invades adjacent tissues or extends beyond its site of origin, and that has propensity to recur either locally or remotely in the body'. I mentioned skin cancer and melanoma. Of course, we all know that there is lung cancer, breast cancer, bowel cancer, liver cancer, throat cancer, leukemia and probably many others.

This bill will establish a register of the incidence of cancer in the Northern Territory. That register will provide the information necessary for our researchers to identify where the greatest incidence is and where there is the greatest need for research. You do not provide resources for research to solve the problem where the number of persons dying from a particular cancer is small when another type of cancer might be killing hundreds or thousands of persons each year. We need to identify where the need is greatest and direct the main thrust of research in that area. In earlier times, there was no cure for cancer. Fortunately, today, quite a large number of people who are affected do survive, particularly when the cancer is identified at an early stage. If it is too advanced, in most cases it is too late. If it can be identified early, there is quite a good success rate as a result of surgery or through chemotherapy, and many people do recover their health. The survival rate has improved considerably. I know there are many people in the community today who are still alive because they were lucky enough to have their condition identified at that early stage.

The bill allows for the establishment of a register of persons suffering from cancer. It provides also for the appointment of a registrar who will be responsible for compiling this register. I am not quite sure, and perhaps the honourable minister can clarify this, whether the registrar will have support staff and, if so, how many staff? What sort of bureaucracy will result from the passing of this legislation?

As I indicated, it is very necessary to have these statistics to identify the incidence of the disease and the particular forms it takes. In 1984, the National Health and Medical Research Council endorsed the establishment of an Australasian Association of Cancer Registries and I understand that most states are now participating in that. Following the passage of this bill, the Northern Territory will participate in that program. I am very pleased that the minister has introduced this legislation because I believe that it is absolutely essential that we participate.

Mr Ede: Give it a miss and sit down.

Mr SETTER: Mr Speaker, it is quite disappointing to hear the member for Stuart make lighthearted comment during discussion of this bill because this is a very serious matter.

Mr Ede: I know. We are agreeing with it.

Mr SETTER: Good. It is a very serious matter. Do not make light of it because there are many people in the community who have suffered from this disease.

Mr Ede: Oh, come off it Rick. Sit down!

Mr SETTER: Who knows, some us here may have had it. In fact, I am aware that some of us have.

This register will enable the identification of the incidence of cancer in ethnic groups. For example, the Aborigines live a particular lifestyle. They spend much of their time in the sun. Other ethnic groups have dietary habits which are different from our own. I am talking about myself as a normal Anglo-Saxon European Australian - steak and eggs and the works. Other people have different dietary habits and it could well be that the incidence of cancer in those groups is different from that in my own particular group.

In fact, let me recount something that quite surprised me. When I was a young fellow in north Queensland, I had a good school mate who lived just down the road from me. He happened to be an Aboriginal person. One day, I told him that I had been badly sunburned which was quite common in those days before sunburn creams. He said: 'So have I'. I said to him: 'Come on, your skin is black as charcoal'. He said: 'Of course I get sunburned'. I could not believe it. Quite obviously, regardless of the colour of the pigment of the skin, all people burn. That was something that I had not realised.

Mr Speaker, with those few words, I indicate my support for the bill.

Mr COLLINS (Sadadeen): Mr Speaker, in an earlier debate, I recall that the question was posed as to what would be proved if everybody in the Territory were tested for AIDS and all the data collated. What difference would it make to the method of treatment? I received a bit of an explanation from the member for Ludmilla, but he did not really give clear examples to show why cancer should be treated differently from AIDS. I see that the minister is writing. I would be pleased to be educated by him as to how and why the gathering of all this data will really make any difference to the way people are treated. I am sure that the most effective treatment of cancer at present is linked to early detection. I will seek the minister's advice as to how and why the data will be used and how it may affect the way people are treated. I am willing to be educated.

This is a very important subject. If the bill is demonstrably useful, I will support it. However, if it is of dubious value, my question is why it should be implemented. The bill contains secrecy provisions which seem to indicate that people's dignity will be respected. However, if there is really no point in recording and keeping the information, what is the use of the legislation? I will sit down now to await the minister's advice.

Mr DALE (Health and Community Services): Mr Speaker, I would like to thank members opposite for their cooperation in allowing the passage of this bill through all stages at these sittings. It has had a long gestation period and I certainly can understand the feeling in the community about the introduction of such legislation.

What has concerned me most in this debate is the way in which members on the crossbenches, in the comments they have made, have shown either their complete lack of understanding or an unwillingness to show simple compassion for their fellow humans. In discussing AIDS, the members for the Joh party

appeared to be totally unconcerned about the fact that AIDS is killing people. They did not want to do anything about it. They wanted to fight drug abuse, and I agree with that, but they did not want to do anything about AIDS.

The honourable member for Koolpinyah seems to be concerned mainly with the confidentiality of information despite the fact that I believe information will be absolutely secure under this legislation. She seems to forget about the actual situation of individuals unfortunate enough to have contracted what I believe is the most insidious snake-in-the-grass disease known to man today - cancer. If we have any compassion at all for people who are fortunate enough to be free of this disease at this stage of their life and, moreover, any concern for the well-being of future generations, we have to take whatever responsible steps we can take, as legislators and as human beings, to put the best possible weapons in the hands of the people who are trying to combat this disease. This legislation represents an incredibly simple step in that regard.

If anybody reads the bill, he will see that confidentiality is well and truly secured. Of course, nothing is absolutely secure. Fort Knox is not absolutely secure. Alcatraz was not absolutely secure. Nothing is absolutely secure in the world of human beings. The fact is that the information to be collected under this legislation will be about as secure as anything can be under our law. It includes appropriate penalties for anybody who breaks the law.

Let us suppose for a moment, however, that confidentiality is breached in a couple of cases. Do members on the crossbenches think that such information will be splashed all over the front pages of the newspaper? 'Mrs Smith has breast cancer - disclosed in leak of confidential information at Royal Darwin Hospital last week'. What a lot of nonsense! Members on the crossbenches have shown a pathetic grasp of the situation in their efforts to discredit this very responsible government for its efforts to attack 1 of the 2 most horrendous situations confronting mankind today - cancer and AIDS.

There is a very good reason why it is necessary to record the names of people who contract cancer. It is very simple and it is common sense. If we record only a number beside a particular case, we cannot follow that case through in the future. We cannot tell if a number died 6 months after being recorded. We cannot tell if that number moved from the Northern Territory to New South Wales and, for some incredible reason, recovered from cancer. We cannot tell if that number has moved from a job in an asbestos mine to a job in some other environment and, in the process, recovered from the disease. We cannot record those things if we do not have the name of the person. That is a very basic way of explaining the matter to the member for Koolpinyah. She did not go so far as to say that she did not agree with the bill or would not like to see it passed because of her concern about confidentiality. However, she did not say that, despite that concern, she supported it.

Anybody who reads the legislation will see that it is absolutely necessary. In his comments on the bill, the member for Sadadeen raised a question which is related to his rather cynical approach to AIDS. He appears to be absolutely determined not to be educated on various aspects of the AIDS virus. One of those is his ...

Mr Collins: I attended 2 of your briefings.

Mr DALE: And you did not listen. It seems to require a 6-inch nail driven by a meat axe to get anything into his skull.

Mr COLLINS: A point of order, Mr Speaker! I find those words offensive and I ask that the minister withdraw.

Mr DALE: Mr Speaker, I withdraw any remarks that would in any way cause discomfort to the member.

Mr Speaker, sometimes I become extremely frustrated when people elected to this forum, people whom I believe to be extremely intelligent, fail to display the ability to listen and to absorb and assess information. I suppose one of my vices is that I become very frustrated when people will not absorb information. This Assembly has been given information about AIDS and the reasons for not moving to compulsory blood testing and recording that information. Apparently, it has not sunk into the heads of members on the crossbenches that there is no benefit to society or to researchers in documenting information about blood tests for AIDS.

Mr Collins: Then why do you want to do it under this bill?

Mr DALE: Mr Speaker, there is a very subtle difference and, once again, the member for Sadadeen has not listened. In the case of AIDS, there are 2 simple facts which are not guaranteed in the case of cancer. The first is that there is no cure for AIDS. If a person contracts it, he or she will die. The second is that we are 98% certain of how AIDS is contracted, where it started from and how the virus works. That is not the case with cancer. Cancer is treatable. We can do something about it if we record information about individual cases. With AIDS, such information is of no account. Inevitably, infected people will die as a result of it. That is why the approaches adopted to the 2 diseases are different.

Various forms of treatment are used to combat what might appear initially to be the same type of cancer. Two people with brain tumours may be treated differently because of specific factors. One may be treated surgically whilst the other may be treated with a combination of chemotherapy and surgery. In researching the disease of cancer and its treatment, it is extremely important that such cases are followed through and the results of treatment recorded. For example, if the person who is treated by chemotherapy keels over and dies after 6 months whilst the other person lives on for 10 years, that information needs to be documented. That can be done only if the identities of the 2 cancer sufferers are known.

It will give us the ability to take part in an Australasian scheme to record all cancer cases. I suppose it is very fitting that I am the minister who has the opportunity to introduce this bill after such a long time has passed in developing it. Despite my problems, I have absolutely no hesitation whatsoever in introducing this legislation. I can assure honourable members that, if I can do anything to prevent any person contracting cancer from this moment on or can assist in any way with research which will add to the treatment of cancer today, then I am extremely honoured to be able to do so.

Mr Speaker, I thank all honourable members for their contributions. I congratulate the Anti-cancer Foundation on the work that it has put into this bill over the years and also the AMA for its contribution over recent weeks, in particular for ensuring that the bill takes a form that most people anyway will be happy with.

Motion agreed to; bill read a second time.

Mr DALE (Health and Community Services)(by leave): Mr Speaker, I move that the bill be now read a third time.

Motion agreed to; bill read a third time.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

Mr COLLINS (Sadadeen)(by leave): Mr Speaker, during his speech, the minister gave the rather clear impression that I had some very funny ideas about AIDS etc. I have no idea where he got that from because I have not spoken in that debate at this stage. I have attended 2 briefings with staff of his department. I am taking the matter very seriously. I protest at the attitude of the minister. The only thing that I said about AIDS was to quote a statement that he made saying that there would be absolutely no change in the type of treatment that people would get if everybody in the Territory was tested for AIDS and it would be a pointless exercise to do it. I wanted to know why that did not apply also to the bill that we have just passed. I object to his imputing funny ideas to me because he has no idea what my attitude to the AIDS problem is.

STATEMENT

Article from Katherine Times

Mr COULTER (Leader of Government Business)(by leave): Mr Speaker, just for the public record, the Leader of the Opposition was very selective in his quotation from a column in the Katherine Times. I would like to read into Hansard what the document went on to say. In fact, Paul Everingham, the then Chief Minister of the Northern Territory said: 'The government is committed to ending our dependence on oil and we hope that the Territory's own natural gas supplies can be one of the alternative energy sources'.

Mr Speaker, in 1980, we were still proving up the oil and gas fields of Palm Valley. In fact, the article referred to Palm Valley. I understand from somebody who was in the district at the time that, in fact, they were talking about Mereenie at that time, contemplating the removal of the oil and using the gas as the propellant. The article needs to be read in context. In fact, it went on to say that the Northern Territory government is committed to natural gas as our alternative energy source.

FISHERIES BILL (Serial 151)

Continued from 13 October 1988.

Mr EDE (Stuart): Mr Speaker, from most accounts, the honourable minister has engaged in very extensive consultation with most of the affected people in the industry on the formulation of this bill and, for that, I congratulate him. The bill was to be debated last week but the minister deferred it again to do some final work on it. We have a redrafted set of amendments which would indicate that, even at that stage, he was making amendments. However, it would appear that the Northern Territory Commercial Fishermen's Association missed out in that process. It has a number of issues which it would have liked to raise during that debate. No doubt, the minister will be able to reply to some of them and allay some of the association's fears. Others may become the subject of an amendment to the act if they stand up after negotiation with the Commercial Fishermen's Association and other groups. I would like to go through them because some of them touch on issues which have relevance in this type of bill which, by its nature, confers more powers on

authorities and people in authority. To that extent, it can be seen to be affecting the ordinary rights of individuals within the fishing industry.

Mr Speaker, one of the major problems that people are worried about is the lack of security. They have invested large sums in purchasing their vessels and organising themselves in this profession. They would like to stress that people who have dedicated the best part of their lives to fishing and to slowly building up their equipment unfortunately have no security if a licence is cancelled. There are people who believe that, if a licence is cancelled under the act, the vessel should still be able to be registered for other fisheries if the owner is licensed in those fisheries. In fact, what they are saying is that there should be an amendment to clause 15 in the following terms: 'Where a licence under this act is cancelled, the registration of the vessel enabling it to be used for this licence is cancelled, but it is still registered for other fisheries if the owner is licensed for those fisheries'.

Basically, they want some way of maintaining the value of their asset and the possibility of continuing with their livelihood even though they may have lost their rights in 1 particular area. Obviously, that would not be applicable in all cases, but there may be circumstances where something like that would enable a court to impose a penalty which would not destroy the person's means of gaining his livelihood completely.

In relation to clause 21, they refer to problems where a person who has his licence suspended for an infringement of the act may lose his livelihood even though the suspension may have been for a minor offence. They tell the story of a particular fisherman who was 1 month in arrears with his fishing returns. That is something that can happen to any fisherman at any time, but certainly it should not. People are supposed to submit their returns, but trips take a long time. Sometimes people are away for 6 or 8 weeks at a time. This particular person was a month in arrears with his fishing returns. This person was taken to court and convicted and he was then told that his barramundi licence would not be renewed. Eventually, he was told that he could sell on the buy-back scheme, but the person was forced out of the industry by what, on the face of it, would appear to be a very human and minor error and one which, as I said, because of the fact that he may have been out fishing at the time, he may not have been able to avoid. The suggestion is that, for minor offences of that nature, it should be possible to suspend the licence or impose a fine only rather than going to the extreme of not renewing the licence.

One of the points that people have problems with, right throughout the industry, is the composition of various committees. They state that the old Consultative Committee was referred to generally as the 'insultative' committee in that unqualified people made decisions for the industry when in no way were they conversant with the problems that some of those decisions would visit on the industry. They believe that, if there is a consultative committee or a trust fund to be administered, the barramundi industry, the Northern Territory Commercial Fishermen's Association, the prawning industry, the Northern Territory Fishing Industry Council, the Pelagic Association and the Crab Association should be able to nominate representatives on the committee. Possibly, they could propose a panel of 2 or 3 people in addition to the minister's nominee. That would ensure that the total committee was made up of representatives from each of the various organisations and that those people were responsible back to their committee and would ensure that its wishes were put forward and that the government was then made aware of all the different views within the various sectors of the fishing industry.

With regard to subclauses 31(1) and (2), there are people who feel that that part of the bill is extremely dangerous in that it gives complete powers to police officers or fisheries officers. Whilst the distinction is drawn between the right in that clause for people to enter to look at the catch and the equipment, in some instances, because of their powers to look right through a boat, they may also enter what, in effect, is a person's private home. Many people make their homes on those boats. The power under that clause gives people an unfettered right to go through their personal possessions, through their bedrooms etc. That right ...

Mr Perron: Illegal fish have been found at people's private homes before today, I can tell you that.

Mr EDE: Right, but that does not occur with respect to other sections of the industry. For example, I am told that, in general, people in the prawn industry do not live permanently on their boats. They have homes elsewhere. Different warrants and powers are needed to enter their homes and search for illegal prawns or whatever. There is a difference between the approach to the 2 sections of the industry. Because they live on their boats, people in one section of the industry have lost their right to privacy in those areas of their boats in which they live whereas people in the other section of the industry, who do not live on their boats, have those extra guarantees.

Mr Perron: Are you saying that they cannot use the same powers to enter the houses on land?

Mr EDE: That is the way that this legislation has been explained to me. As far as warrants etc are concerned, it is far simpler for a person to go right through a boat and check a person's living quarters within that boat than it is to obtain access to search a house.

One proposal is that, perhaps the enforcement authority should have the right to inspect freezers and fishing equipment but, of course, within that there should be a requirement to prevent fish spoilage etc. The compromise should be that that part of the boat which is used for purely domestic purposes should be treated in the same way as a person's house is treated so that fisheries officers would have to show good reason to obtain a warrant to search that part of a boat, as they would have to do if they were going into a person's private home on shore.

With regard to the ability to take samples, there is a belief that the samples taken should be sealed and that the fishermen as well as the authorities should sign those samples. People should have the right to take another set of samples from the same catch which also should be signed by the authority that has taken the samples and the fishermen themselves. That would enable people to obtain an independent test if they did not believe that the testing authority would give them a fair go or if they were worried about a set up. There is an ongoing problem in this regard and it is compounded through the effect of a number of pieces of legislation. A person may be charged or told to tie up because there are charges pending. Those charges may be dropped at any time and yet the person has no comeback. He may lose his livelihood in the process, but it would appear that his comeback is either nil or close to nil in practical terms. On the other hand, the law enforcement authorities and the government are able to legislate themselves completely clear of any responsibility.

Obviously, there is no way that the people at the other end can have equal power so there is a complete imbalance in power in that situation and one is

at the mercy of the other. The fishermen talk of a person who had his boat held up for 8 months. As owner, he was not permitted on board and, during that 8-month period, the boat was severely damaged because no maintenance was carried out. There was flooding but there was no compensation paid for loss of earnings or damage caused by the enforcement authorities. We are not sure whether the person won or lost the case but he was dealt a near mortal blow. Another person was mentioned whose property was tied up for 4 months. He won his case but was paid no compensation for damage that occurred to the boat over that period.

There is a concern about the removal of documents. Again, that is enforced under a different act but I think possibly a middle way should be found because those documents may be needed for actions that have been taken by the enforcement authorities, for the court case or for other purposes. A solution may be to provide the right for a person to take copies of documents which are held in such circumstances or even to request that copies of the documents be held and the originals returned to him.

There is another problem in subclauses 34(8) and (10). Both subclauses state that neither the director nor the Crown is liable for spoilage of or deterioration in the quality of fish or aquatic life subject to reasonable care being taken, nor of any deterioration in any vessel, vehicle or other conveyance or other article. Again, the situation could occur whereby a person is found to be innocent but would have no comeback. The same applies in 34(10) in respect of fish or other aquatic life being returned to the water.

The major points raised relate to questions of civil liberties and people's right of redress if they have been singled out or victimised in some way. It is our obligation to protect people and to ensure that, if such things occur to an innocent party, there will be some means of compensation. It needs to be a practical way, not an extremely lengthy legal method that would require the expenditure of thousands of dollars to obtain redress. If a person has already lost his boat and his means of gaining his livelihood, he is not in a position to go further into debt. Obviously, we must provide for an easier method. One of the bodies referred to in the legislation could be charged with the responsibility of providing advice to the minister as to whether he should organise an ex gratia payment through Treasury in the event of a situation of that nature. There should be a provision indicating that natural justice will apply and that, if a person has been unduly injured by the actions of officers, the officers themselves may be excluded from liability, but the Crown will acknowledge that its servants created the injurious circumstances and the injured party will be compensated. A person may be completely innocent but be sent broke because of the way that the legislation works.

Basically, that is my only criticism of the bill. In general, it is good legislation and I hope it will work well. It is aimed primarily at the inshore fisherman and the crab fisherman. I hope that the minister will act on those few suggestions. He will be able to comment on some when he sums up and I hope that he will take others on board and discuss them with people in the industry to see whether they hold similar views. If that proves to be so, he can come back to us next year with some solutions.

Mr PALMER (Karama): Mr Speaker, it is not very often in this House that we debate bills of this nature which affect a total industry. It is not often that we consider legislation which controls an industry to the extent that this legislation will. Obviously, the philosophy and objectives of this bill

are to foster and promote the industry, as they should be. I have long been a proponent of the fishing industry in the Northern Territory, given that we have a fairly large resource and given the known downstream benefits which the industry generates. For every fisherman on the water, I believe that about 9 jobs are created on the shore.

I think the member for Stuart was a little unfair to intimate that the honourable minister had not consulted with the Commercial Fishermen's Association. As recently as late August, he wrote to that association seeking its comments on the bill. As a result of his correspondence with that organisation, the Northern Territory Fishing Industry Council and the Amateur Fishermen's Association, a number of amendments to the bill have been proposed. They include matters of licensing, appeals against the director's decisions, the powers of fisheries officers, matters relating to seizure of vessels, matters relating to aquaculture, some problems with the Aboriginal Land Rights Act, membership of advisory committees, management plans and persons whom fisheries officers may question and examine. Quite obviously, the minister has gone to some trouble to ensure that the industry was consulted in relation to this legislation.

