
NORTHERN TERRITORY OF AUSTRALIA

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

Fifth Assembly
First Session

PARLIAMENTARY RECORD

Tuesday 17 May 1988
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Thursday 19 May 1988

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NORTHERN TERRITORY LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

Fifth Assembly
First Session

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

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Deputy Chairmen of Committees -

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Mr R.A. Hanrahan
Mr W.W. Lanhupuy
Mr M.A. Reed
Mr R.A. Setter

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Mr W.W. Lanhupuy
Mr D.M. Leo
Mr M.A. Reed

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Mr Speaker
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Mr S.G. Tipiloura

Sessional Committee - New Parliament House

Mr Speaker
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Mr D.M. Leo
Mr R.A. Setter

Select Committee - Constitutional Development

Mr B.R. Ede
Mr T. Harris X
Mr S.P. Hatton
Mr W.W. Lanhupuy
Mr R.A. Setter
Mr T.M. Smith

PART I

DEBATES



DEBATES

Tuesday 17 May 1988

Mr Speaker Vale took the Chair at 10 am.

COMMONWEALTH DAY MESSAGE

Mr SPEAKER: Honourable members, I lay on the Table a copy of a Commonwealth Day Message received from Her Majesty the Queen, Head of the Commonwealth, and issued to the Chairman of the Joint Commonwealth Societies Council. Copies have been distributed to all members and, with the concurrence of honourable members, the message will be incorporated in Hansard.

This second Monday in March is the day which we celebrate every year as Commonwealth Day. It is our special opportunity to think about this group of nations and what it means to us. On this day we should all look beyond our own horizons and stretch our understanding of the value of the Commonwealth.

Its strength lies not just in its numbers - we are a worldwide family of a billion - but rather in its shared ideals, its emphasis on discussion and its disposition to cooperate. This voluntary organisation, the group in which we can feel comfortable, is where we can look to our friends for support and understanding and for help in finding the answers to our common problems.

Every year there are many Commonwealth meetings. These bring together all sorts of people - ministers and mariners, teachers and traders, pharmacists and farmers - all working together the more easily because they share a common language. Agreement on all subjects may not always be possible but understanding and mutual benefit are always the goals.

At the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting in Vancouver last year this search for cooperative effort brought practical decisions in many areas including more help for those in need of food and shelter. I was specially interested in the decision to create a Commonwealth-wide distance learning system at college and university level to bring new opportunities for higher education to our young people and adults throughout the Commonwealth.

For the future, we must listen as well as speak to each other and so learn tolerance through understanding. If we always look for those things which unite us, whether shared hopes or shared fears, the Commonwealth link will come to mean even more to us.

I urge you to keep faith in the Commonwealth: it can and will continue to serve the world well.

ELIZABETH R.
14 March 1988.

BROADCASTING OF QUESTION TIME

Mr SPEAKER: Honourable members, I am pleased to announce that, from this morning, 8CCC will be carrying the broadcast of Question Time to its listening audience in Tennant Creek. I am sure that this innovation will meet with the same success as it has in Alice Springs and in Darwin.

ADMINISTRATIVE ARRANGEMENTS ORDER

Mr HATTON (Chief Minister): Mr Speaker, on 6 April 1988, His Honour the Administrator appointed the member for Port Darwin, Mr Tom Harris, and the member for Araluen, Mr Eric Poole, to the ministry. Mr Harris was sworn in as Minister for Education and Minister Assisting the Chief Minister on Constitutional Development. Mr Poole was sworn in as Minister for Tourism with responsibility for the Racing, Gaming and Liquor Commission and the NT Totalisator Administration Board and Minister Assisting the Chief Minister on Central Australian Affairs.

The number of offices of minister of the Territory is 14. The Treasurer, Mr Coulter, has been appointed Leader of Government Business in the Legislative Assembly. I table a copy of the Administrative Arrangements Order made by His Honour the Administrator on 6 April 1988.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

Mr SMITH (Opposition Leader)(by leave): Mr Speaker, I wish to respond to the scurrilous attack made on me during question time by the Chief Minister. Making such an attack during question time, when one is unable to reply, takes the concept of a coward's castle to a new level.

The major issue confronting the Northern Territory government in the run-up to the Premiers Conference was the recommendation of the Grants Commission. Mr Speaker, all members will be aware that, on the day that the report of the Grants Commission report came down, I made a very strong statement distancing the Labor Party in the Northern Territory from it. I stated that the Grants Commission had not done sufficient homework for the report to be taken seriously. I followed that up with a letter to the federal Treasurer on 18 April 1988. I will table that letter and I will also read it into the Parliamentary Record. It says:

Dear Mr Keating,

I concur with the view expressed by my Territory federal colleagues, Warren Snowdon and Senator Bob Collins, that the Grants Commission recommendations be set aside. The Grants Commission often expressed doubts about their conclusions so far as they impact on the Territory. There is sufficient evidence to set them aside. The fact that some of the premises on which they rely are clearly unsustainable makes it absolutely necessary that they be set aside.

Let me examine a couple of those premises. '(1) That electricity charges should be increased by over \$5m'. This represents 5% before inflation. We already have the highest charges nationally and my current survey of local business indicates that the current impost is damaging business performance. '(2) That Darwin water and sewerage works are rural and are not subject to fiscal equalisation'. Darwin is not a state capital and it is far more rural than Newcastle, Wollongong or Bendigo. '(3) That the Northern Territory should

collect \$2.5m in hospital charges'. The Medicare arrangements are, of course, the province of your government and beyond the control of the Northern Territory.

I would be pleased to detail more problems with the report should the evidence currently available to you not be sufficient for you to be convinced that its recommendations on Northern Territory revenue be set aside.

From 18 April 1988, I was in regular contact with my federal colleagues, Senator Bob Collins and the member of the House of Representatives, Warren Snowdon. I kept myself fully abreast of the issues involved and I therefore reject completely and utterly the scurrilous nonsense delivered by the Chief Minister in this Chamber during question time. I take the opportunity of congratulating Senator Bob Collins and the federal member, Warren Snowdon, because I think it is in their court that the prime responsibility ...

Mr PERRON: A point of order, Mr Speaker! The Leader of the Opposition rose to make personal explanation and now he is trying to praise the efforts made by members of another parliament.

Mr SPEAKER: There is a point of order. The honourable member will restrict his comments to his personal explanation. I also advise him that he must seek leave to table that letter to the federal Treasurer, which he can do at the conclusion of his explanation.

Mr SMITH: Thank you, Mr Speaker