The legislation is required to cover also various vested interests in the fishing industry. The first group is the professional fishermen who make a major contribution to the economy of the Northern Territory and can make a continued and growing contribution. Obviously, there are rules which they will have to obey and those rules are designed primarily to protect the resource which they are exploiting.

Another group with a vested interest is amateur fishermen. I am reminded of the words of the toad. I make no reference to the member for Sadadeen who in no way resembles a toad. I would be very remiss if I referred to him in this House as a toad. I refer, of course, to the character, Toad, in *Wind in the Willows*, who said that there is nothing in life which is half as much fun as simply mucking about in boats. I know that amateur fishing brings a considerable amount of enjoyment to many people. Our reports tell us that something like \$60m is expended annually on amateur fishing in the Northern Territory. That is quite a sizeable input into the economy of the Northern Territory and an input that must be protected. The intention of the legislation is to protect the resource which amateur fishermen exploit and allow them to have access to areas which probably cannot sustain a commercial effort but are quite able to sustain a controlled amateur effort.

One of my strong themes over the years has been the need to encourage the young people of the Northern Territory to enter the local fishing industry. The local industry suffers from a lack of indigenous wealth. There is no traditional family base for fishing in Darwin or on the coast of the Northern Territory. I believe that has probably led to some tardiness in the proper establishment of a local inshore fishery or a fresh fish or reef fish fishery.

Some time ago, I proposed that the Northern Territory government could look at the establishment of a training facility here, not only to train people to gain their master's ticket but also to give them practical experience on a fishing vessel. There is at least one fisheries training vessel in Australia but, unfortunately, it is ported in Tasmania. I doubt whether its activities would be particularly relevant to the Northern Territory or the northern fishery. I think it is time for the government to consider again the training needs of the industry. A training vessel could work semi-commercially, perhaps generating enough money to sponsor graduates from training courses into their own vessels.

I believe that this legislation will go a long way in fostering the development of the industry. Like the member for Stuart, I have some concern in relation to certain aspects of the bill. I do not think that the minister is pretending that he has it all right at this time but, as with any piece of legislation, we have to wait and see whether the hypothetical outcomes actually come into being. There will be amendments to this legislation as things develop and as problems are identified but I believe, in general terms, it is probably an advance on the previous legislation. I look forward to this legislation doing what it purports to do, which is to promote, foster and facilitate the development of the fishing industry in the Northern Territory. With those few words, I commend the bill.

Mr REED (Primary Industry and Fisheries): Mr Deputy Speaker, I thank honourable members for their involvement and their contributions. As both members have indicated, there has been extensive consultation with both the industry and the amateur fishing organisations on the preparation of this legislation and that consultation has continued since. As a result of that, a number of amendments have emerged. It would be remiss of me at this time not to indicate to the industry bodies and the amateur fishing groups and, indeed, the officers of the Fisheries Division of my department our appreciation for the effort that they have put into the preparation of this bill and the result that we see before us today.

The member for Stuart raised a number of issues. In particular, they related to comments passed to him by the Northern Territory Commercial Fishermen's Association. The first point he raised was in relation to the security of the financial commitment involved in obtaining the equipment used by commercial fishermen and the risk that follows in the event that this equipment might be seized or whatever. Really, all that I can say to that is that the fact that there is a large financial commitment indicates clearly that commercial fishing is a business and, given that it is a business, one would expect that the requirements involved in the running of that business would be met. Part of those requirements is the preparation of returns and other matters stipulated in the licence. As a consequence of that, I would suggest to fishermen that these matters should be clearly recognised and that the commitment should be followed through.

In relation to the structure of those committees and their membership, it was suggested that the nomination of members of those committees should be included in the legislation. Such an action would be very restrictive and it is not particularly necessary under this bill. The bill allows for management plans for the various fisheries and any committees that would be established in relation to those fisheries would have included in their membership representatives from the operators in that fishery. I do not think there need be any concern about the operators in that fishery having input into those management plans.

I move now to the powers of search, in particular the powers of search of domestic quarters on boats. The ability to search such areas on fishing boats exists already. I do not think that a reasonable parallel can be drawn between living quarters on boats and living quarters in homes on shore where there is a variation in relation to the bill and the powers of search under other legislation. A boat has to be looked at in a different context and, bearing in mind that the provision exists already in the current act, we should be aware that there have been no obvious or particularly devastating breaches of the intention of that legislation resulting from use of that section which provides the ability to search the whole of a vessel. In relation to all the enforcement provisions in the legislation, and I do not

deny that they are fairly strong, they are designed principally as a deterrent, and I think that is an important factor that needs to be recognised. Of course, that is not to say that, if there is a need for them to be applied they will not be, but the provisions under the present act and in this bill are very similar and I think that the number of breaches of the intention of the legislation that have occurred in the past would be fairly minimal.

Another issue that was raised was the ability of persons from whom samples were being taken to take samples themselves and for them all to be sealed, signed and tested. A touch of paranoia seems to be creeping in there but, nonetheless, as a result of discussions between officers of the Fisheries Division and the representatives of the Commercial Fishermen's Association, an amendment has been proposed to the bill to take account of that problem. That amendment will provide in the regulations for the process under which samples are taken.

The next point involved the situation where charges are laid against a fisherman, equipment is seized and boats are tied up, and subsequently those charges are dropped. It was pointed out that the licensee can suffer some considerable loss in income as a consequence. There is provision under clause 34(3) of this bill for persons in such a position to apply for the return of their boats before the matter goes to court. Additionally, where a catch may be seized, there is an ability within the bill for the department to sell the catch and to hold over the income derived from that sale. In the event that the charges are not successful, that money will be passed to the person who was charged.

I think that most of the points raised are covered fairly well in the bill and really it is a matter of going through it thoroughly. The honourable member suggested that the removal of documents can constitute a violation of privacy. If the legislation is to be applied and someone is to be charged, charges will not be laid frivolously. If it were necessary to seize documents, that would be because they were needed to proceed with the charges and for presentation in court. If a person has done the wrong thing, it is part of the process that has to be gone through and, however uncomfortable it may be, the law really must be applied.

As I have said, the enforcement provisions are very strong and they are intended to act as a strong deterrent. Hopefully, that will be the way that they will be looked on by people in the industry. That is not to say that the government is not prepared to consider the problems that the industry may have and to take on board its concerns and, if necessary, consider amendment. I anticipate that that will be the government's approach. We will be looking carefully at the operation of various provisions in the legislation. There was no provision for body searches in the old act. Although such a provision was included in the original bill, it was excluded after consultation with the industry. The effects of such exclusions will be closely monitored, as will the various provisions of the bill. If the deletion of body searches detracts from the proper policing of the Northern Territory fishery, the legislation will be amended, as will occur in the case of any other matters requiring attention.

The industry has taken a very responsible approach to the implementation of the new legislation. The Fishing Industry Training Committee will conduct a seminar in January 1989 to familiarise commercial fishermen with the provisions of the new legislation and the differences between it and the old act. If the need arises, the transitional arrangements included in the bill

can support the efficient administration of fisheries in the Territory. It is, however, most desirable that regulations be introduced as soon as possible. Regulations are being drafted for promulgation prior to the commencement of the 1989 fishing season.

It is unfortunate that the Northern Territory Commercial Fishermen's Association did not comment on the draft legislation until fairly late in the piece. That occurred despite the fact that it was provided with copies of the bill at an early stage, as were all other industry bodies and the amateur fishing associations. Nevertheless, we have been able to accommodate some of the association's suggestions. I am pleased that this has been achieved.

Mr Speaker, I look forward to the passage of this bill through the Assembly and to its becoming an effective tool for the management of the Northern Territory fishing industry.

Motion agreed to; bill read a second time.

See minutes for amendments agreed to in committee without debate.

Bill passed remaining stages without debate.

STATEMENT
Women Living in Remote Areas

Continued from 23 September 1987.

Mr COULTER (Deputy Chief Minister): Mr Speaker, the report entitled 'Women Living in Remote Areas' has been tabled and the Chief Minister will be speaking on the report because of his interest in women's affairs. I am sure that he will speak at some length. I was minister responsible for the Women's Advisory Council at the time when it undertook the major research project which led to this report. The research was very thorough and it highlighted some real issues and problems which, no doubt, the Chief Minister will mention when he makes his contribution to this debate. The consultant travelled extensively throughout the Territory and, as I recall it, looked at a mining town, a remote area and a pastoral area.

Mr Smith: Who was the author again?

Mr COULTER: I cannot remember the name of the consultant who prepared the report. I know that, at the time, there was some controversy in relation to the consultant. The consultant had written a number of articles in conjunction with Mr Mowbray. Mr Speaker, I am genuine. I am aware of the report and I know what was in it. I was the minister responsible at the time, and the lighthearted demeanour of the Leader of the Opposition does him no credit.

Mr Smith: You don't know the name of the woman who wrote the report.

Mr COULTER: I am sure that, when the Chief Minister rises to contribute to this debate, he will have some worthwhile things to say.

Mr PERRON (Chief Minister): Mr Speaker, I am not sure whether the report has been distributed.

Mr Smith: It was distributed 15 months ago.

Mr PERRON: I am sorry. I am talking about the government's response.

Mr Speaker, I table the Northern Territory government's response to the recommendations of the Report on Women in Remote Areas of the Northern Territory. That response is being distributed to all honourable members and I will come back to it shortly.

When the Report on Women Living in Remote Areas of the Northern Territory was commissioned by the Women's Advisory Council, it was the first study of its kind undertaken in Australia. The aim of the report was to look closely at the lives of women who live in the far-flung reaches of the Territory. The consultant contracted to produce the report was to look at the daily lives of women living in remote areas, to identify their needs and the problems they encountered and to look at the existing services provided for women in the outback. In short, the report was to provide the Women's Advisory Council with a snapshot of the women who lived in the remote areas of the Territory. I might say that, in my view, the report gives a very illuminating picture of the lives of these women. It touches on some important areas which are of concern to non-urban women in the community.

At this point, I wish to place on record my thanks to the Women's Advisory Council for commissioning the report. It has provided to the government and the community at large an informative appraisal of the lives of women living in remote areas. It has identified the services currently provided and the services and facilities for which women have expressed a need. The report has been studied carefully by the government and the response distributed to honourable members is the result. I will now turn to that response.

As pointed out in this document, the report is a valuable source of information for every officer working in the policy and planning areas of government. Whilst the government had already commenced action on some recommendations of the report, the report certainly prompted a number of initiatives. For example, in order to make the government aware of women in the community with various skills and qualifications and the experience to serve on authorities, advisory bodies and boards, the Office of Women's Affairs is establishing a women's register. I would encourage all Territory women to submit their names for inclusion on the register.

One area of concern identified in the report related to Yulara. While the Territory government had done much in relation to providing infrastructure at Yulara, there is no doubt that the Report on Women Living in Remote Areas prompted the provision of a number of services, not only for the women of Yulara but for the whole community. The provision of child-care facilities and improved access to medical and counselling services are but 2 of the projects undertaken at Yulara as a result of this report.

The report identified a need for an emphasis on recreational activities for those people who choose to work at Yulara. The Community Recreation and Leisure Association of Yulara Inc, with the help of government financial assistance, plays a major role in the leisure time activities of all Yulara residents. Concerts, market days, movie nights and a wide range of sports are among the many activities that this association organises for residents.

One of the most challenging responsibilities facing women in the outback is the role played by mothers in the education of their children. During the past few years, there has been a development of support services in this area. The School of the Air, in both Katherine and Alice Springs, organises annual conferences which, next year, will place heightened emphasis on training

sessions for mothers who are home tutors for their children in remote areas. The government will be monitoring closely the present schedule of patrol visits between teachers and students enrolled in the School of the Air.

While the report did not research in great detail the lives of Aboriginal women living in remote areas in the Territory, it did make a number of recommendations based on the research undertaken within the terms of reference. One recommendation in this regard was that, through the Women's Advisory Council, Aboriginal women be provided with appropriate forums to speak about issues of concern to them. Of the 14 current members of the Women's Advisory Council, 3 are Aboriginal women. These women come from Alice Springs, Darwin and Minjilang.

The report made recommendations in respect of the provision of Aboriginal essential services. It is well recognised that the Territory's track record in providing the essential services of power and water to remote communities is second to none. Further, the Territory government's commitment to such services being provided will continue and, in some instances, will be enhanced. While not an essential service per se, the provision of women's resource centres in Aboriginal communities continues to be a priority with this government. During the past 3 years, funding for women's resource centres has been provided in locations such as Daly River, Gunbalanya and Ramingining.

In addition, the role of Aboriginal health workers has become increasingly important. The health workers have become an integral part of the Territory's health care system and, as many of the health workers are women, there has been an emphasis on women's health. The Department of Health and Community Services utilises the information collected by health workers to identify the needs of Aboriginal women. This is in line with the government's policy to provide health services sensitive to the cultural values of Aboriginal people.

Another issue raised in the report concerns child care. Multi-functional child-care centres for families in regional centres are being provided. Already, one has been established at Jabiru and another will open in Tennant Creek in March. My government recognises its responsibilities for the provision of child care which is used not only by those families where the mother is employed outside the home but also by those families who need temporary care for their children. This is often the case for families from remote areas who come to town and need the support of occasional care. It is usual for some places to be reserved in child-care centres for this purpose and more effort will be made to ensure that remote area families are aware of services that are available for their use.

The consultant who prepared the report recommended that it should be circulated widely, especially to women in the outback, for further discussion. I have been informed that the report has gone into many libraries and tertiary institutions throughout Australia as well as Territory households. This year, the Women's Advisory Council has instituted regional meetings as well as its regular business meetings. The report is used as a basis for discussion when particular members travel to designated areas to meet formally and informally with Territory women. This year, such meetings have been held at Groote Eylandt and Borroloola so that women living in these areas would have a forum in which they could identify their concerns and share their experiences with council members. The government sees such regional meetings as being a valuable means of communication and will continue to provide the funds to enable them to take place.

The report, *Women Living in Remote Areas*, is but a starting point. I encourage the Women's Advisory Council to take up the challenge and pursue those issues that have been mentioned in the report as requiring further research. The geography and, in particular, the population spread in the Territory are unique. In my view, the Women's Advisory Council has commenced and completed research into but one aspect of that uniqueness. As I have indicated, I think there is great potential for further research into the lives of women who live in remote areas of the Territory. In summing up, let me say that there is much that can be done for women who live in remote areas, but the record of this government in the provision of services to women who choose to live in the remoter parts of the Territory is one of which all Territorians can be justifiably proud.

Mr SMITH (Opposition Leader): Mr Speaker, I must say that the action of the Chief Minister in rising at this hour tonight and delivering this statement is as perfect an indication as one could have of the attitude that this government has towards women's issues. Here we are, in the dying hours of these sittings ...

Mr SPEAKER: Order! I am advised that the Leader of the Opposition has spoken already on this statement.

Mr SMITH: Mr Speaker, I plead innocence under the effluxion of time rule. It has been more than 12 months since this statement was introduced.

Mr SPEAKER: I am sorry, but the honourable member will have to seek leave to speak.

Mr BELL (MacDonnell): Mr Speaker, I have noted with interest this statement which has been on the Notice Paper for an unconscionably long time. I must admit that, late on the last day of these sittings, it is quite surprising to see the Chief Minister taking the trouble to speak to this statement. It would appear that the efforts of the Leader of the Opposition and the Deputy Leader of the Opposition have finally pricked the conscience of the Chief Minister into reading his prepared statement on this particular issue.

I have a number of points that I would like to raise, some of which are general matters in respect of the situation of women in remote areas of the Territory. However, there are more specific concerns mentioned in the report that have been acted on, at least in part, with respect to the community of Yulara in my electorate. I must admit that I take a certain amount of satisfaction in the fact that I have argued strongly and forcefully in this Assembly concerning human services that impact particularly on women. You will recall, Mr Speaker, the petitions that I have tabled asking for, inter alia, child-care facilities and services that many people in the more populous parts of the Territory take for granted. As with all the communities in my electorate, I take very seriously my role as the local member for Yulara. There is a great deal of pain in a job like this but, occasionally, there are some satisfactions.

The child-care arrangements that have been organised at the Yulara centre have provided one such satisfaction. I have had the opportunity to visit it on a couple of occasions. I have spoken to the people working in the centre and have seen the kids who are receiving quality child care there. Many of the women at Yulara are working and child-care facilities were non-existent. Many women were unable to work because there were no child-care facilities and private child-minding arrangements were difficult, if not almost impossible,

to organise. The child-care service was very welcome. Unfortunately, I was unable to be there recently for its first birthday party. In the weekly Yulara publication, which I receive through the mail, I saw a photograph of the celebration. I am very sorry that I was not able to be there on that occasion.

Mr Speaker, while I am on the subject of Yulara, I think the membership of Mrs Kathrina Bryen on the Women's Advisory Council is welcome and I am sure the vigour and energy that she brings to her work and her voluntary service at Yulara will ensure that she will prove to be a great asset to the Women's Advisory Council.

Another organisation with which I have been involved in respect of the concerns of women in remote areas has been the Isolated Children's Parents Association.

Mr Collins: And a great group it is too.

Mr BELL: To pick up the interjection from the member for Sadadeen, it is a great group. It is an energetic group of people who are working very hard for improved conditions, particularly with respect to schooling, for kids in remote areas. I think the Chief Minister mentioned that, and the report certainly does. One of the central concerns for women in remote areas is the education of their kids. Many of them have to be involved on a much more intimate basis with their children's education than is usual because of School of the Air arrangements and so on, and that proves to be a very big challenge for many people.

I want to look broadly at the issue of what remoteness means and then pass on to the concerns of Aboriginal women that the Chief Minister referred to and which are discussed in the report. I will read with a great deal of interest the response of the government to many of the issues put forward in that report. The word 'remote' means removed and, quite obviously, for many non-Aboriginal women living outside the towns of the Territory is remote life. They are removed from the usual urban facilities that are provided in towns. As a result of my own experience, I believe that life in remote areas is rather easier for men than it is for women. It is difficult to describe why. Possibly the sheer physical effort of doing simple things like getting supplies, and running a motor car in a remote area where there is not a garage around the corner, forces one to be more self-reliant and, in some ways, that represents a challenge for men. I think it presents a challenge to many women as well, but it is a much more difficult business when child-rearing is involved and when the absence of people with whom to discuss common problems and education is felt. That is where the Isolated Children's Parents Association is so important. Like many members of this Assembly, I have been along to the Annual General Meetings of the Isolated Children's Parents Association and I have been as touched and as moved to action by the problems that women experience in remote areas, as they have come through to me at some of those meetings, as I have been by any other issue that I have had to deal with as a member of the Legislative Assembly, as a local member or as a portfolio spokesman for the opposition.

To look at the situation of Aboriginal women, to suggest that they are 'remote' because they are living outside the towns of the Territory, is a bit of a definitional problem. Obviously, remoteness is not the issue when you are living on the country your family has been living on for 5000 or 10 000 years. For an Aboriginal woman, or an Aboriginal man for that matter, to be sent to Adelaide is to be sent to a remote area. I am musing about a

definitional problem here. It is to the credit of the Women's Advisory Council and the people who produced this report that they did concentrate on the social and economic conditions that Aboriginal women, men and children face on remote communities. I think that concern about essential services and so on augurs well for the Women's Advisory Council. I join my colleagues in their justifiable criticism of the Chief Minister with respect to the position of a women's advisor, but the government's efforts with respect to the Women's Advisory Council and the essentially non-partisan efforts of the Women's Advisory Council reflect well on the government and I give it an accolade for that because it deserves it.

Mr Perron: We accept it.

Mr BELL: If it is accepted, that is fine.

I think that the Women's Advisory Council, under the various chairpersons it has had - or chairmen. I refuse to consider the word 'chairmen' as a sexist expression. However, in the context of this statement, I suppose I should be careful. Wendy James' efforts as chairperson of the Women's Advisory Council and June Tuzewski's efforts were commendable, regardless of political affiliations in June Tuzewski's case. I do not know about Wendy James' political affiliations. In the case of neither woman does it matter. The Women's Advisory Council has done a good job in reflecting the breadth of opinion across the Territory and I think that it is to be commended for that.

I will digress for a moment and pick up the point that was raised about integrating Aboriginal people into administrative processes in the Territory. I echo the comments made by the member for Nhulunbuy about the involvement of Aboriginal people on hospital management boards. I realise that the involvement of Aboriginal people in organisations is not a simple business, because of differences in language, differences in aspiration and all those sorts of things. However, I suggest that that area deserves rather more attention than this legislature has given to it. That issue may very well be germane to the debate on the report before us.

With those comments, Mr Speaker, I endorse the report. I will be studying the government's response with interest and I hope that this legislature will continue to evince concern for the problems of women in remote areas.

Mr COLLINS (Sadadeen): Mr Speaker, I think that women who live in remote areas are some of the bravest people in the Territory. In many ways, it is a man's world out there and I feel that men have it easier there. The member for MacDonnell suggested that he could not quite put his finger on why women have a harder time of it than men in remote areas. One of the reasons, particularly in white society, is the fact that stations are more likely to employ men to help them with the wealth-creating work before getting around to what might be called the luxury of having ...

Mr Bell interjecting.

Mr COLLINS: It is only a relative term of course. I am talking about women who might be employed to help with the education of children and the like. On stations, the men often have other men around for company whilst the women often lack the company of their own gender which I know all women well and truly appreciate at times.

In terms of the job they have to do, women in remote areas have to be very resourceful. They are often the first to be called when medical skills are needed following accidents and so forth, and frequently have to drive long distances over crook roads to take their children to town. Women are far more vulnerable to attack than are men. I believe that women show a great deal of courage in living in the outback environment and they are to be praised for it. They may not see it the way I see it but I believe that they are very brave.

My comments do not apply only to European women. There have been examples of Aboriginal women showing a great deal of courage. I remember hearing a couple of years ago, when there was a grog-running problem at Santa Teresa south-east of Alice Springs, that it was the women who had the courage to stand up and show real leadership. They pulled things into order when the grog-running was leading to great hardship and disharmony, including violence, in the community and one must certainly praise their efforts. It is impossible to generalise but one might well say that women with children are more responsible than are the men. Certainly, in that instance, it was the women who had the common sense to get things into gear and to oppose those who were breaking the law by taking grog into a dry area.

The ICPA is an organisation of women for which I have a great deal of admiration. Its members look after the interests of women. They share their ideas in terms of self-help and they support one another. Some women put a great deal of effort into trying to obtain a good education for their kids and to see that they are not deprived of the benefits which town kids have. The example of Mrs Sue Staines, who lives on a station about 80 miles south of Alice Springs, comes to mind. She puts an enormous effort into ensuring that her children have the chance to be involved in music, dance, karate and judo by travelling into Alice Springs with them several times a week. She wants her children to be able to do the things which town people take for granted. People living in towns often do not realise what wonderful opportunities their children have and do not urge their children to take advantage of them. That mother, Mrs Staines, makes real sacrifices for her children, and she is typical of many others.

I recall talking to parents from stations in my teaching days. In particular, mothers were concerned that their children's education might not be up to the standard of that of children attending town schools. On many occasions, it was delightful to find that, when those children came into town to board at St Phillips and to attend the high school, they often excelled. They excelled because their parents, particularly their mothers, had made a tremendous effort because of their concern that their children might not have as good an education as the town kids. On many occasions, the children who had been educated through the School of the Air and with parental backing really shone when they attended school. It was a real pleasure to be able to tell those parents that they had done an absolutely marvellous job in bringing their children to a stage from which they could make excellent progress.

Mr Speaker, women in remote areas face many difficulties but they are some of the most resourceful people around. Whenever there is adversity, the human spirit seems to rise to the challenge and find solutions. I salute the women in our remote communities for the contribution they make to our society. They are the salt of the earth. They are truly great people.

Motion agreed to.

MOTION
Report of Privileges Committee on Statement
by Member for Barkly

Continued from 16 August 1988.

Mr PERRON (Chief Minister): Mr Speaker, the finding of the Privileges Committee in this matter would have to be some sort of classic. Indeed, it may be referred to one day in a reference publication. The Privileges Committee perused a considerable amount of documentation relating to various investigations in respect of matters of privilege and perhaps one day this matter may end up becoming part of that documentation.

Mr Speaker, if the honourable member had been attempting to bring a member of this parliament into ridicule or to bring the Subordinate Legislation and Tabled Papers Committee into ridicule or if he had deliberately disclosed proceedings of the committee before the committee's report was tabled, he would have been in danger of committing a grave breach of privilege. However, the Privileges Committee found that the honourable member's statements were so inaccurate that no breach had occurred.

The member for Barkly referred to this matter in the adjournment debate of Wednesday 24 August. He said: '... I am not a member of the Subordinate Legislation and Tabled Papers Committee. Accordingly, I had no knowledge as to how the proceedings of that committee were conducted and could not have had any information without a member of the committee contravening standing orders'. Mr Speaker, you do not have to be a member of a committee of this parliament in order to know its proper title. You do not have to be a member of a committee to know that it is not a government committee and you do not have to be a member to know that it cannot pass regulations.

In his speech in that particular adjournment debate, the honourable member went on to say: 'Mr Speaker, you would also be aware, as would other members of the House, that the events which I related on the 7.30 Report were a matter of open discussion in the corridors of this building ...'. In saying that, he cast a slur on all members and staff of the Assembly. In effect, he was saying that a member of the committee or a staff member servicing it had caused its proceedings to be discussed openly. If he has evidence of a person breaching standing orders in this way, he should name him or her in this Chamber rather than cast aspersions on everybody in the building, members and staff alike.

The member for Barkly concluded his remarks in the adjournment debate on 24 August by saying: 'Mr Speaker, whilst the committee has found that my statements on the ABC did not technically agree with the above wording from the report, and I accept the committee's ruling unreservedly, the overview I presented to the community, in layman's terms, told the story'. That statement really shows that the member did not understand the message which the Privileges Committee was trying to convey through its report. The words which the member for Barkly used on the 7.30 Report did not tell the story. The committee found that his statement on the 7.30 Report was riddled with inaccuracies. Indeed, the committee found that the only details he got right were the dates of the 2 meetings. Everything else was wrong, including the name of the committee, its composition and its function. The Privileges Committee has detailed all that in its report yet, after reading it, the member for Barkly insisted in the adjournment debate of 24 August that his remarks on the 7.30 Report, to use his words, 'told the story'.

The member for Barkly has the dubious distinction of having avoided committing a possible breach of privilege because his public statement was so inaccurate that it could only be described as fiction, yet he states in this Assembly in an adjournment debate that he accepted the findings of the Privileges Committee unreservedly. He went on to make the astounding statement that his portrayal of events within a non-existent committee with non-existent powers was accurate. Mr Speaker, the only conclusion I can draw from that is that one should be enormously cautious about believing anything that the member for Barkly says.

Motion agreed to.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

Mr TUXWORTH (Barkly)(by leave): Mr Speaker, the Chief Minister referred to my comment in the adjournment debate of 24 August that the matter under discussion by the Privileges Committee was being talked about openly in the corridors of this House. That is a fact, Mr Speaker. I do not make any complaint about the members who talked about it. That is a matter for them. If they wanted to tell me about it, that was a matter for them. If I had felt that that was offensive, out of order or untrue, then I had the opportunity to come to you, Sir, and lay a complaint.

Mr Coulter: Who were the members?

Mr TUXWORTH: I say to the Leader of Government Business that that is a matter for him to know about because some of them were his colleagues. That is up to him.

Mr Coulter: Who are they?

Mr Manzie: Come on, cast aspersions on everybody.

Mr Coulter: You cannot put everybody in the same pot. Who were they?

Mrs Padgham-Purich: I was told too.

Mr TUXWORTH: Mr Speaker, 2 other members are saying the same thing quite independently, and the Leader of Government Business says he wants to know who talked openly about the proceedings of the committee.

Mr Speaker, the point of my personal explanation is that the remark I made, about the proceedings of the committee being spoken about openly, was quite true. That is a matter for the government if it is concerned about it.

STATEMENT

Report of Privileges Committee on Statement
by Member for Barkly

Mr SMITH (Opposition Leader)(by leave): Mr Speaker, I am appalled by the remarks which the Chief Minister has just made. As a member of the Privileges Committee, I must say that that it worked hard and it agonised over the decision that it finally took on this matter. To have it used to play a cheap political tricks, as the Chief Minister has just done, is an insult to the parliament and an insult to the standing of the committees of this parliament. What he has done is absolutely disgraceful. He has turned a considered and objective judgment by a committee of the parliament into a cheap and nasty political exercise against somebody against whom, obviously, he holds a

personal grievance. That is a disgraceful and contemptible use of the powers and privileges of this parliament. He ought to be condemned by every member of this parliament for that attitude.

If he wanted to make an outrageous statement of that kind in reporting to this parliament in his capacity as Chairman of the Privileges Committee, the Chief Minister should have had the courtesy at least to check it with the committee. The original report to this parliament was agreed to by the committee. However, for a cheap political purpose, he thinks he has the unlimited ability to turn something that is serious and considered into a political attack on the member for Barkly.

Mr Speaker, I do not hold any particular brief for the member for Barkly on this matter. However, the Chief Minister has just extended the abuse that the members opposite make of this parliament when it suits them. Let us hope that we do not have a repetition of this type of exercise whereby the chairman of a parliamentary committee turns that committee's deliberations into a farce in order to advance his own political cause.

Mr PERRON (Chief Minister)(by leave): Mr Speaker, I make this point simply because I think the Leader of the Opposition has totally missed it. That is a shame because he has been in this House for a long time and he was also a member of the Privileges Committee.

Mr Smith: I still am.

Mr PERRON: The honourable member has suggested that I was out of order this afternoon when speaking to the motion to note the report of the Privileges Committee. The fundamental error that he made - and a man of his experience should not make such errors - was in trying to suggest that, once a report of a committee of this parliament has been tabled in the Chamber, even as a member of that committee, I am constrained in some way in terms of what I can say in this Chamber.

As I understand the system, once a committee of any parliament reports to that parliament, the members of that committee are free to take part in debate on the report in the Chamber. He suggests that I should be constrained in what I say in debate, irrespective of what may arise. Mr Speaker, bear in mind that my comments related to comments which had been made in this Chamber since the tabling of the report. That was the entire subject of my discussion this afternoon. The Leader of the Opposition is trying to put some sort of gag on members of the parliament. Are members of the Public Accounts Committee gagged in some way once a report has been tabled so that, if anything they might say is not in support of the report, they have to go back to the committee? What absolute nonsense! As the former Chairman of the Privileges Committee, I believe that I had a responsibility to comment on what I perceived to be totally inappropriate remarks made by the member for Barkly in response to the committee's report. I do not believe that he comprehended the message that the report contained for all member of this House and, in particular, for himself.

MOTION

Proposed Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission

Continued from 26 May 1988.

Mr HATTON (Nightcliff): Mr Speaker, when making the statement on 26 May this year, I said the following, and I repeat it for the benefit of honourable members:

In making this statement, my fundamental concern is whether ATSIC will truly advance the interests of Aboriginal Australians or will merely impose on them yet another grandiose, bureaucratic structure that will repeat past injustices by denying Aboriginal people the right to determine their own future via their own structures and in their own time.

Mr Speaker, that is the fundamental reason underlying the statement I made. I said also:

I am well aware of the difficulties in commenting on the proposal without the benefit of a draft bill. However, my duty to protect the interests of Territorians makes it imperative that I speak now before it is too late - too late for Australians, too late for Territorians and too late for Aboriginal Territorians.

I then went on to outline in detail, with supporting evidence, 3 concerns that I had with the proposals outlined in 'Foundations for the Future' marks I and II. The first related to ATSIC's proposed regional boundaries. I outlined in detail the mockery that those boundaries made of recognised traditional, linguistic and cultural ties. The second was the impact of ATSIC on the rights and responsibilities of the states and the Northern Territory in particular. The third concern related to the proposed preamble. In the course of the debate, some attention was also drawn to the subject of community government, and I will deal with that in due course. Whilst I may have had some justifiable concerns about speaking prior to the introduction of the bills, now that the bills have been introduced, may I say that the fears that I expressed then were, if anything, understated. The reality of the legislation is worse than I had anticipated.

In response in the debate, we heard a confusing array of contradictory allegations from 3 speakers from the Labor Party who united in an attempt to deflect the argument away from the factual detail that was being put forward with another misguided and inaccurate suggestion that I and the government of the Northern Territory were attacking Aboriginal people and land rights. In fact, I made no reference at all to the land rights system as it operates in the Northern Territory other than to mention a possible spread of the land rights system to other parts of Australia. We are quite used to the opposition's desperate attempts to manipulate and control the Aboriginal vote by trying to turn every discussion on matters affecting the Aboriginal community into a racist debate. I for one do not intend to be dragged down to that level of debate. I leave it for members opposite to carry on in that way if they so desire because they will come undone.

As has been shown quite clearly, the allegations members of the opposition made 6 months ago were wrong. We see now that the Aboriginal bureaucracy that was so strongly controlling and restricting the self-determination of Aboriginal people is crumbling by the force of the will of the Aboriginal people themselves. We can see that those massive bureaucracies in the Northern and Central Land Councils are under intensive attack. It is inevitable that the will of the Aboriginal people will prevail. We will see more regional land councils because that is what the Aboriginal people want. They are sick and tired of the paternalistic bureaucracy that is trying to control every aspect of their lives.

I do not resile from what I said in May in respect of the legislation. Nothing has been put to this House to overturn that view in any way. No evidence has been given to support any contrary view. I referred to the

confusion among 3 speakers opposite, the member for MacDonnell, the member for Stuart and the member for ...

Mr Smith: Mr Speaker, I draw your attention to the state of the House.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! A quorum is not present. Ring the bells.

Bells rung.

Mr SPEAKER: A quorum is present. The honourable member for Nightcliff.

Mr HATTON: Mr Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition is now leaving. I note that no member of the opposition is in the Chamber.

Mr Speaker, I return to the point that I was making concerning what was said by the 3 members of the opposition who spoke, and I want to demonstrate the level of confusion that arose on the issue of consultation. The member for Arnhem was quite clear about it, and I quote from his speech when he said that:

... the 30% of the Northern Territory's population who are Aborigines have not been properly consulted on the ATSIC proposal by the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs.

Later he said:

We certainly feel that we have not been consulted sufficiently on a matter which will affect us. It will be our social and economic development that will be affected by this proposal of the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs and the federal government.

Later again he said:

Mr Speaker, I can assure you that 30% of the Territory's population is very concerned about the ATSIC proposal from the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs.

Quite clearly, the member for Arnhem was supporting the view that I had put forward that there had been inadequate consultation.

However, the member for Stuart said: 'It is the culmination of a long process of consultation which has been going on ever since the NAC was disbanded'. I would think that that is quite a contradiction, Mr Speaker. Then, in opening his speech, the member for MacDonnell said: 'There is a need for more consultation'. I might say also that I understand that similar concerns were expressed by Senator Collins in the debate on this in the Senate. That demonstrates the confusion that exists merely in relation to the matter of consultation.

The whole concept of consultation on this matter needs to be questioned because Minister Hand himself is somewhat lax in accuracy, shall I say, in referring to this. I refer to his 'Towards ATSIC' statement of 27 April where he said: 'In my statement of 10 December, I stressed that the ATSIC proposal would not go ahead if it did not receive a positive endorsement from the Aboriginal and Islander communities'. Mr Speaker, I say that he was stretching the truth in saying that because, when we look at the 10 December 1987 statement that he referred to, in fact what he said was this:

I must stress that the effective implementation of these proposals ultimately rests on receiving a positive endorsement from the Aboriginal and Islander communities in Australia. The government must be satisfied that the proposals have been endorsed by the people it will directly affect. In the early part of next year, I intend to consult personally with Aboriginal and Islander people. I am developing an itinerary for consultations in each of the regions outlined in the new commission proposal. Every incorporated Aboriginal body or organisation will be invited to attend these meetings. After these discussions, our proposal will be reviewed in the light of all the comments received.

Mr Speaker, that is a long way from saying that, if they do not agree, we will not go ahead, isn't it?

I might say that that is not only my own view. I note the views of Professor Victor Prescott, a very eminent, internationally-recognised political geographer. I will quote from 'Notes on the News' in which he commented on 13 May in reference to consultation: 'This intense consultative activity was designed, first, to win support for the concept of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders Commission and, second, to discover how the initial plans for this commission should be modified'. That is what it was about. It was a sell job and a process of walking around down south saying: 'I have been out to talk to 6000 Aboriginal people around Australia'. All this in 2 months!

We have heard the member for MacDonnell talk about the process of 'long consultation' and we have heard an Aboriginal representative in this Assembly himself saying there has been inadequate consultation. Far from any consultation, there is a cheap sell job under way by the federal minister to punch through a proposal that, quite frankly, is crumbling around his ears as people come to recognise the danger of what is proposed.

I refer next to the issue of the regional boundaries because here, and quite wisely, the member for Arnhem said nothing. He kept right away from that subject, because he knew that I was right. I was talking about his own traditional country and his own traditional tribal associations. The member for Stuart also steered well clear of conflicts and problems that I raised in my debate whereas the member for MacDonnell - who is now trying to see if he can call for a quorum yet again because I am starting to get into him - will hear when he sits down how wrong he was in the nonsense he spouted in this debate. I am pleased to see that he has joined us. He has sat down. The honourable member himself stated that he is not all that well read in terms of Australian anthropology.

Mr BELL: A point of order, Mr Speaker! Not only would I like to draw the attention of the House to the headgear of the Minister for Tourism, I would like also to draw your attention to the state of the House, Mr Speaker.

Mr Perron: You boys along ...

Mr Bell: Oh, listen! If you blokes are going to pull this stuff after you have had 16 hours a day for 2 weeks ...

Mr SPEAKER: Order!

Mr Bell: ... you have got to be ...

Mr SPEAKER: Order! I have reminded the honourable member before about continuing to talk over a call for order. If he does it once more tonight, he will be named.

A quorum is not present. Ring the bells.

Bells rung.

Mr SPEAKER: A quorum is present. The member for Nightcliff.

Mr HATTON: Thank you, Mr Speaker.

I would like to refer to the comments made by the member for MacDonnell, who has yet again left the Chamber after coming in and creating a disturbance. The honourable member stated that he was not all that well read in terms of Australian anthropology and therefore we can readily appreciate why it is that he exhibits such a poor understanding of matters which relate to Aboriginal people in his own electorate.

Firstly, in relation to the question of estates, the honourable member obviously has not read Justice Toohey's report on the Uluru land claim. The area which was the subject of the claim lies squarely within the member for MacDonnell's electorate. It was one of the most publicised land claims yet. However, the honourable member remains ignorant of some of the most critical facts, subsequently displaying an obvious lack of knowledge about matters of great importance to his own constituents.

Let me refer the honourable member to the report on the Uluru land claim where Mr Justice Toohey, on the question of estates, stated the following at paragraph 38: 'The country in which the claimed area lies comprises a number of estates'. Again, at paragraph 62, he stated: 'It became apparent that 6 estates lay claim between them to the area'. In his report, Justice Toohey went on to discuss each estate in detail. The honourable member would be well advised to sit in on a few more of Dr Petersen's lectures and to read Justice Toohey's report on the Uluru land claim which has been on sale at the Government Information Office for \$2.25 since 1980.

As for the honourable member stating that he has never heard the term 'Matutujara', yet again he displays an appalling ignorance of the identity of his own constituents. I refer the member for MacDonnell to the public transcript of the Lake Amadeus/Luritja Land Claim - and again the claim area is in the middle of the honourable member's electorate - wherein a number of his constituents gave detailed evidence on the Matutujara identity and the areas traditionally ascribed to the Matutujara people. The honourable member would be well advised to refer to Professor Strehlow's published works, such as the Songs of Central Australia which is available in the Alice Springs public library. Should the text prove too difficult for the honourable member, I am sure that the large and detailed map accompanying the volume will clearly evidence the traditional country of the Matutujara.

A number of the member for MacDonnell's constituents have taken considerable exception to the honourable member's denial of or ignorance of their existence. For the honourable member's information, the Ungwanaka family, headed by Nahasson Ungwanaka, is Matutujara. That was confirmed by Justice Maurice in the Lake Amadeus/Luritja Land Claim. Mr Jack Coulthard is another senior Matutujara man and has considered himself to be Matutujara for over 90 years. Other Matutujara people are resident at Orange Creek, Horseshoe Bend, Lilla Creek and Hermannsburg. I have met senior Matutujara

people myself and I can assure the honourable member that they were particularly keen to straighten him out on a few matters including the fact that they are alive and well.

The honourable member seems to have shot himself in the foot again in relation to the Finke Land Claim. Although he assigns the Finke community to the Western Desert bloc because of the Pitjantjatjara language affiliation, he fails to acknowledge that the area claimed in the Finke Land Claim and the Finke community itself are clearly separated from their Western Desert affiliations by the regional boundary to be imposed as part of the proposed ATSIC structure. Further, as the honourable member has thus acknowledged, we have a community speaking a Western Desert language claiming ownership of the Simpson Desert area of the Northern Territory which abuts the Queensland border, an area which has been affiliated traditionally with the Wangkanguru. This is an absolutely ridiculous and incredible stretch of the CLC's imagination.

Mr Bell: Do you want some pronunciation lessons?

Mr HATTON: Yes, I would love some. I will take them over Christmas if you like.

Mr Bell: Okay, 10 bucks an hour. No worries!

Mr HATTON: Mr Speaker, in the MacDonnell electorate, the southern Aranda, the Matutujara and the Yangkuytjatjara are split between these regions. The eastern Aranda and lower southern Aranda are each divided between 2 regions, which are still left with the residual portions of the Pintubi. The area immediately north of Lake Amadeus has been split between 2 of the proposed regions. This area has been the subject of dispute between Aboriginal groups in the Lake Amadeus/Luritja Land Claim. It would appear that the federal minister took it upon himself not to await the report of the Aboriginal Land Commissioner but, before the completion of hearings on the land claim, he himself defined the affiliations of the groups concerned. The Aboriginal Land Commissioner has now completed his report and forwarded it to the federal minister. It clearly shows that the federal minister was wrong. I understand that, having received that report, the federal minister moved quickly to amend his proposed regional boundaries in line with the commissioner's finding that the Pitjantjatjara-based claimants referred to by the CLC were not the traditional owners of the land claimed in the Lake Amadeus/Luritja Land Claim. The minister's proposed regional division clearly cut across the traditional country of a number of Aboriginal groups.

Mr Speaker, I turn now to the Stuart electorate, where the Walpiri are divided between 2 zones and 3 of the proposed regions. The Alyawarra, Pintubi, Anmatjerre, northern Aranda, Akarra and eastern Aranda are each divided, not only between 2 regions, but between 2 zones. The Anmatjerre people living around Ti Tree in the electorate of the member for Stuart totally rejected the federal minister's ATSIC proposal. They went to see the minister at Yuendumu but he had flown the coop.

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

Mr PERRON (Chief Minister): Mr Speaker, I move that so much of standing orders be suspended as would allow the honourable member to complete his speech.

Motion agreed to.

Mr HATTON (Nightcliff): Mr Speaker, as I said, the federal minister had flown the coop. Later he sent a little, coloured map of Australia and, even on something so ridiculously small, the Anmatjerre people could see that the area for which they hold traditional responsibilities had been dissected into 3 separate regions and 2 zones. This prompted them to write to the federal minister on 14 October 1988 to make him aware of their concerns. To my knowledge, the federal minister has not yet bothered to reply. The Anmatjerre people called another meeting. Senior people gathered from Ti Tree, Utopia and surrounding outstations, representing traditional Aboriginal interests over an area of 42 000 km². At this meeting, they completely rejected ATSIC and called for the formation of their own regional land council with boundaries synonymous with the extent of traditional Anmatjerre responsibilities. I understand that the Anmatjerre people put their thoughts in the following terms:

We don't agree with the new ATSIC council. That wrong. That new council will be like Gerry Hand throwing meat to dogs and all the dogs fighting for that meat. That is what ATSIC will be like. ATSIC will make enemies of our people. Our law says ATSIC is wrong way. This ATSIC just like cement mixer. It mixes us with other mob. That's not our law. Gerry Hand didn't see any of us old people. We could tell him the right way for our country but he didn't see the law man. Who told him these ATSIC boundaries? These are not our country. Our law says ATSIC is wrong way.

The Milingimbi community states in a letter to the Prime Minister that it is totally outraged at the manner in which the federal minister has conducted his consultations on the matter of the proposed Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission. The federal minister's grand and glorious scheme for the future of Aboriginal Australians has come crashing down around him. His ill-conceived notion of an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission has been demolished absolutely and uncompromisingly by Aboriginal people in the bush. The federal minister's hallucinations are destined to remain a fantasy. His pact for support from the Central and Northern Land Councils in return for giving them a slice of the ATSIC pie has led to a backlash against both land councils from Aboriginal people.

The Peppimenarti Community Council has made public its desire to form a regional land council separate from the Northern Land Council. In the Petermann range area west of Alice Springs, traditional Aboriginal owners have instructed their solicitor to write to the federal minister requesting him to accede to their call for the formation of a new regional land council in that area. Its letter of 17 October remains unanswered by the federal minister.

So blatant have been the abuses by the major land councils that, in the case of the Lake Amadeus/Luritja Land Claim, the Aboriginal Land Commissioner did not find the claimants put forward by the Central Land Council to be the traditional owners. Rather, His Honour found that the CLC had sought consciously to exclude another group of Aboriginal people whom the judge ultimately found to be the traditional owners under the Land Rights Act. Is it any wonder that the traditional owners have written subsequently to Mr Hand asking him not to vest the land in the Central Land Council but rather to allow the traditional owners to obtain ownership in their own right, on the same basis as other Territorians? Needless to say, Mr Speaker, the federal minister has not replied to their letter of 30 August 1988.

The Ngukurr community has joined with the Angurugu and Numbulwar communities, among others, to propose the formation of a new regional land

council for south-east Arnhem Land. The relevant communities have publicly rejected the NLC and voted unanimously to break away from it.

In the Northern Territory, the only ATSIC boundary which comes close to the traditional Aboriginal boundaries is that between the Tiwi Islands, Bathurst and Melville, and the mainland of the Northern Territory. No other ATSIC boundary remotely resembles the traditional affiliations of Aboriginal people in the Northern Territory. Aboriginal communities all over the Territory have condemned the federal minister and his proposed Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission. Clearly, the formation of ATSIC should not proceed.

Mr Speaker, I wish to respond briefly to the remarks made by the member for Arnhem in relation to community government in the debate on ATSIC on 26 May this year. He referred to community government councils as 'make-believe local government councils' and went on to say: 'If the Chief Minister had his wits about him, he would at least approach the land councils and say, "Excise this piece of land. Give it to us under the Local Government Act. We will have some discussions with the people"'. The credibility of the member for Arnhem in this matter has been demolished in 2 ways. First, his own constituents in south-eastern Arnhem Land have moved to break away from the NLC. One of the elements behind that move has been their desire for community government. Quite clearly, the member for Arnhem was wrong. He is suffering because he has followed slavishly the precepts of his political masters in the land councils. Like the members for MacDonnell and Stuart, he has relied on them very heavily in terms of mustering the votes to keep him in this House.

More importantly, Senator Collins has lent his support to community government. Senator Collins expressed his views in the Senate on 27 April, before the member for Arnhem made his comments in the debate on ATSIC in this House. The Senate Hansard records the remarks of Senator Collins in relation to community government. He said:

Another concern that at least some of my constituents had, and I share that concern, was that we have in the Northern Territory a unique system of Aboriginal local government. It is the most flexible system of local government for Aboriginal communities that exists in Australia and was introduced by the Northern Territory government, to its credit. I was a member of the Northern Territory parliament when it was introduced.

It provides, and this is the fundamental manner in which it is flexible, for the individual scheme of each Aboriginal community to be tabled in parliament, not as part of the fundamental act but as a schedule to the act, as each scheme is uniquely tailored to the unique needs of each community. In the case of some communities, the negotiations over the kind of scheme that they wanted for their own local government have gone on for years. The scheme provides for an almost open-ended manner of accommodating the Aboriginal relationship system, the moiety system and the skin group system, and local conditions in the community. Many of them have uniquely different systems of electing their councils in terms of how they are constituted, with representatives from each skin group in the community.

I think it is fair to say that, despite the concerns that a great many people have had about the introduction of this

scheme - concerns, I might add, within the ranks of the Country Liberal Party and the parliament itself and outside it - the scheme has worked very well.

Mr Speaker, the member for Arnhem is damned by his own mentor and his own constituents in respect of his comments on community government. ATSIK is an horrific proposal. It will not assist or benefit Aboriginal people and it should be thrown out here and now. There is an argument for bringing together the many community organisations in the area of Aboriginal affairs and, perhaps, for finding some means of bringing the ADC and DAA functions together. There is, however, no justification for creating a pseudo-parliament interposed between the minister and the public service and taking the responsibility for basic decisions away from the minister whilst having responsibility for up to \$600m worth of Australian taxpayers' money and interposing itself across state and Territory government affairs by means of a voting system which contains so many flaws that one could spend hours enumerating them.

I will give an example. Under the proposed ATSIK legislation, people are not only entitled to vote if they are in jail for periods of less than 12 months, but they are entitled to stand for election to ATSIK. Bankrupts and persons who have been engaged in fraudulently misappropriating money from Aboriginal organisations would be entitled to stand for election. Such a person could even become the chairman of ATSIK responsible for overseeing the expenditure of \$600m-worth of taxpayers' money. What a great system! That is only one of the concerns about the legislation - there are pages of them.

The legislation should be thrown out on its ear. The Aboriginal people do not want it because they recognise that it is nonsense. It cuts across the whole concept of federation. The federal government should get back in its box. The member for Stuart talked about ATSIK being a third-level, consultative mechanism and tried to liken it to organisations like the Confederation of Industry. If the minister thinks there is a need for such a mechanism, let him form a consultative group of Aboriginal people to advise him, whilst leaving him responsible for his own ministerial decisions. He should not attempt to sell his ministerial birthright in the process.

Mr Speaker, I commend the statement and I exhort all honourable members to do whatever they can to ensure that the ATSIK proposal does not become law.

Motion agreed to.

MOTION

Noting 'Towards the 90s Volume 2'

Continued from 24 August 1988.

Mr COLLINS (Sadadeen): Mr Speaker, volumes 1 and 2 of 'Towards the 90s' have certainly put education at the forefront of people's thoughts. Many people were stirred up about volume 1. The Northern Territory Teachers Federation was able to raise concerns and to get parents to pick up those concerns, sometimes not entirely wisely. However, it was good to see education in the forefront of public debate. Whatever we might think about the content of volumes 1 and 2, they have certainly made people think.

I understand that the minister wants to hear wide-ranging views on education tonight and that he has supplied copies of volume 2 of 'Towards the 90s' and its discussion papers to give us some ideas about the possibilities

which are being canvassed around the traps. They are not policy documents and I will take up the minister's invitation to range widely in relation to the very important subject of education. I was a teacher for over 10 years in the Territory and, prior to that, for 4 years in South Australia before coming to the Territory. Thus, I have had a level of experience and I do take a keen interest in education in all of its forms.

Our education system is very firmly in the hands of the producers - the teachers and the schools. In essence, parents are told what is offered and they can like it or lump it. The producers have almost total control over the system. I believe that we could solve many of the problems which are canvassed in these documents by taking a different tack. I suggest that the consumers of the service be given a greater say. I know that we have school councils. Sadadeen Secondary College has just completed an evaluation of its school council. We set up subcommittees to analyse the work of the council. Many of us had some doubt that we were really performing an effective role. We came to realise that, if we were to play a solid role, we would have to devote much more time than was spent on the monthly meetings. It would take a great deal of dedication.

The scheme that I moot today is not new. I read about it many years ago in a book from the United States where it was proposed. I refer to what is called the voucher system. Many people have said that it would be nice but there are numerous problems with it. Recently, to my great surprise, I learnt that a form of voucher system is being operated in Australia by our federal Labor government in respect of Aboriginal parents.

Mr Bell: Oh, Denis!

Mr COLLINS: Mr Deputy Speaker, the member for MacDonnell will have his chance to speak and I will be interested to hear what he has to say.

The man in charge of Kormilda College, Dr Peter Harris, told me that, in order to get the college functioning, he has to attract students. He told me that parents of Aboriginal students are receiving cheques. I have not confirmed absolutely whether the cheques are payable to the education institution to which the parents send their children. Dr Harris has a full-time staff member visiting Aboriginal communities and trying to persuade them to send their children to Kormilda College. He has had quite a battle because many parents want to send their children to places such as Charters Towers. Dr Harris says that the college has to go out into the marketplace and attract the students and, more importantly, provide the quality of education which will make those children want to remain at the college. That is a real challenge.

Mr Deputy Speaker, that is real power in the hands of the parents, the consumers of the education system. It was an eye-opener for me to discover that this was the situation. I am sure that Dr Harris would be prepared to talk about this to any member here. He has a staff member working full time at persuading people to send their children to Kormilda College. The staff of the college is pleased to take up the challenge to provide an education which will satisfy those children and their parents. The college will survive on the basis of its performance.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I believe the same system could be applied to our education system in toto. From the documents which we have before us, I note that the recognition of excellence, for example, is a real bone of contention. How do you reward a teacher yet keep him in the classroom where he loves to

be? That is where he obtains his greatest satisfaction yet, in our present system, if he wants to progress, he has to move out of the classroom into the administrative area. That is something for which most teachers have had no specific training and they are not very happy with it.

If a voucher system were introduced, it would work in the following way. The parents would be provided with a voucher for their children. The amount would have to be determined and, no doubt, it would vary as the children progressed through the education system. The parents would use that to purchase their children's education. One of the first advantages would be that schools would have to become very open about what they were offering to the parents. They would need to explain clearly the curriculum and demonstrate that it was actually taught. One of the oldest tricks in the book is to present magnificent curricula which are applauded but not always taught. In essence, the parents would hold the whip hand. If they were not satisfied that they were receiving the best deal for their children's education, they would be able to withdraw the remainder of the voucher and take it to another school of their choice.

This would solve the problem in relation to keeping excellent teachers in the classroom. Every school council would be seeking the best teachers that it could attract to its school. If you have a good school and teachers with good reputations, you will find it easy to attract the students. These would bring funds to the school and the school would be able to progress. That would lead to competition, particularly in areas where there was a shortage of teachers. I believe that teachers would want to be involved in such a contract scheme. For example, a physics teacher with a good reputation - and physics teachers are becoming hard to find - would be a very marketable product. That person would seek offers from various other schools and would be able to negotiate with the school council in respect of his salary.

The normal market forces would apply because those subjects which commanded larger salaries would attract students to those disciplines. Students attending the teachers' colleges would be attracted to the disciplines which offered the best rewards. There would then be greater competition for those positions and the salaries would drop closer to the level of those for other subjects. Excellent teachers with good reputations would be able to command good salaries.

I believe the system would do one other thing. There are some teachers who are not very good, and nobody says anything about that. There are teachers who are a darn sight better than others and our present system has good teachers and bad teachers who, basically, are all paid at the same rate. It would be one of the better aspects of the whole system if those teachers who cannot teach worked in some other field, both for their own satisfaction and for the sake of the children. This is one of the problems: nobody has found a system by which to dispose of the person who really cannot teach. I believe that this would sort out that situation. I strongly believe that there are some teachers who really do not fit into teaching. It seems to be an art. Many have an aptitude for teaching but some do not, and often they do not help our kids. They would be far happier themselves if they moved out of teaching but they lack the courage to admit that the work does not suit them and that they are ineffective. They tend to hang on yet it would be a darn sight better for themselves and a darn sight better for our children if they went. Under this system, in order to survive a school has to attract children to it and thereby obtain their vouchers ...

A member: It is not compulsory to go the full distance.

Mr COLLINS: I could go for a great deal longer, mate, if I could get an extension of time.

A member: I will move an extension for you.

Mr COLLINS: Will you? Thank you. This really is an important topic. I believe the voucher system will recognise excellence. We are experiencing great difficulty in finding ways and means of rewarding excellence and attracting teachers into the right areas.

I would say to the minister that it appears to me that the curriculum advisory paper was prepared by someone who was walking a tight line between what the government wants and what teachers want. I believe that the government would like to have set curricula across the Territory and it is trying to balance that against what the teachers want. The Teachers Federation is a laissez-faire set-up which says it will make up its own courses and teach what teachers wish to teach.

One of the greatest weaknesses in our education system becomes apparent when teachers in a school get into a position where they make up courses for a year for their kids without reference to what has happened in the past and without reference to what will occur in the future. If teaching is a professional job, and I believe it is and should be, it must be done by a professional team. No one teacher should set up his course for the year without reference to what has happened before and what will happen after. I will bet that the majority of parents would not have a clue that we have entered a period where that is what is occurring with education. Under this system, 3 teachers who teach the same subject will prepare their individual courses for their classes and, in the following years, students from each of those classes will move together to another class and another teacher, who will find that some of them have already learnt what he has decided to teach and others have not. The tendency then is for the teacher to rush through the material so that the kids who have done it before do not become bored. The result is that those who are studying it for the first time do not receive an adequate explanation of it.

For the curriculum standard, I suggest each school might well be guided by a central department. However, with schools having to be open about what they offer, I am sure that parents would act like school inspectors with a really keen interest in the school and would soon notice if there were inconsistencies in the curriculum, and I believe there is a great advantage in that. If you want to attract students to your school and want the cost of their education to be covered by their vouchers, you have every reason to have a school improvement plan. You are looking to compete in the marketplace.

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

Mr BELL (MacDonnell): Mr Speaker, I was under the illusion that this paper was dealing with the excellence of the achievement of students in schools in the Northern Territory. What we have just heard is a poor explication of a very bad idea that has absolutely nothing to do with excellent achievement by our kids. All that the member for Sadadeen seemed to be talking about was a question of excellence among school teachers. I suggest that, in this Assembly, we ought to be talking about excellent achievement by our school kids, and I do not mean excellent achievement only by school kids in Darwin, Katherine, Tennant Creek and Alice Springs. I mean excellence in achievement in every kid from Nhulunbuy to Docker River and from Santa Teresa to Port Keats. Those are the sort of issues that inspire me. What the member for Sadadeen had to say was flying in cloud cuckoo land.

I have read the paper that the honourable minister has circulated and it starts off with a wonderful heading: 'Excellence'. As anybody who is involved in public relations knows, it is thought that people will read the title only and say: 'Oh, that is good. They are doing something positive'. When you actually read this document, you find that it comes up with the old, hackneyed themes of back-to-basics and system-wide testing. Mr Deputy Speaker, I am not going to denigrate the ideas of back-to-basics and system-wide testing as totally and completely as I will denigrate the absurd idea that the member for Sadadeen proposed in respect of a voucher system. The plain fact of the matter is ...

A member interjecting.

Mr BELL: I will pick that up in a minute, if you are so passionate about it. Just hang on.

Mr Collins: I am delighted about it. I think that is tremendous.

Mr BELL: Mr Deputy Speaker, there are some sensible comments to be made about back-to-basics and the system-wide testing that is talked about in this paper. Let us just dispatch the voucher system for a minute. If some kids may go to Kormilda or may end up in boarding schools in Charters Towers or wherever because they are on the edges of Australian civilisation, and the honourable member for Sadadeen sees this as some sort of embryonic voucher system, he is even more myopic than I gave him credit for. Let me tell you, Mr Deputy speaker, that there is nobody in this Assembly who feels more strongly than I do about quality of achievement, kids being challenged and their minds filled with the best possible things they can be filled with, certainly in the area of the formal education that is paid for by a substantial proportion of the budget that is the subject of debate in this House.

Just to explain my bona fides in that regard, I do not know what makes me more passionate about this particular subject. Perhaps it is the fact that I have spent a fair amount of time in my life as a schoolteacher and I like to think that I made a few mistakes as well as doing the job fairly well in a couple of places. In the context of this debate, I do not have the time to go into that in detail. However, I would be quite happy to sit down and talk to members of this Assembly about my own experience and what was good and what was bad.

It must be said that this particular statement has absolutely nothing to do with excellent achievement on the part of kids. It ought to be canvassing the virtues and vices of adopting a back-to-basics approach rather than carrying the flash label of 'excellence' and talking about things like system-wide testing. The root of the word 'excellence' is 'ex cellere' which means 'to rise above'. We are encouraging people to stand out from the mass.

Mr Collins: That does not sound like Labor Party policy.

Mr BELL: To pick up that comment from the member for Sadadeen, it is very much Labor Party policy to help kids to achieve their potential. One would like to think that, in the best possible world, every child would stand out from the crowd in some way and, in doing so, would have self-respect and receive respect from others in the community. Conservatives in this country have corrupted the idea of excellence. Economic conservatives define it solely in terms of making dough. The Labor Party has understood that and stands for providing every kid with the opportunity of achieving his

potential. Let us forget the comments of the member for Sadadeen. This statement has absolutely nothing to do with that. In fact, it talks about the ruck.

Mr Speaker, I will not go on for too long because I think it is utterly offensive for this government to introduce a debate on such an important topic at this time of night on the last day of the sittings. A mere 25 of us have been here for more than 12 hours a day on every day of these sittings and I believe this statement deserves far more attention from all members than it can be given at this stage. For example, I could talk at length about my views on excellence in terms of bilingual education for children in Aboriginal communities. This particular statement has absolutely nothing to do with that. Although I believe that there is a place for system-wide testing, it has absolutely nothing to do with the concept of excellence.

Mr Finch: How do you demonstrate excellence?

Mr BELL: The Minister for Transport and Works has not been here for very long. I have a rather wider idea of excellence than he has. I do not believe that it necessarily means obtaining a university degree.

Mr Finch: Neither do I.

Mr BELL: I do not believe that it means getting a fat pay cheque. I have a fairly broad view of what constitutes quality in education, but I will not dwell on that for the time being because I think I have made my point.

However, I will reiterate the point which I made in the debate on truancy when I referred to the problems of motivating kids in Territory schools. I refer the honourable minister to my comments in that debate in relation to the need to motivate kids to feel that learning is valuable. That is a much better starting point for discussion on the achievement of excellence than the hackneyed themes of back-to-basics, system-wide testing and so on. I suggest that the Northern Territory government ought to be working closely with the Teachers Federation in addressing this problem of motivation instead of generating industrial conflict.

Mr Finch: They are politicians. They are not interested in education.

Mr BELL: Mr Deputy Speaker, that really says it all. I was going to finish my remarks but, unfortunately, the Minister for Transport and Works came back into the Chamber and started to interject. I am used to him doing that, although he does not normally descend to quite the base level of absurdity to which he has descended this evening. Instead of making simplistic responses, the minister should consider what I have said about what constitutes quality in education and what does not, and how such quality might be achieved, a matter which is not addressed by the contents of the 'Towards the 90s' documents.

Mr HARRIS (Education): Mr Deputy Speaker, once again I have to say that I am absolutely disgusted with the contribution of the member for MacDonnell. He has a background in the field of education and I would have expected him to have some respect when addressing the issues involved and make some meaningful input. He gave a similar performance when he spoke on the Education Amendment Bill and its provisions relating to the problem of truancy. On that occasion last week, he attempted to adjourn the debate before filibustering for 20 minutes. He said absolutely nothing and his performance was an absolute disgrace.

Mr Deputy Speaker, the member for MacDonnell has missed the point completely. Quite frankly, I am surprised that he has not been able to pick it up. If this debate had not been brought on tonight, the opposition would have been into me again for not discussing 'Towards the 90s'. Volume 1 of the document was produced last year. There were problems with it. Those problems were addressed and adjustments were made within the system in the light of comments made by members of this Legislative Assembly. That is what debate is all about and that is what this debate should be about. We are trying to obtain the opinions of members of this Assembly and note their comments. Both the member for MacDonnell and the member for Stuart, the opposition spokesman on education, have missed that point completely. Volumes 1 and 2 of 'Towards the 90s' are discussion documents. We want to hear comments and ideas, no matter how far out they may be.

There has been a reasonable response to the document 'Towards the 90s Volume 2'. Some 40 submissions have been received and there has been plenty of public comment. Unfortunately, people who make comments which downgrade the government system are not prepared to get in there, look at the documents and have an input. We hear them carping about how bad the system is but they are not prepared to come forward and address the issues in a practical way.

I had intended to go through the responses to the document in detail but, at this stage, I think it is sufficient if I provide a brief outline. Most responses were generally positive with very few expressions of absolute opposition. That should be noted right from the word go because the comments of the opposition spokesman on education and of the member for MacDonnell could well lead people to believe that the whole document was totally opposed and that there was a widespread belief that it was a load of nonsense. That, of course, is entirely wrong.

Almost all submissions addressed the issue of school improvement plans. Most took a positive view and welcomed the government's commitment to further improve Northern Territory schools. A smaller number of respondents still remain to be convinced of the value of school improvement plans, principally on the grounds that full information is not yet available and the resource implications are still to be finalised. I believe that schools should aim to set school improvement plans in place. They do offer some stable direction, particularly in view of the fact that school council members move through the system.

The topic of staff development attracted comment in only two-thirds of the 40 submissions received. Most responses were generally positive and welcomed the initiatives and approaches outlined in 'Towards the 90s Volume 2'. School councils and school staff were among those most positive about the staff development proposals. Some reservations were expressed about resource allocations and implementations.

I turn now to the topic of excellence. There has been some criticism of the use of the word 'excellence', particularly in terms of its association with external assessment. The paper on excellence states clearly that the concept of excellence is not simply about external assessment. In saying that, I am referring to many of the comments that came back in the form of submissions. The paper says quite clearly that external assessment is just one way to approach the notion of excellence in our schools. 'Excellence' is an appropriate title for the paper because it is concerned with the foundations for excellence in many areas. The word is used in that way throughout the world and I am surprised that people have downgraded and criticised the paper on the basis of its use of that word. The paper

attracted a mixed reaction. The opinion of parents was divided on the issue of whether or not there should be external assessment. Industry and business and, indeed, many academics tended to favour external assessment. Teachers tended to favour a form of moderation. Overall, about 87% of people who commented were in favour of some form of external assessment, and that was very clear.

I had hoped to be able to table a paper detailing the response of the Board of Studies which has been examining the whole issue of external assessment. At its November meeting, the Board of Studies considered a report from its Year 10 Assessment Committee which incorporated the recommendations of a working party and the findings of an extensive survey of all those interested in Year 10 assessment. As a result, the board: decided there should be some form of system-wide external assessment in Year 10, using common instruments of assessment in English and mathematics; considered that this external component should not account for more than 30% of the single total mark in any subject; stressed that there should be balanced assessment with the best means used for each aspect of the subject and that that should contribute proportionately to the single total mark; and pointed out the need to ensure validity, reliability and acceptability of assessment methods to the wider community. That came out of the Northern Territory Board of Studies response to that particular committee's report. In fact, some groups have been waging a campaign against external assessment, and there is no doubt about that. The Board of Studies has been looking at this issue through the year and it has come forward with the points that I have just mentioned.

We heard criticism of the content and style of the paper on excellence. The member for MacDonnell went crook about it, but it is a fact that it is not possible to please everybody. We were intent on preparing a document that would be simple in its terms and that would not confuse people. It was also required that it be written in academic language. We had to take the middle ground. The paper had to present some form of compromise. It would have been easy enough to prepare a document a couple of inches thick if we wanted to include all the issues that we are discussing here but, once again, members of the opposition have missed the point because we wanted them to comment on all those issues and to give their ideas.

Mr Ede: You would not give us the chance.

Mr HARRIS: I would not give you the chance! What are you on about?

We will be presenting a policy document in this Assembly and that is when members of the opposition can comment and make their criticisms because that will happen when it is finalised. That paper was reduced from some 25 pages down to 11 pages. The excellence paper was calling for a balanced approach and a balanced argument. Unfortunately, most of the responses have not been very balanced and that is a disappointment.

Mr Deputy Speaker, the master teacher proposals drew a relatively large amount of comment. Considerable support was expressed by about half of the submissions, particularly those from a number of school councils and school staff. We are seeking to reward those who enjoy teaching in the classroom. We want to keep them in the classroom. If they want to progress in that role, a career path should exist so that they are able to do that. It is the same as the career structure for nurses. Why should nurses who are good at caring for patients at the bedside and who want to do that work have to go into administration to further their careers? It is absolutely crazy. We must have a system that can address that situation for teachers as we have for

nurses. I would have been very pleased to have heard some comment in relation to that.

The member for Stuart spoke about the need to address the issue of teachers in remote areas. That is a matter that we need to address and I made a public statement on that. We are looking at introducing a system which will work on zones. Teachers will be rewarded appropriately and employed on a contract basis. That system will be spoken about next year and honourable members will have the opportunity to comment on it. We are examining that issue. There is a range of problems in the whole education field which need to be looked at and we will look at them, one by one. It is our intention to ensure that what we provide is a sensible and reasonable proposal that will improve the education that we provide to students in the Northern Territory.

The proposals on curriculum advisory services were well supported by about half of those particular submissions. The proposals on flexibility and devolution, direct grants to schools and school staffing were generally supported, and approximately two-thirds of all comments dealt with this particular issue. Few submissions dealt with the question of industry links with schools. However, nearly all of those which touched on the topic were supportive, and some pointed to the links which have already been established. A number of people are still responding on certain aspects of this discussion and they will be doing so for some time. I have made it very clear that we are not trying to cut off debate on this issue. If people have comments to make, then I want to hear them.

Mr Bell: Very selective.

Mr Smith: Not very effective, that is for sure.

Mr HARRIS: Mr Deputy Speaker, may I have some protection from the Chair, please?

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order!

Mr HARRIS: Mr Deputy Speaker, I know it is late, but this happens to be a very important subject.

Mr Smith: Why didn't you bring it on earlier then?

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order!

Mr HARRIS: Mr Deputy Speaker, members of the opposition keep on asking why we did not bring this debate on earlier. The same occurred with the original 'Towards the 90s' document. When I seek to debate it, those members start to make statements about other matters. I happen to think that this is important. It is something that I am responsible for and I will pursue it. If members of the opposition say that it is not worth anything ...

Mr Ede: Bring it back on next Tuesday.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order!

Mr HARRIS: Mr Deputy Speaker, the government will be asking for further comment to be made on these papers. The member for Stuart was looking only at the political mileage he could make when he wanted to talk on the excellence paper. He could have spoken on excellence in relation to the original document that was prepared.

Mr Smith: It was not there.

Mr HARRIS: Mr Deputy Speaker, again he is missing the point. I have told the member for Stuart that I want to hear his comments about it. I have asked for his comments. I will even offer the services of a stenographer because he says that he does not have staff at his disposal. I will make available the services of a stenographer and the honourable member can dictate his comments and have them transcribed. I want the comments of the member for Stuart. If, when he is in Alice Springs, he finds he does not have staff to handle it or he does not have time to write his comments down on a matter which is very important and on which he is the shadow spokesman, then there is something wrong.

Mr Ede: I just cannot type.

Mr HARRIS: I am offering to make available stenographic assistance in the preparation of some form of response.

This is the point that members of the opposition do not seem to pick up. Whether we like it or not, a great many comments are coming from the general community about the standards being attained by students. Whether we like it or not, that is happening. For instance, the Sydney Daily Telegraph of 21 November contained an article entitled: 'Fury Over Illiterate Students'. I quote from that:

Thousands of students leaving school to take up technical college courses are so illiterate they cannot read their own textbooks, according to an alarming new survey. The problem is so widespread that special remedial classes in English and mathematics will have to be set up in every college in the state to enable apprentices and other students to continue with their courses.

Further on it mentioned that 10% to 15% of all trade and general study students had deficiencies in literacy and numeracy.

Mr EDE: A point of order Mr Deputy Speaker! Members on this side of the House are having extreme difficulty hearing what the honourable minister is saying on this very important subject because ...

Mr Finch: Open your ears instead of your mouth. That is the problem.

Mr Dondas: What a load of rubbish. You just walked back in here.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order!

Mr EDE: ... of the background noise from the government benches.

Mr Dondas: What a load of rubbish!

Mr EDE: Mr Deputy Speaker, they are demonstrating their lack of interest in the subject and are talking among themselves. We are finding it extremely difficult to understand what the minister is saying. Mr Deputy Speaker, would you please ask them to keep quiet.

Mr DONDAS: Mr Deputy Speaker, the utter hypocrisy of the member for Stuart is something that he should not be allowed to get away with. The honourable member has been roaming in and out all night.

Mr Ede: I was here all afternoon!

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: The honourable member for Casuarina has made his point. I ask all honourable members to cease this chatter within the Chamber. It is occurring on both sides of the House and among the opposition and crossbenches. It is most unfair to the honourable minister who is speaking.

Mr HARRIS: Mr Deputy Speaker, I read from an article from the Sydney Daily Telegraph to give an example of the type of comment that is being made. It is of concern in the community. I was on talkback the other day and, whilst members opposite may not realise it, people are making comments of this sort. I believe our education system can stand up to scrutiny. I do not have any fear about that. I believe that we need a system which will lay this all to rest.

The other night, the member for MacDonnell read out a letter and I will read it again:

I am writing this letter in the hope that it will stimulate some discussion on educational standards in Alice Springs and hope that you will print it in your letters section. How many times have you heard that we will not be able to live here once the kids reach secondary school? There seems to be a consensus among most people with whom I associate that education, particularly secondary in Alice Springs and in the Territory generally, is second rate and not even close to southern standards.

That letter was read out by the member for MacDonnell in the context of the debate on truancy. He knows there are problems in relation to the perceptions in the community and those matters need to be addressed.

I am sorry that this debate has reached this stage tonight. I think members should have offered responsible input on this very important matter. I thank those members who spoke. I will consider the comments of the member for Sadadeen on this. All we were trying to do with these documents was stimulate discussion. Education has to meet the needs and the expectations of people in the community. It is through debates such as this that we are able to discuss such important matters. As a result of this exercise, the government will be finetuning its policy. We need input to ensure that we meet the needs and expectations in the community. A policy document will be released in due course which will be debated.

Before closing, I indicate to honourable members that, next year, we will be introducing some form of external assessment in Year 10.

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

Motion agreed to.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

Mr EDE (Stuart)(by leave): Mr Deputy Speaker, I feel that the statements made in reply by the Minister for Education may lead people to the conclusion that I am not interested in the matter of excellence. I would like to point out that the paper discussing 'Excellence' was circulated after I had made my contribution to the debate. Even though I had done a considerable amount of work on a reply in respect of that matter, standing orders prevented my delivering it because I had already made my contribution to this debate in

this House. I will take on board the offer of the honourable minister to make available the services of a stenographer next year. That would be a definite addition to my resources and I will use that to give him the information that he requires.

ADJOURNMENT

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

In doing so, I would like to wish everybody a merry Christmas, in particular the Hansard staff who have worked so hard and diligently throughout the year to provide an excellent service. It has been interesting year and a great deal of effort has been put into this year's sittings. In fact, 407 questions were asked during question time throughout the year, mostly from the right-hand side of the House at one particular time. Hopefully, Mr Speaker's cataracts have now been corrected and questions may be distributed more evenly throughout the House in 1989. That is an average of 14.71 questions per sitting day.

Mr Smith: It has dropped dramatically.

Mr COULTER: It has not. It has increased over the last 3 years. Those figures are available to the Leader of the Opposition. However, he has not learnt. He is no genius with figures; he gets them wrong time and time again. Of course, his biggest blunder was the \$500m mistake that he made during the year.

Mr Smith: \$500m?

A member: \$250m.

Mr COULTER: Something like that. \$250m - a lot of money.

Mr Speaker, I give my best wishes and thanks to the Clerk for the assistance that he has provided throughout the year. He is an excellent asset to this Assembly and we are very privileged to have a man of such talent. That ensures the efficient running of this parliament which has to be the most dynamic parliament in Australia and we all should be very proud of it. I have visited the Senate on several occasions this year. On one occasion, I walked into the Senate and found the President calling for order when there was only one other person in the Chamber at the time. I am proud of this parliament and the way it operates. I am proud of the business that is processed through this Assembly. I conclude by wishing everybody a very merry Christmas, and may your God be with you.

Mr SMITH (Opposition Leader): Mr Speaker, I have the feeling that I am the preliminary to the main event tonight. As the main event is announcement of the annual SPIEL awards, I will make my comments very brief.

In this month leading to the season of goodwill and cheer, I think it is appropriate that, on behalf of the opposition, I pay my respects and thanks to all those who slave in this House on our behalf. Frankly, they have been slaving over the last 2 weeks, particularly this week. Sometimes, during these long and arduous days and nights, we forget that, whilst we can take a break outside and have a beer and a smoke, it is very difficult for the staff to do the same.

The last week has demonstrated that we need to start having a pretty close look at ourselves and the way in which we operate. We need to show a little more sympathy and consideration for the people who work here. It is not only Hansard - and I pay my tribute to the Hansard people slaving away up there for our benefit - but also the attendants, the Clerk, the Deputy Clerk and all the other staff many of whom I probably do not even know about. They do not finish when we finish and they start before most of us even think about starting. It is those people who, over the last 3 days, have really done it hard. It is no compensation is it, Tony, to say that probably you have been on double time for 36 hours out of the last 48 hours? It is no compensation. It is a completely unsatisfactory lifestyle. Indeed, it is a completely unnecessary lifestyle because, with a bit of thought, it should not have been necessary for us to be sitting till 2 am, 11 pm and what could well be after 10 o'clock tonight. There is no need for this. There is a simple solution and that is for the House to sit more often. Perhaps, over the Christmas break, we could think about whether our present sitting patterns are completely satisfactory.

Mr Firmin: More MPis.

Mr SMITH: I take the government Whip's honest comment that the government has been filling up the Assembly's time with more and more rubbish during these sittings. At least a bit of honesty is coming from the other side at this hour of the night. The government has the right to make statements and the opposition has the right to propose matters of public importance for discussion. Let us not forget that we have discussed only 2 during these sittings. If that results in our sitting after 8 o'clock on 3 nights in a row, we have a problem, not only in the way that we perform but in the demands we are placing on the staff of the house. I hope that, over the Christmas break, we will all take the time to think about whether what we have at present is the best way of going about it or whether we need to look at sitting more often and perhaps joining the rest of Australia minus Queensland.

Mr Speaker, having said those few harsh words - and I think members on both sides will probably agree that there is much truth in them - once again, I extend my thanks to the staff. I extend my thanks to the government for making the life of the opposition interesting during the last 12 months and making it almost certain that we will be in government following the next election. I invite the government to continue on its present path in 1989 because that will make it a certainty. I know that the staff of this Assembly are obliged to put up with the rubbish that we give them but, nonetheless, I wish them a happy New Year and I hope that the overtime money that they have earned in the last 3 days gives them a very satisfactory Christmas.

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH (Koolpinyah): Mr Speaker, I would like to add my remarks to those of the Leader of the Opposition and the Leader of Government Business in wishing everybody the compliments of the festive season ahead of us, not only for Christmas but also for the New Year. My thanks go to the Hansard staff and the Assembly staff for the way they have made our job much easier during the year, both by giving their advice to us from time to time - and I know they have advised us all - and by the pleasant way in which they have done it. That makes working in the Legislative Assembly as an MLA just so much easier.

Mr Speaker, I am glad that the Minister for Health has just walked in. I am really surprised that he has not noted the auspiciousness of this day in view of his overwhelming interest in it. I read in the newspaper that this is National AIDS Day, and I am wondering why the honourable minister has not told us what we are supposed to do on National AIDS Day.

Mr Collins: And what you don't do.

Mr Dale: Well now, Noel, I will tell you about that privately.

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH: It is probably rather late in the day now anyway. It is a pity.

Mr Dale: This is the right time, Noel.

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH: It is a pity we do not have the adjournment debate in the morning. I was seriously pondering what one should do to celebrate National AIDS Day. Should we each wear a condom or should we have the minister demonstrate to us ...

Mr Collins: I would like to see you wear one.

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH: Mr Speaker, I did not mean to say that.

Mr Finch: You withdraw.

Mr Collins: There is definitely nothing to withdraw, Mr Speaker.

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH: Or should we have the honourable minister demonstrate to us how we are all to use these nice, clean, you-beaut, new needles that he is going to give out to all those poor people in the community who are drug addicts? However, to turn to something more serious ...

Mr Dale: There cannot be anything more serious.

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH: ... I asked the Minister for Transport and Works a question this morning regarding the working conditions of employees of his department who are wearing the demolition of the first government building to make way for the new Supreme Court building. I refer to the Ward Building. For the information of those honourable members from outside Darwin, the Ward Building is at the west end of the Brennan Building, which goes through to Smith Street.

The trials and vicissitudes of those working in the Brennan Building have to be experienced to be believed. I do not believe any of the lucky Department of Transport and Works employees were fully aware that this most unusual work place experience would give them such personal and unique feelings of really living in a Darwin on the move. To start with, the air-conditioning was turned off for lengthy periods over 2 days. I have to be fair. The employees had a long play-lunch on those days because it is pretty hard to work in a building designed to be air-conditioned when it is not air-conditioned because the government does not provide punka wallahs or hand-held fans these days.

The water was cut off yesterday for the third or fourth time. There was no water in the water bubblers which made it hard for the Transport and Works teetotal program. There was no water for cooling in the air-conditioning system. The Transport and Works employees cannot understand why people in other places still pay to go to saunas. What was most important was that there was no water in the toilets, and I understand that some very pained expressions were noted among Transport and Works staff and some have developed the knocking-knee syndrome. When the water was turned on, it came out of the tap with a fair supply of mineral deposition, namely sand, murky clay and solubles which stuffed up, literally ...

Mr BELL (MacDonnell): Mr Speaker before I commence the serious business of announcing the awards of the Society for the Prevention of Injury to the English Language, SPIEL, I would like to endorse and reiterate the comments of the Leader of the Opposition and to pass on my thanks to you, Sir, and to the Clerk, the Deputy Clerk, the staff of Hansard and all the other staff of the Legislative Assembly. I have appreciated their services during the year and I will make a more tangible recognition thereof with a supply of wherewithal for the staff party, as I did last year.

Mr Speaker, this year the SPIEL Awards will be presented in 4 categories: the Phonology Section, the traditional Territory Tautology Section, the Syntax Section and the Semantics Section.

Entries in the Phonology Section were submitted by the Minister for Health and Community Services, the Chief Minister and the Leader of Government Business who, in fact, submitted 3. I will begin with the entry from the Minister for Health and Community Services. I suppose that I should not be talking about this on National AIDS Awareness Day, but the minister was obviously expressing a concern about the loss of libido on the part of the subject of his comments on 23 August when he used the word 'delibidating'. I presume that can only mean the loss or removal, perhaps surgical, of libido. Of course, it may simply have been a reworking of 'debilitating', but it was a good-quality, solid entry.

At this year's North Australia Development Conference, I heard the Chief Minister's musings about the Greenhouse Effect in which he made 2 good entries in the Phonology Section. The first was when, in summing up, he used the word 'eptimise'. I couldn't find it in the dictionary and I think that he may have meant 'epitomise'. His second entry was a marginal one rather than a quality submission and was his pronunciation of the word 'technopolis' as 'tek...no...polis'. As I say, it was marginal.

Mr Perron: Tell me what won. Don't keep me in suspense!

Mr BELL: I will pass on to the 3 entries of the Leader of Government Business, entries of truly high quality. He prefaced his first entry, made in May, by saying: 'Before detailing the actual and factual situation in Yulara, I must draw honourable members' attention to the flawed wording of the MPI which we are now addressing'. He then said: 'It is erroneously worded'. Mr Speaker, I have committed many crimes in my life but 'erroneously worded' MPIs are not among them.

Mr Speaker, with his customary magna ... magnanimity ...

Members interjecting.

Mr Finch: Mr Speaker, a late entry!

Mr BELL: Mr Speaker, the Leader of Government business made his second entry when he referred to the 'largesse' of the government, pronouncing 'largesse' with a hard 'g'.

It was, however, his third entry which scooped the pool in this section. He made a particularly interesting reference to the opposition's arguments in relation to economic management in the Northern Territory when he described the opposition as being bemused by Whitlamesque economics - pronounced 'Whitlam ...eskew'. Perhaps he might like to inform the House about 'Whitlam ...eskew' economics during the course of this adjournment debate. I presume he was referring to ...

Mr Coulter: Gough Whitlam's esky!

Mr BELL: 'Whitlamesque economics' is not a phrase that I have heard very often. I am not sure that the former Prime Minister would take particular pleasure in having a style of economics named after him although he may appreciate certain eponymous activities.

Mr Speaker, before he left the House this evening, the Attorney-General gave me written advice concerning an entry. I will not read his entire letter, nor will I seek to have it incorporated in Hansard. I will not even table it, although it contains what might have been a quality entry in its own right, where it spells the word 'believe' as 'beleive'. Unfortunately, the SPIEL Awards do not contain a suitable category for such entries this year.

In this letter, the Attorney-General urged me to enter one of my own contributions to debate in this House. Rather than being a simple tautology, this entry would probably be classified as sound symbolism or onomatopoeia. I am not sure whether I can repeat it accurately but the Attorney-General maintains that I said something like: 'I ...I ...I ...I ...I ...I reiterate!'

Mr Speaker, the Minister for Health and Community Services made 2 quality entries in the Tautology Section. The first was on 19 May, when he referred to the 'projected replacement dates of the radiological equipment in the future'. In a premier field, that certainly deserves a special mention. Not content with that, he referred to the relationship between the psychiatric ward and the maternity ward at the Royal Darwin Hospital as not being 'a new innovation'. That was excellent. Good, solid tautological stuff!

Once again, however, the Leader of Government Business has triumphed. Indeed, he finessed in the tautological stakes on 24 February when, whilst talking about sewage flowing into Ludmilla Creek, he referred to the sewage as having 'an ingress into' Ludmilla Creek. He repeated this winning entry when he talked about the problem of water entering the gas pipeline. He said, in fact, that there was a problem with water ingress 'coming into the pipe'. That was a fine performance, Mr Speaker, in a very competitive section. The committee was absolutely delighted.

The Leader of Government Business also made a wonderful entry in the Jangled Syntax Section - no sound effects allowed - and the staff of Hansard also nominated an entry from myself. The Leader of Government Business was castigating the opposition in debate on Hungerford Refrigeration. He said, in fact, that it was unreasonable to bring on a motion of 'such as this nature'. My own entry was made on 17 May when, referring to Northcorp, I said: 'One of the reasons I am bringing this up is for 2 good reasons'. To use another 'Whitlam ...eskew' phrase, I cannot be accused of not being even-handed.

The largest number of entries came in the Semantic Section. The Leader of the Opposition entered when he referred to the 'condensation' of the CLP candidate in the federal election, Mr Peter Paroulakis. It has been suggested that what he really meant was the 'condescension' of Mr Paroulakis.

Mr Speaker, I am concerned about the postures which the member for Nightcliff has been adopting. I have certainly not observed anything irregular but, judging by his comments in the economics debate on 25 February, he must have adopted a very unusual posture. He said: 'I would like to actually speak to the matter that is before the floor.'

The member for Jingili made a quality entry when he appeared to be talking about the numbering of aldermen. He talked about their 'renumeration'. I presume that he could only have meant 'remuneration'. The Attorney-General also entered, when he referred to 'such a safeguard which is already protected by the common law'. It seems to me, Mr Speaker, that we are in a pretty sad state if we have to protect our safeguards. The Attorney-General made another entry in the debate on the Police Administration Bill. Indeed, I really wonder whether he is either matricidal or has an Oedipus complex. He described the bill as being a bit like 'applehood and mother pie'. Poor mother!

The Leader of Government Business made another entry when he talked about the Leader of the Opposition becoming an advocate for Hungerford creditors in a de facto fashion. The Minister for Tourism talked about a hiatus in the law. Heaven forbid, Mr Speaker, that the Legislative Assembly should ever allow a hiatus in the law. There may be gaps in the law that we rapidly fill but we would never allow a hiatus. In fact, this morning, there was a comment about enforcing voluntary codes of ethics. That was in a petition from Tennant Creek.

Mr Speaker, I have to confess that you yourself are an entrant in this year's Semantic Section.

MR SPEAKER: Order! The honourable member's time has expired! I'm sorry. The honourable member for MacDonnell.

MR BELL: Mr Speaker, you spoke about having a great deal of difficulty in dealing with some of the points of order raised when cross-chatter chamber is continuing.

I understand there have been industrial relations problems with the Fire Brigade. However, if the member for Katherine's proposal for coal-powered fire stations goes ahead, we will be in real strife.

Mr Speaker, on 25 February, you said: 'I won't counter any opposition to the Chair'. Mr Speaker, it is important for you to make a more forceful approach. I really would expect you to counter any opposition to the Chair at any time and I certainly would not expect you to countenance it.

A quality entry from the Deputy Leader of the Opposition has been drawn to my attention by - I can't decipher the writing. In the BTEC debate, the honourable member referred to the BTEC perishing in the mire of its own survival.

However, for this year, our overall winner is clearly the Leader of Government Business. We have already had a solid, all-round performance from the Leader of Government Business but let me tell you, Mr Speaker, that he is likely to get a fizzy beer for his tautologies and, for his malapropisms, a bizzy feer. The honourable minister was talking about the School of Nuclear Studies, and he said: 'I am not degenerating the studies of frogs and insects'. However, quite clearly the entry of the year, which has made Katherine rival Lourdes as a tourist destination, was his reference to orgasms in the Katherine reservoir. In fact, I think my can of fizzy beer will be augmented by a crate of champagne from the Katherine Regional Tourist Association.

MR EDE (Stuart): Mr Speaker, how does one make an ordinary adjournment debate after that? I have made a commitment to put some points on the record.

First, I would do the customary thing and thank the staff of the Assembly and ...

Mr PALMER: A point of order, Mr Speaker! Standing orders are quite clear about tedious repetition. Other members have thanked the staff. The Leader of the Opposition did so on behalf of all opposition members. He wished the staff a merry Christmas. Now the Deputy Leader of the Opposition is attempting to do the same. It is nothing but tedious repetition.

Mr SPEAKER: There is no point of order.

Mr EDE: Mr Speaker, there is nothing tedious and repetitive about our staff except their bravery in coming back time and time again to listen to us. I will not dwell at great length on that point. They know my feelings towards them and the contribution they have made. I think they will thank me most if I make my thanks short so that we are able to conclude this adjournment debate and enjoy the festivities of the evening.

I have made a commitment to put on record some of the problems that I have with regard to the lack of movement on the excisions program in the Northern Territory. I have a letter from a person in the Power and Water Authority which shows that, whereas the cash component allocated in the 1988-89 budget for water drilling and the equipping of water supplies on Aboriginal excisions from pastoral properties was \$170 000 out of a total program provision of \$600 000, the cash component and the program provision have both been reduced to \$28 000. It really takes my breath away that the government's priorities are so short-sighted that it has removed funding needed to provide the fundamental requirement of people establishing themselves on their excisions. It has withdrawn \$142 000, or some 80%, of the money allocated to that program. I hope that it will restore it pretty quickly in the next budget review. There are places like Coniston where 3 different sites have been established as being possibly suitable for an excision but there is no money for drilling. At Aileron, 3 sites have been pegged as possible areas for drilling but, again, there is no money.

There are other problems with the excisions program. Andado, Mulga Park, Cavenagh and Glen Helen have problems with communications. The department has taken on the responsibility for talking to the pastoralists in relation to granting excisions in that area, but nothing seems to have been done for some months. It is essential that the department re-establish its commitment to the excisions program and facilitate negotiations between the pastoralists and the people who are looking for land. They are not looking for large areas of land. No one is seeking more than 1% of the property. In fact, 1% would be a very large excision. Given that no pastoral property in the Northern Territory uses more than 87% of its land, it should be possible to excise 1% or 2% for the traditional inhabitants. I realise there are points to be negotiated: the siting of the excisions, the shape of the excisions, access to the excisions etc. We must agree that the people who have been described as 'those whom land rights forgot' should be able to obtain some land.

Mr Speaker, Renno Davis Jungarrayi, in Aboriginal tribal law, is my father. He worked on Hamilton Downs basically since he was about 7 or 8 years old. He came into Alice Springs for some time after the wages dispute. He has now moved back to that property because he wants to die on the country that he grew up on. Repeated attempts have been made to contact the owners of Hamilton Downs. He himself has nothing but praise for the owners of Hamilton Downs. He remembers them with great affection and believes that it is the manager who is standing between him and his land.

I make a special and personal plea to the honourable minister to do something for Benno Davis Jungarrayi. He is a very old man now. He was involved in the first cattle drive over the Tanami Highway, down through Rabbit Flat. He was with me one day when we were driving through Rabbit Flat and we were talking to Bruce Farrands. It was quite amazing because, as you know, Mr Speaker, Bruce Farrands did a number of those drives over the years and feels himself to be something of an authority on the subject. However, when he realised that Benno Davis had done the first and he had been involved in the third, they found common cause in the difficulties involved in the drive which, as you would know, is one of the most difficult in Australia.

There are a number of other properties. At Kirkimbie, the site has been agreed, access has been discussed and agreed, and nothing has happened for 4 months. A number of these excisions are outstanding. Some have been determined between the pastoralists, the people and the land council involved, but somehow all these arrangements have not come to fruition so that the water can be found, land can be organised and decisions formalised so that people can arrange some form of housing and start to get on with their lives.

Mr McCarthy: Get the minister in Canberra to keep his side of the bargain.

Mr EDE: I hope that the Chief Minister understands that these people are not pawns in some sort of a bargaining arrangement between ourselves and the federal government. They are real Territorians who have lived here for untold generations and who have missed out on all the other programs. Mr Speaker, I think that you would agree that they live in what is probably the worst situation of any Territorians. You would know the situation with Quartpot Corbett, for example, at Ammaroo. The previous owners of the property gave him what he believed to be cast-iron guarantees that he would have the 1 square mile where he lives, and still nothing has happened. There are so many of these examples and they are individual tragedies. They are families that are trying to get their act together on the land that they know and the land that they believe that they cannot move from because they have such strong ties with it.

I would like the government to re-establish its commitment to this program. It should not be treated as a political game played between the Northern Territory government and the federal government where it is all up there for grabs and people write letters and threaten to resume this, and somebody else threatens to pull out of negotiations, and somebody else threatens that he will put a claim over all the land and so on and so on. It is time to leave politics out of this and start dealing with these people as individuals who have real problems. The government should work to obtain areas for these people and negotiate to arrange that without dragging politics into it. The time has come to think in terms of those people who have been waiting and waiting for years. We are talking about some 20 years since the Gibbs communities were started.

Mr Perron: If the feds would pass the legislation as they undertook to do, you would be miles ahead of where you are.

Mr EDE: Mr Speaker, the Chief Minister is starting to play politics. It is futile to start up the argument that, if the federal government passed legislation to give up the right to claim stock routes and reserves, everything would be all right. That is not the way it works and I hope that we will not continue in that vein but will start to treat these people as individuals who have real needs, and start tackling their problems.

Mr REED (Katherine): Mr Speaker, I rise tonight to speak on a couple of issues. The first is in relation to the States and the Northern Territory Grants Rural Adjustment Bill 1988 which was debated in the House of Representatives on 12 October 1988. In speaking to the bill, the Minister for Primary Industries and Energy, Mr Kerin, outlined the thrust of the bill which is to provide funding to enable people in rural industries to readjust in the event that the activity that they are pursuing at the time is not economic. It is by no means a scheme whereby funds are provided to prop up uneconomic operations but, as the title implies, to assist adjustment. The administration of the scheme is by agreement between the Commonwealth and the states.

I have no argument with the scheme. I think it is commendable. It is and will continue to be of great benefit to people in the rural industries. My argument is with the comments that were made by the member for the Northern Territory, Warren Snowdon, in the debate that ensued on 9 November. I really must express great concern at the comments that the honourable member made and the lack of knowledge that he demonstrated about the pastoral industry, the agricultural industry and primary industry as a whole in the Northern Territory. The honourable member said, and I quote page 2722 of the House of Representatives Hansard for 9 November:

The Northern Territory has an agricultural base with a gross value in 1986-87 of \$12.3m. There are 270 agricultural establishments within the Northern Territory, the majority of which are pastoral holdings.

There are 2 obvious flaws in that statement. The first is that it grossly understates the monetary value of our industry and, secondly, the honourable member is speaking not only of the agricultural operations in the Northern Territory but also pastoral holdings. Advice from my department indicates that, in 1986, the value of product and the turnoff to the Territory from primary industries, excluding fisheries, was in the order of \$123m, not \$12.3m. That the federal member representing the Northern Territory in the federal government could mistake the facts and undervalue our product and the operations of the primary industry in the Northern Territory in the federal parliament seems to me to be appalling. In addition, the honourable member went on to state, and I quote again from Hansard of the same date:

The number of establishments in the Northern Territory with agricultural activity in 1986 was 239 while, in 1987, there was a significant increase to 290. In 1987, 179 of these establishments were over 50 000 ha. 54 were less than 100 ha. That does not include any with an estimated value of agricultural operations of less than \$20 000.

It is hard to get across just what the honourable member was referring to, where he obtained his information from and what the thrust of his debate was, but the worst is yet to come. The honourable member did not stop at denigrating the value of our pastoral industry and the people involved in it. He went on to criticise directly all of those people who have committed a large amount of money and a great deal of time and who, in doing so, have contributed to the future of the Northern Territory. I speak particularly of those people in the grain industry in the Katherine and Douglas/Daly areas, and I quote again from Hansard of 9 November at page 2723:

Perhaps the most alarming illustration of the failure of agriculture in the Northern Territory arises out of an article in the NT News of

25 September 1988. The headline was 'Farmers Face Disaster'. This article is about experimental farms established by the Agricultural Development and Marketing Authority in the Adelaide River and Douglas/Daly areas that I have mentioned previously. The hope in 1980, when this plan was introduced, was that we would see 120 grain, oil seed and peanut farms established in the Douglas/Daly area over a period of 10 years, and about 45 rice farms established in the Adelaide River region.

The government initially pledged to pump about \$52.5m into the Douglas/Daly area and \$9.4m into the Adelaide River area. What we have seen, however, is a monumental disaster. I would like to quote from part of that article because it illustrates aptly the concerns of the people in the Northern Territory who are involved in primary industry about the way in which the Northern Territory government is managing its resources.

That ends the quote but what really concerns me about it is that, whilst I recognise that there have been difficulties in relation to grain production in the Douglas/Daly area, there have been successes too. We have people in that area who have committed a great deal of effort and time and who are still there producing. The honourable member did go on to say that, in fact, the failures were largely a result of climatic difficulties - that is, drought conditions - over the last 3 years. He went on to criticise the Northern Territory government and the Department of Primary Industry and Fisheries in relation to the way that primary industry has been administered in the Northern Territory and, in particular, the application of Rural Adjustment Scheme funds.

I find that alarming, absolutely out of character and un-Territorian from a member of parliament who is in Canberra to represent the people of the Northern Territory and supposedly promote the interests of the Northern Territory and those people who are committing their finances and all of their efforts to develop the Northern Territory to ensure that we have a future. All politics aside, I find it alarming and absolutely appalling that our federal member should denigrate Territorians and the Territory government in that way. I really think that should be recorded and that is why I have moved on this occasion to ensure that it is. I will be writing to the honourable federal member on this matter to express my concern. I think that Territorians, particularly those in the pastoral industry and the grain industry who are striving to benefit the Northern Territory, will be really ashamed of the effort that the honourable member put in on that occasion.

If one reads other debates that have taken place and are reported in the federal Hansard on this issue, members from other states and other electorates have attacked the problem from a completely different angle. They have related to the position that is in existence in their states and the benefits that would flow to their states and to their electorates from the scheme, and looked at it in a very positive way. Unfortunately, quite the opposite view has been put forward by the honourable member for the Northern Territory.

I would like to touch on one other subject tonight, given that this is the last opportunity to do so during Australia's bicentennial year. I refer to the efforts that have been put in throughout the year by the staff working in the Northern Territory Bicentennial Office. During 1988, I have had the opportunity to attend many bicentennial activities. I referred earlier in the day to Droving Australia, the Territory's principal bicentennial activity, and the success that that was. I was fortunate to be at Newcastle Waters on the

day that the great cattle drive left and also to be at Longreach when it arrived there. Throughout the year, I have been at bicentennial activities at Kalkaringi, Borrooloola, Katherine and several other centres in the Northern Territory.

I would like to pay tribute to Pauline Cummins, in the Bicentennial Office, and to Justice Brian Martin and all of the other people who have headed the Bicentennial Authority in the Northern Territory this year. They have done a magnificent job. They had an incredible task before them. Organisationally, I imagine it would have been a nightmare to draw all of the activities together. The success of those activities throughout the Territory, the lasting mementos of the bicentennial that we will see in years to come and the monuments that have been put in place for future Territorians are really a credit to them and credit to all Territorians.

In speaking at many of the celebrations and the unveilings that have taken place throughout the Territory, I have said that a part of the bicentennial celebrations that did not appeal to me was the razzamatazz, the money spent on fireworks and all those things that to me seemed not to matter much. That left me a little cold. But the things of substance, the preservation of old buildings, Droving Australia and the other activities that the people and the children have directly benefited from have been of real value and I guess they will leave a stamp on the Territory and the whole of Australia. I take this opportunity to congratulate all of those Territorians who were involved and I have no doubt that future generations of Territorians will obtain great benefit from reflecting on those activities and will show their appreciation.

Mr McCARTHY (Victoria River): Mr Deputy Speaker, it is interesting that the member for Katherine raised an issue this evening regarding our federal member in Canberra. It is getting close to Christmas. It is a time of good will and everybody is enjoying Christmas fare, but I could not let this opportunity go by without mentioning a comment made by the honourable member for the Northern Territory in the House of Representatives on 24 November. During a grievance debate, he spent quite some time talking down the Northern Territory.

His attack on Senator Grant Tambling throughout the early part of the debate was pretty terrible, but he went on to really run the Territory down. He said: 'The unemployment rate is running at some 6.7% as at October 1988'. That, by the way, was the lowest rate in the country, but he did not say that. I am saying that. However, he said that that, in fact, relatively low unemployment rate was 'a direct result of the fact that people are leaving the joint'. He was talking about his own home region, the Northern Territory. He said: 'The people are leaving the joint. It has almost got to the stage where it is a case of the last one out turn out the lights'. Mr Deputy Speaker, this is our House of Representatives person. I could think of better words to describe the man, but this is our representative in Canberra talking about the Northern Territory. If that is talking up the Northern Territory, I am glad we do not have any enemies there.

It is very much the same sort of attitude that the member for Katherine was talking about in his reference to an earlier debate in which this member took part. This person is supposedly in Canberra to represent the Northern Territory and to try to win funds for the Northern Territory yet those are the sorts of comments that he makes. Both those comments were made in November. However, Mr Speaker, if you consult the Hansard of the House of Representatives in Canberra for the last 12 or 18 months, you will find similar comments from him. His whole time is taken up in running down the

Territory, running down this government and running down Territory industry. He is pandering to his mates. In this debate, he went on to talk about the wonderful things the federal government is doing here and the funds it is pouring into defence. At the same time, he says that the Territory government is driving people out and that the last one out should turn out the lights.

Is that the sort of representation we need in Canberra? It certainly is not. In fact, I intend to distribute this extract as widely as possible throughout the Northern Territory. I am sure that, if enough of this material is seen, there is no way that this man - this fool, if you like, Mr Deputy Speaker - will be there after the next federal election. I am fed up to the back teeth with the sort of comments that are being made by this bloke who is in Canberra supposedly representing the Northern Territory. I have had enough of it. I have approached him with problems that are of real interest and concern to the Northern Territory. If, in any way, they involve a criticism or an apparent criticism of the federal government, I am told: 'That is not on. Forget it'.

I do not believe that we in the Northern Territory should have to take that. I certainly do not accept that this person is my representative in Canberra. He does not represent me there and I am sure that he does not represent the majority of the people of the Northern Territory. These are just the ramblings of an idiot.

Mr Reed: Don't praise him up too much.

Mr McCARTHY: Mr Deputy Speaker, I have been commenting regularly on remarks that have been made about population loss in the Territory. In last Sunday's Sunday Territorian, Dr Peter d'Abbs, a senior lecturer at the Darwin Institute of Technology, commented on our supposed population loss. He used the same figures that indicated that, in December last year, our construction work force rose by 1500 people. We knew our construction industry was in the doldrums and that those figures were not true. Nevertheless, he used those figures to indicate that the Northern Territory is losing people now.

I do not seem to be able to get the message across to the members opposite that the figures laugh at one another. People like to choose them selectively. I am not being selective here. I am indicating that I know we had a downturn in the construction industry even though the figures said we had an increase of 1500 persons. 1500 additional people in the work force would indicate some 4000 extra people in the Territory. Obviously, the figures are ridiculous.

I am rather surprised that Dr d'Abbs wrote an article like that. It is another indication that people are working to drive the Territory down. Certainly, our member of the House of Representatives is doing nothing for the Northern Territory. He is out to destroy the Northern Territory. In his hatred for this government, he will run the Northern Territory into the ground. I have had enough of him. I cannot accept that very many people in the Territory could regard him as a colleague. He is certainly not a friend of the Territory.

I would like to add my voice to those who have wished the Clerk and his staff a merry Christmas and a wonderful 1989. Mr Clerk, I think that, at times during the year, we have all given you and your staff a hard time. We appreciate the work that you do despite the conditions that you work under with water dripping around your ears on sitting days. Next year will be an interesting time. Obviously, we will move from this House at some time during

the year into temporary quarters. I have no doubt that you, Mr Clerk, will make the best of the temporary facilities and probably turn them into something quite good even as this building became despite its being rather obsolete.

Mr PERRON (Chief Minister): Mr Speaker, I begin tonight by joining other honourable members in wishing members and staff the compliments of the season, particularly the staff of the Assembly who have made this year a successful one and have served us all well during the proceedings of this Assembly. They are an essential part of the parliament if we are to have things go smoothly.

I will not keep honourable members very long as we have had a pretty torrid sittings during this last couple of weeks, but I feel I would like to end the year on a serious note. Honourable members may conclude these parliamentary sittings in 1988 reflecting on the fact that the Territory is going through a very important phase in relation to Aboriginal affairs and, in particular, a very important phase in Aboriginal self-determination. Possibly, for the first time, we are witnessing real self-determination. I refer, of course, to the rapidly growing movement for more land councils. But I am not referring only to that. I am referring also to the refreshing attitude towards negotiations demonstrated so far by the Jawoyn people in discussing with the government the future of the Katherine Gorge and the level of interest being shown in discussing the government's proposed legislation to replace the Aboriginal Sacred Sites Act. A year or more ago, we might have expected the proposal to have been rejected without any consideration. I do not think we would have seen interest or serious consideration given to it. I think it would have been rejected out of hand because the attitude would have been that anything the government proposed must be bad. Today, however, there is interest in discussing the proposals.

Another issue which demonstrates to me that we are experiencing changing times is the genuine reaction by many Aboriginals to the ATSIC proposals. We are hearing that reaction, not from the usual voices that we seem to hear so often in Aboriginal affairs, but from what I call real Aboriginals. A growing number of tribal Aboriginals are speaking out for themselves on issues which affect them. I detect a deliberate movement away from allowing others to speak on their behalf and I think this is very encouraging and very refreshing.

We may well be witnessing or experiencing the emergence of a new era in the Territory after a very long period of so-called self-determination. In fact, what we are seeing now is real determination. I believe that this movement will bring with it very significant advances in black/white relationships in the Territory because it is true that, for too long, Aboriginals have been served badly by many, though not all, of the people who purport to represent their interests. In too many cases, those people have been representing their own interests. As Chief Minister, I intend to foster this movement. I propose to cooperate with traditional Aborigines and negotiate with them to make the Territory a better place to live.

I believe that, in fact, most Aboriginals seek eagerly to contribute to the improved lifestyle that they acknowledge comes from the advances they see in the health of their people under government health programs. In relation to education programs, they recognise the advantages to the new generations of young Aboriginals. Not only do they want to contribute to this advancement of society, they want to be seen to be contributing to it. I do not think Aboriginals are really content to live with the mentality of handouts any more than white people are. Everyone likes to think he contributes and I do not

believe Aborigines are really any different. They have dignity as do the rest of us.

We are seeing the groundwork being laid now for some enormous strides to be taken in 1989 as we begin to talk to the real decision-makers in Aboriginal society - the tribal decision-makers - the people who have been so far in the background for the last 220 years that their views have not really been heard. Now they are gaining the confidence to speak out, even without the ability to articulate well. I detect some embarrassment but, notwithstanding that, they are now prepared to come forward and say in so many instances: 'That is not what we want. This is what we want'. I think that, once we reach the real decision-makers in Aboriginal society, we will see a completely new face in terms of what Aborigines aspire to. I believe that that will result in an enormous improvement in black/white relationships. I and my government want to be a part of that. I think that 1989 will see some great steps forward for the Territory.

I conclude my remarks there, Mr Speaker. I thought I would place those comments on record because it is something which has been growing before my eyes for the past several months. I am sure we will be speaking on this subject a number of times in coming sittings of the Assembly.

Mr COLLINS (Sadadeen): Mr Speaker, I welcome the statement the Chief Minister has just made about Aboriginal relations. I would like to comment briefly on some information that came to me in relation to Hon John Howard's visit to Ernabella. That visit was greatly publicised. The media grabbed hold of it and, apart from the South Australian media, tended to lambast Mr Howard. Some stories came to me from a whole variety of people. It was rather fascinating that they should come to me. I cannot explain it.

A friend of mine has been working at Ernabella off and on since the missionary days. He was asked by one of Mr Howard's colleagues what the people do at Ernabella. His answer was that they do not do anything. The man was visibly horrified by that answer. My friend went on to say that, 20 years or so ago, back in the missionary days, there was a 16-stand shearing shed. The community ran cattle and sheep and grew grapes and vegetables. It supplied itself with meat, vegetables and fruit and sold produce to neighbouring communities. The people had real dignity and pride. Later, when it was easier to live because of the cheques from Canberra, the people stopped working for their money. Now they are very discontented.

The leader of the Inura Pitjantjatjara group there is Jim Lester, or Yami as he prefers to be called these days. I have known him since I was about 18. He gave a speech after Mr Howard and that situation was interesting. Normally, Jim Lester is a very friendly man. He is a blind Aboriginal fellow and it was because of his sight problem that he came to South Australia, where I first came to know him. Despite his usual friendliness, he was very nervous and ill-at-ease when he delivered his speech. Prior to delivering it, a lady appeared to be dictating to him. It is possible that she was just helping him to go over the notes which he might have worked out to give Mr Howard a message, but it certainly was not the normal Jim Lester who spoke that day.

People in the media, particularly the South Australian media, said that they did not believe that they had heard the real Jim Lester and that he had given a message from someone else. They said that the press release was definitely not Jim Lester. He replied to that by saying: 'No, we are the bosses'. The sad thing is that Jim Lester knows what Ernabella had been like in the earlier days when he still had his sight. He would know in his heart of hearts that the Ernabella had been much better off in those days.

I am certainly not going to give the name of another person from the area, but I heard from 2 quite separate sources that he was very concerned about the role of the land council. In fact, he asked one of my sources to help him to obtain the services of the best lawyer he could find, because he believed that the Inuru Pitjantjatjara Land Council should be disbanded on the basis that it was not helping the ordinary people. This person had close associations with Ernabella and was most concerned that the land council was not doing its job. If the Chief Minister is picking up vibes that Aboriginal people in the Northern Territory are not satisfied with the performance of the land councils here, I can tell him that the same thing is happening across the border in South Australia.

Another matter which I wish to raise tonight relates to a question that I asked of the Minister for Transport and Works this morning. I had been given a page taken at random from a taxi driver's logbook and it showed that the driver was receiving a very low rate of pay. He was earning about \$5 an hour, an average of \$60 for a 12-hour shift. I asked the minister to take those figures into account before handing out more taxi licences. I know that many people, including myself, become very irate when taxis do not arrive when requested, but I appreciate the minister's willingness to have his department look into the issue I have raised. If the figures that I gave are typical - and I am prepared to be informed that that is not the case - it may well be that the issuing of more licences is not appropriate. I believe in competition, but perhaps the competition is so fierce in this case that people are just not prepared to give it their best shot because they cannot see themselves making a decent wage. I repeat that I appreciate the minister's willingness to take the matter on board and discuss it with the relevant people in the taxi industry.

Mr Speaker, a couple of months ago, I received a letter from the RSL in Alice Springs asking, in desperation, whether there was anything I could suggest to help the RSL with its continual battle with vandals on Anzac Hill. The vandals paint obscene messages on the obelisk and the flagpole. They damage the flagpole and break the lights. Their activities have been a source of continual annoyance to the RSL which takes a great deal of pride in that memorial to the fallen of this nation and to those who served in the wars in which Australia has been involved.

Whilst thinking about what might be done, the 2 magnificent flagpoles adjacent to the Bagot Road overpass came to mind. I recalled being told by some protocol officers that, initially, the flags flew only during daylight hours and were therefore raised in the morning and lowered in the evening in accordance with tradition. That was rather a bothersome procedure and I also believe that there was a problem with vandalism. Eventually, somebody decided that the need to raise and lower the flags every day could be eliminated by spotlighting them. The spotlights would satisfy the protocol requirements and the flags could fly all the time. I recall that, at one stage, Hon Paul Everingham offered the Alice Springs Town Council 2 similar flagpoles to be erected by the Gap and I was very disappointed that the council did not take up that offer.

I put the suggestion to the people at the RSL that they could approach the government about obtaining a tall flagpole for Anzac Hill. It may not need to be as large as those on Bagot Road, but should have the cables inside the pole. The flag could be raised and lowered as necessary but the cables should be sealed inside the pole. The spotlights on the ground could then be removed because vandals smash the glass and cause damage. Lights could be fitted at the top of the pole. It would not require such a powerful set of lights and

the flag could be illuminated and could fly night and day and would become a real landmark. I put that suggestion to the people of the RSL and, after consideration, they were very enthusiastic about it.

This is an important matter. I have spoken to you privately about it, Mr Speaker, and I certainly appreciate the support that I detect from you. I have spoken to the member for Araluen. He has received a letter from the RSL and has offered to 'consider', if that is the right political word to use, any suggestions on cost and what would be involved if arrangements could be made for it to happen. It would have made a lovely 1988 bicentennial project: a tall flagpole with a flag flying continuously night and day. Residents of Alice Springs and tourists would all be very proud of it, as an indication of the great job the RSL is doing in Alice Springs. It would become an additional landmark. We have several, of course, but it would be outstanding and would provide a salutary reminder to us all that we do owe the freedom of the land that we live in to the sacrifices of those who went before us.

Mr Speaker, I would like to join with the other speakers tonight and express my thanks to the Assembly staff for the service and the advice that they have given and, above all, the friendliness of each and every one of them which I appreciate very much. I say a big thank you to them all and hope they have a great Christmas season and a very prosperous year in 1989.

Mr SPEAKER: Honourable members, I would like to take this opportunity to thank all honourable members for their support during the past 12 months, and to place on record my appreciation to all members of the Legislative Assembly staff, particularly the 2 Clerks who have done their damndest, I suppose you could say, to keep me out of trouble for another 12 months. I hope they will be able to do that for another 12 months. I extend to each and every one of you the compliments of the season.

Mr FINCH (Leanyer): Mr Speaker, I take this opportunity to wish yourself, all honourable members of the Assembly and the staff of the Assembly all the very best for the festive season. I am sure that 1989 will bring great rewards to all Territorians.

Motion agreed to; the Assembly adjourned.

ADJOURNMENT

ABC radio policy on rural services 5266, 5273
 Aboriginal self-determination 5375, 5376
 Alcoholism problems in Aboriginal community 4766
 Alice Springs abattoir, government inaction 4881, 4883
 Bicentennial Office, tribute to members 5373
 Blenkinsop, David, allegations 4758, 4760, 4767
 BTEC 4885, 4975, 4979
 Buffalo industry grants 4887
 Colonia Dignidad 4979
 Constitutional Commission, final report 4888
 Country Hour 5266, 5273
 Dam sites for Darwin, conflicting information 5265
 Darwin showground, quarantine status 4885, 4975, 4979
 Dorothea Mackellar Memorial Trust awards 4756
 Education services in remote areas 4890
 Excisions program, problems 5369
 Firefighting equipment, restrictions 5264
 Flagpole for Anzac Hill, Alice Springs 5377
 Frequency of sittings 5265, 5362
 Greenhouse Effect conference 5263
 Imparja Television, government support for remote area reception 5273
 Indonesian fishermen illegal fishing in Australian waters 4758, 4760, 4767
 Industrial training committees 4974
 Jungarrayi, Benno Davis, excision 5370
 Lateness of sitting hours 5265, 5362
 League of Rights candidate, Alice Springs council elections 4979
 Library services funding 4754
 Life Education Centres, fundraising 4771, 4978
 Liquor Act amendments, adverse effects 4976, 4977
 Medical services in Palmerston and Darwin rural area 4975
 Member for Sadadeen, refutation of letter to Sunday Territorian 5138
 MLAs relationship with local government 4969, 4972
 Minister for Health and Community Services, contemptuous attitude 4971
 Morrison, Desmond, report on correctional services administration 5271
 Mulga Bore, housing 5261
 National AIDS Day 5362
 O'Keefe, Sister Olive, death 4756
 Old age pensions, effects of federal budget 4878
 Pine Gap agreement renewal 4978
 Porter, Patrick, poetry award 4756
 Restrictions on sale of alcohol 4766
 Salami challenge 4972
 Seasonal greetings to members and staff 5361, 5362, 5366, 5374, 5378
 Small Business Awards, Grainger's Glass Service 4756
 Snowdon, Warren, comments in House of Representatives 5371, 5373
 SPIEL Awards 5366
 State Square project 4978, 5139
 Strip shows in Tennant Creek hotel 4761, 4764
 Taxi licence plates 5377
 Territory Tidy Town awards 4972
 'The Territory on the Move' 4770
 Water supplies in remote communities, government funding 5369
 Whatley property, live ordinance 5267
 Williams, Tom, death 5262, 5263
 Willowra community education centre 5141
 Woolanng School 5141
 Working conditions in Ward Building 5363

BILLS

Bail Amendment (Serial 109) 5254
 Business Franchise Amendment (Serial 162) 5259
 Cancer Registration (Serial 160) 4828, 5317
 Crimes (Forfeiture of Proceeds)(Serial 149) 4953, 4954
 Education Amendment (Serial 150) 4830, 4854,
 Education Amendment (Serial 161) 5111
 Fisheries (Serial 151) 5326
 Health Practitioners and Allied Professionals
 Registration Amendment (Serial 148) 4951
 Heritage Preservation (Interim Arrangements)(Serial 133) 5221
 Housing Amendment (Serial 153) 4954, 4967
 Justices Amendment (Serial 107) 5254
 Juvenile Justice Amendment (Serial 131) 5230
 Liquor Amendment (Serial 145) 4864
 Listening Devices (Serial 158) 5083
 Mining Amendment (Serial 152) 4744
 Oaths Amendment (Serial 163) 5275
 Ombudsman (Northern Territory) Amendment (Serial 147) 4748
 Petroleum Products Subsidy Amendment (Serial 156) 4952
 Plant Diseases Control Amendment (Serial 155) 5260
 Poisons and Dangerous Drugs Amendment (Serial 86) 5085
 Police Administration Amendment (Serial 110) 5254
 Prisoners (Interstate Transfer) Amendment (Serial 154) 5110
 Racing and Betting Amendment (Serial 157) 5082
 Real Property Amendment (Serial 140) 5241
 Statute Law Revision (Serial 130) 4862
 Strehlow Research Centre (Serial 142) 5114, 5127,
 Trustee Amendment (Serial 123) 4747
 Unlawful Betting (Serial 159) 5079

DISCHARGE OF ITEMS FROM NOTICE PAPER 4649

DISTINGUISHED VISITOR

Usher of Black Rod, Australian Senate 4649

MATTERS OF PUBLIC IMPORTANCE

Refusal to appoint Women's Advisor 5059
 The government's failure to provide for the health and community
 needs of the people of the Northern Territory 4932

MOTIONS

Brucellosis and Tuberculosis Eradication Campaign 5161
 Committee of Privileges 5291
 Condemnation of the Opposition 4773
 Discharge of items from Notice Paper 4649, 5254
 Freedom of information 5192
 Noting papers -
 'AIDS: A Time to Care, A Time to Act' 4986,
 Commissioner of Consumer Affairs, Annual Report 1986-87 4650
 Menzies School of Health Research Annual Report 1987-88 5146
 Public Accounts Committee - Annual Report 1987-88 5254
 Report of Privileges Committee on statement
 by Member for Barkly 5340, 5341
 Report on Public Administration and Recurrent Expenditure 5254
 Report of the Northern Territory Law Reform Committee
 on de facto Relationships 4988,
 'Towards the 90s Volume 2' 5350, 5360
 review of TDZ marketing and promotion activities 5303, 5316

Noting statements -

crocodile industry 5154
Darwin State Square development 4701, 4740
future direction of Batchelor College 5282
housing purchase assistance package 4656, 4681
inquiry into land degradation 5025, 5039
Kakadu National Park stage 3 4908, 4931
Meningococcal meningitis 4687, 4691
Northern Territory offshore fishery 5045, 5058
NT participation at World Expo 88 5292, 5293
overseas trip by Deputy Chief Minister 5297, 5300
proposed Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission 5342, 5350
services for the intellectually disabled 4816, 4827
surveillance of exotic diseases in the Northern Territory 4897, 4901
upgrading of Darwin and Alice Springs Airports 4993, 5016
visit to East Timor by Northern Territory delegation 5151, 5158
women living in remote areas 5333, 5339
Order of business 5155

PERSONAL EXPLANATIONS

Mr Collins 5326
Mr Dale 5146
Mr Ede 5360
Mr Leo 4649
Mr Tuxworth 5145, 5341

PETITIONS

Appointment of Women's Advisor 4983, 5145
Cuts in funding for libraries 4649, 4983
'Last Temptation of Christ' 5145, 5275
Strip and lingerie shows 5275

REQUEST FOR LEAVE TO MAKE STATEMENT 4902

STATEMENTS

Appointment of Deputy Chairman of Committees 5275
Article from Katherine Times 5326
Crocodile industry 5151
Darwin State Square development 4693
Driving Australia mementos 5287
Future direction of Batchelor College 5278
Housing purchase assistance package 4650
Inquiry into land degradation 5019
Kakadu National Park stage 3 4903
Meningococcal meningitis 4682
Northern Territory offshore fishery 5041
NT participation at World Expo 88 5291
Overseas trip by Deputy Chief Minister 5293
Report of Privileges Committee on statement by Member for Barkly 5341
Services for the intellectually disabled 4816
Surveillance of exotic diseases in the Northern Territory 4893
Upgrading of Darwin and Alice Springs Airports 4988
Video library footage 4984
Visit to East Timor by Northern Territory delegation 5143

SUSPENSION OF STANDING ORDERS

Cancer Registration Bill (Serial 160) 4828
Housing Amendment Bill (Serial 153) 4830
Legislation on domestic violence 5254
Motion of condemnation of the Opposition 4773

TABLED PAPERS

Article from Katherine Advertiser 5317
Commissioner of Consumer Affairs, Annual Report 1986-87 4650
Menzies School of Health Research Annual Report 1987-88 5146
Subordinate Legislation and Tabled Papers Committee, Seventh Report 4650
Subordinate Legislation and Tabled Papers Committee, Eighth Report 5146
'AIDS: A Time to Care, A Time to Act' 4984
Report of Northern Territory Law Reform Committee on
de facto Relationships 4987
Review of TDZ marketing and promotion activities 5300

BELL N.R.

ADJOURNMENT

MLAs relationship with local government 4969
Seasonal greetings to members and staff 5366
SPIEL Awards 5366
Strip shows in Tennant Creek hotel 4761

BILLS

Cancer Registration (Serial 160) 5317
Crimes (Forfeiture of Proceeds)(Serial149) 4953
Education Amendment (Serial 150) 4846
Housing Amendment (Serial 153) 4966
Juvenile Justice Amendment (Serial 131) 5239
Liquor Amendment (Serial 145) 4864, 4873
Poisons and Dangerous Drugs Amendment (Serial 86) 5092
Real Property Amendment (Serial 140) 5248
Statute Law Revision (Serial 130) 4862
Strehlow Research Centre (Serial 142) 5114, 5131, 5136

MATTER OF PUBLIC IMPORTANCE

The government's failure to provide for the health and community needs of the people of the Northern Territory 4932

MOTIONS

Condemnation of the Opposition 4789
Freedom of information 5201
Noting papers -
'AIDS: A Time to Care, A Time to Act' 4986
'Towards the 90s Volume 2' 5353
Noting statements -
Darwin State Square development 4738
housing purchase assistance package 4661
inquiry into land degradation 5025
Meningococcal meningitis 4687
surveillance of exotic diseases in the Northern Territory 4897
upgrading of Darwin and Alice Springs Airports 5007
women living in remote areas

PETITION

Strip and lingerie shows 5275

COLLINS D.W.

ADJOURNMENT

Aboriginal self-determination 5376
Life Education Centres, fundraising 4771, 4978
Member for Sadadeen, refutation of letter to Sunday Territorian 5138
Seasonal greetings to members and staff 5378
State Square project 4978, 5139
Taxi licence plates 5377
'The Territory on the Move' 4770

BILLS

Education Amendment (Serial 150) 4838, 4860
Housing Amendment (Serial 153) 4956
Juvenile Justice Amendment (Serial 131) 5230
Real Property Amendment (Serial 140) 5249
Strehlow Research Centre (Serial 142) 5120, 5137

MOTIONS

Condemnation of the Opposition 4803
Discharge of items from Notice Paper 5254
Freedom of information 5212
Noting paper - 'Towards the 90s Volume 2' 5350
Noting statements -
 Darwin State Square development 4714
 housing purchase assistance package 4677
 inquiry into land degradation 5032
 Kakadu National Park stage 3 4925
 Meningococcal meningitis 4689
 upgrading of Darwin and Alice Springs Airports 5000
 women living in remote areas 5338

PERSONAL EXPLANATION 5326

COULTER B.F.

ADJOURNMENT

Seasonal greetings to members and staff 5361

BILL

Mining Amendment (Serial 152) 4744

MOTIONS

Committee of Privileges 5291
Condemnation of the Opposition 4792
Noting paper - review of TDZ marketing and promotion activities 5303, 5313
Noting statements -
 Darwin State Square development 4730
 Kakadu National Park stage 3 4911
 NT participation at World Expo 88 5292
 overseas trip by Deputy Chief Minister 5297, 5299
 women living in remote areas 5333
Order of business 5155, 5157

PETITION

'Last Temptation of Christ' 5145

STATEMENTS

Article from Katherine Times 5326
NT participation at World Expo 88 5291
Overseas trip by Deputy Chief Minister 5293

TABLED PAPER

Review of TDZ marketing and promotion activities 5300

DALE D.F.

BILLS

Cancer Registration (Serial 160) 4828, 5323
Health Practitioners and Allied Professionals
 Registration Amendment (Serial 148) 4951
Juvenile Justice Amendment (Serial 131) 5231
Poisons and Dangerous Drugs Amendment (Serial 86) 5085
Prisoners (Interstate Transfer) Amendment (Serial 154) 5110

MATTER OF PUBLIC IMPORTANCE

The government's failure to provide for the health and community needs of the people of the Northern Territory 4936

MOTIONS

Noting paper - 'AIDS: A Time to Care, A Time to Act' 4986

Noting statements -

Meningococcal meningitis 4687, 4691

services for the intellectually disabled 4822, 4827

surveillance of exotic diseases in the Northern Territory 4897, 4901

PERSONAL EXPLANATION 5146

STATEMENTS

Meningococcal meningitis 4682

Services for the intellectually disabled 4816

Surveillance of exotic diseases in the Northern Territory 4893

SUSPENSION OF STANDING ORDERS

Cancer Registration Bill (Serial 160) 4828

TABLED PAPERS

Commissioner of Consumer Affairs, Annual Report 1986-87 4650

'AIDS: A Time to Care, A Time to Act' 4984

DONDAS N.M.

MOTION

Noting statement - Upgrading of Darwin and Alice Springs Airports 4996

EDE B.R.

ADJOURNMENT

Alice Springs abattoir, government inaction 4881

Colonia Dignidad 4979

Dorothea Mackellar Memorial Trust awards 4756

Excisions program, problems 5369

Jungarrayi, Benno Davis, excision 5370

League of Rights candidate, Alice Springs council elections 4979

Library services funding 4754

Mulga Bore, housing 5261

Porter, Patrick, poetry award 4756

Small Business Awards, Grainger's Glass Service 4756

Water supplies in remote communities, government funding 5369

Williams, Tom, death 5262

Willowra community education centre 5141

Woolanang School 5141

BILLS

Education Amendment (Serial 150) 4830, 4859

Fisheries (Serial 151) 5326

Heritage Preservation (Interim Arrangements)(Serial 133) 5224

Housing Amendment (Serial 153) 4956

Liquor Amendment (Serial 145) 4876

Strehlow Research Centre (Serial 142) 5125, 5133, 5137

MATTER OF PUBLIC IMPORTANCE

Refusal to appoint Women's Advisor 5068

MOTIONS

Brucellosis and Tuberculosis Eradication Campaign 5161, 5187
Condemnation of the Opposition 4779
Noting paper - review of TDZ marketing and promotion activities 5303
Noting statements -
Darwin State Square development 4722
future direction of Batchelor College 5282
housing purchase assistance package 4667
inquiry into land degradation 5038
Kakadu National Park stage 3 4915
Meningococcal meningitis 4690
Northern Territory offshore fishery 5046
NT participation at World Expo 88 5292
overseas trip by Deputy Chief Minister 5298
surveillance of exotic diseases in the Northern Territory 4899
upgrading of Darwin and Alice Springs Airports 5012
Order of business 5156

PERSONAL EXPLANATION 5360

STATEMENT

Droving Australia mementos 5290

FINCH F.A.

ADJOURNMENT

Old age pensions, effects of federal budget 4878
Seasonal greetings to members and staff 5378

BILL

Petroleum Products Subsidy Amendment (Serial 156) 4952

MOTIONS

Noting statements -
Darwin State Square development 4701, 4740
upgrading of Darwin and Alice Springs Airports 4993, 5016

STATEMENTS

Darwin State Square development 4693
Upgrading of Darwin and Alice Springs Airports 4988

FIRMIN C.C.

ADJOURNMENT

Constitutional Commission, final report 4888

BILLS

Cancer Registration (Serial 160) 5318
Liquor Amendment (Serial 145) 4867
Real Property Amendment (Serial 140) 5243

FLOREANI E.A.

ADJOURNMENT

Minister for Health and Community Services, contemptuous attitude 4971
Salami challenge 4972

BILLS

Heritage Preservation (Interim Arrangements)(Serial 133) 5227
Real Property Amendment (Serial 140) 5246

MOTION

Noting statement - Darwin State Square development 4733

HARRIS T.

BILLS

Education Amendment (Serial 150) 4854, 4859
Education Amendment (Serial 161) 5111

MOTIONS

Noting papers -
Menzies School of Health Research Annual Report 1987-88 5146
'Towards the 90s Volume 2' 5355
Noting statement - future direction of Batchelor College 5282

PETITION

Cuts in funding for libraries 4649

STATEMENT

Future direction of Batchelor College 5278

TABLED PAPER

Menzies School of Health Research Annual Report 1987-88 5146

HATTON S.P.

BILLS

Education Amendment (Serial 150) 4836
Juvenile Justice Amendment (Serial 131) 5237
Ombudsman (Northern Territory) Amendment (Serial 147) 4752

MATTER OF PUBLIC IMPORTANCE

The government's failure to provide for the health and community
needs of the people of the Northern Territory 4949

MOTIONS

Brucellosis and Tuberculosis Eradication Campaign 5180
Condemnation of the Opposition 4798
Noting statements -
Darwin State Square development 4733
housing purchase assistance package 4658
inquiry into land degradation 5052
Kakadu National Park stage 3 4918
proposed Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission 5342
upgrading of Darwin and Alice Springs Airports 5009

PETITION

Cuts in funding for libraries 4983

LANHUPUY W.W.

BILLS

Education Amendment (Serial 150) 4852
Liquor Amendment (Serial 145) 4871

MOTIONS

Condemnation of the Opposition 4809
Noting statement - Kakadu National Park stage 3 4908

LEO D.M.

BILLS

Housing Amendment (Serial 153) 4954
Liquor Amendment (Serial 145) 4868, 4874
Trustee Amendment (Serial 123) 4747

MOTIONS

Condemnation of the Opposition 4796
Freedom of information 5207
Noting statement - housing purchase assistance package 4656
Order of business 5155

PERSONAL EXPLANATION 4649

MCCARTHY T.R.

ADJOURNMENT

Industrial training committees 4974
MLAs relationship with local government 4972
Seasonal greetings to members and staff 5374
Snowdon, Warren, comments in House of Representatives 5373
Territory Tidy Town awards 4972
Whatley property, live ordinance 5267

MATTER OF PUBLIC IMPORTANCE

Refusal to appoint Women's Advisor 5071

MOTIONS

Freedom of information 5218
Noting statements -
inquiry into land degradation 5035
Kakadu National Park stage 3 4928

MANZIE D.W.

BILLS

Crimes (Forfeiture of Proceeds)(Serial 149) 4954
Heritage Preservation (Interim Arrangements)(Serial 133) 5221
Housing Amendment (Serial 153) 4830, 4967
Listening Devices (Serial 158) 5083
Oaths Amendment (Serial 163) 5275
Racing and Betting Amendment (Serial 157) 5082
Real Property Amendment (Serial 140) 5246
Statute Law Revision (Serial 130) 4863
Strehlow Research Centre (Serial 142) 5127, 5134, 5136, 5137
Trustee Amendment (Serial 123) 4747
Unlawful Betting (Serial 159) 5079

MOTIONS

- Condemnation of the Opposition 4811
- Discharge of items from Notice Paper 4649
- Freedom of information 5197
- Noting paper - report of the Northern Territory Law Reform Committee
on de facto relationships 4988
- Noting statements -
 - crocodile industry 5154
 - housing purchase assistance package 4673, 4681
 - inquiry into land degradation 5025, 5039
 - Kakadu National Park stage 3 4908

STATEMENTS

- Crocodile industry 5151
- Housing purchase assistance package 4650
- Inquiry into land degradation 5019
- Kakadu National Park stage 3 4903

SUSPENSION OF STANDING ORDERS

- Housing Amendment Bill (Serial 153) 4830
- Motion of condemnation of the Opposition 4773

TABLED PAPER

- Report of Northern Territory Law Reform Committee on
de facto Relationships 4987

PADGHAM-PURICH C.N.

ADJOURNMENT

- Blenkinsop, David, allegations 4758
- BTEC 4884
- Buffalo industry grants 4886
- Dam sites for Darwin, conflicting information 5265
- Darwin showground, quarantine status 4885, 4975
- Firefighting equipment, restrictions 5264
- Frequency of sittings 5265
- Greenhouse Effect conference 5263
- Indonesian fishermen illegal fishing in Australian waters 4758
- Lateness of sitting hours 5265
- Liquor Act amendments, adverse effects 4976
- Medical services in Palmerston and Darwin rural area 4974
- National AIDS Day 5362
- Seasonal greetings to members and staff 5362
- Working conditions in Ward Building 5363

BILLS

- Cancer Registration (Serial 160) 5320
- Education Amendment (Serial 150) 4842
- Heritage Preservation (Interim Arrangements)(Serial 133) 5228
- Housing Amendment (Serial 153) 4955
- Juvenile Justice Amendment (Serial 131) 5235
- Ombudsman (Northern Territory) Amendment (Serial 147) 4751
- Real Property Amendment (Serial 140) 5241
- Strehlow Research Centre (Serial 142) 5123

MATTER OF PUBLIC IMPORTANCE

- Refusal to appoint Women's Advisor 5075

MOTIONS

- Brucellosis and Tuberculosis Eradication Campaign 5176
- Noting statements -
 - Darwin State Square development 4718
 - inquiry into land degradation 5027
 - Kakadu National Park stage 3 4909
 - surveillance of exotic diseases in the Northern Territory 4900

PALMER M.J.

BILLS

- Crimes (Forfeiture of Proceeds)(Serial 149) 4953
- Fisheries (Serial 151) 5329
- Housing Amendment (Serial 153) 4958

MOTION

- Noting statement - housing purchase assistance package 4665

PERRON M.B.

ADJOURNMENT

- Aboriginal self-determination 5375
- Blenkinsop, David, allegations 4760
- Indonesian fishermen illegal fishing in Australian waters 4760
- Seasonal greetings to members and staff 5375

BILLS

- Bail Amendment (Serial 109) 5254
- Business Franchise Amendment (Serial 162) 5259
- Justices Amendment (Serial 107) 5254
- Ombudsman (Northern Territory) Amendment (Serial 147) 4753
- Poisons and Dangerous Drugs Amendment (Serial 86) 5099
- Police Administration Amendment (Serial 110) 5254
- Strehlow Research Centre (Serial 142) 5121, 5135

MATTER OF PUBLIC IMPORTANCE

- Refusal to appoint Women's Advisor 5063

MOTIONS

- Condemnation of the Opposition 4785
- Freedom of information 5215
- Noting paper - report of Privileges Committee on statement
by Member for Barkly 5340
- Noting statements -
 - Darwin State Square development 4709
 - Northern Territory offshore fishery 5049
 - visit to East Timor by Northern Territory delegation 5151
 - women living in remote areas 5333

PETITION

- Cuts in funding for libraries 4983

STATEMENTS

- Report of Privileges Committee on statement by Member for Barkly 5342
- Visit to East Timor by Northern Territory delegation 5148

SUSPENSION OF STANDING ORDERS

- Legislation on domestic violence 5254

POOLE E.H.

ADJOURNMENT

Liquor Act amendments, adverse effects 4977

BILL

Liquor Amendment (Serial 145) 4872, 4876

MOTION

Noting statement - upgrading of Darwin and Alice Springs Airports 5005

REED M.A.

ADJOURNMENT

ABC radio policy on rural services 5266

Alice Springs abattoir, government inaction 4883

Bicentennial Office, tribute to members 5373

BTEC 4979

Country Hour 5266

Darwin showground, quarantine status 4979

O'Keefe, Sister Olive, death 4756

Snowdon, Warren, comments in House of Representatives 5371

BILLS

Fisheries (Serial 151) 5331

Plant Diseases Control Amendment (Serial 155) 5260

MOTIONS

Brucellosis and Tuberculosis Eradication Campaign 5168

Noting statements -

inquiry into land degradation 5031

Kakadu National Park stage 3 4930

Northern Territory offshore fishery 5045, 5055

STATEMENTS

Droving Australia mementos 5287

Northern Territory offshore fishery 5041

SETTER R.A.

ADJOURNMENT

Blenkinsop, David, allegations 4767

Indonesian fishermen illegal fishing in Australian waters 4767

BILLS

Cancer Registration (Serial 160) 5321

Education Amendment (Serial 150) 4843

Liquor Amendment (Serial 145) 4870

Ombudsman (Northern Territory) Amendment (Serial 147) 4750

MOTIONS

Condemnation of the Opposition 4806

Freedom of information 5209

Noting paper - Review of TDZ marketing and promotion activities 5306

Noting statements -

housing purchase assistance package 4670

Kakadu National Park stage 3 4922

upgrading of Darwin and Alice Springs Airports 5002

visit to East Timor by Northern Territory delegation 5158

Order of business 5155, 5158

PETITION

Strip and lingerie shows 5275

SMITH T.E.

ADJOURNMENT

Frequency of sittings 5362
Lateness of sitting hours 5362
Seasonal greetings to members and staff 5361

BILLS

Housing Amendment (Serial 153) 4959
Ombudsman (Northern Territory) Amendment (Serial 147) 4748
Strehlow Research Centre (Serial 142) 5132

MATTER OF PUBLIC IMPORTANCE

Refusal to appoint Women's Advisor 5059

MOTIONS

Brucellosis and Tuberculosis Eradication Campaign 5184
Freedom of information 5192, 5219
Noting paper - review of TDZ marketing and promotion activities 5310
Noting statements -
Darwin State Square development 4701
housing purchase assistance package 4680
upgrading of Darwin and Alice Springs Airports 4993
women living in remote areas 5336
Order of business 5155

PETITIONS

Appointment of Women's Advisor 4983, 5145
Cuts in funding for libraries 4983

REQUEST FOR LEAVE TO MAKE STATEMENT 4902

STATEMENT

Report of Privileges Committee on statement by Member for Barkly 5341

TABLED PAPER

Article from Katherine Advertiser 5317

TIPILOURA S.G.

BILL

Education Amendment (Serial 150) 4841

MATTER OF PUBLIC IMPORTANCE

The government's failure to provide for the health and community needs of the people of the Northern Territory 4947

TUXWORTH I.L.

ADJOURNMENT

ABC radio policy on rural services 5273
Alcoholism problems in Aboriginal community 4766
Country Hour 5273
Education services in remote areas 4890
Imparja Television, government support for remote area reception 5273

Morrison, Desmond, report on correctional services administration 5271
Restrictions on sale of alcohol 4766
Strip shows in Tennant Creek hotel 4764

BILLS

Housing Amendment (Serial 153) 4965
Poisons and Dangerous Drugs Amendment (Serial 86) 5102

MOTIONS

Brucellosis and Tuberculosis Eradication Campaign 5186
Condemnation of the Opposition 4804
Freedom of information 5204
Noting statements -
 Darwin State Square development 4726
 housing purchase assistance package 4679
 services for the intellectually disabled 4825
Order of business 5156

PERSONAL EXPLANATION 5145, 5341

STATEMENT

Driving Australia mementos 5289

VALE R.W.S.

ADJOURNMENT

Seasonal greetings to members and staff 5378
Williams, Tom, death 5263

STATEMENTS

Appointment of Deputy Chairman of Committees 5275
Driving Australia mementos 5289
Video library footage 4984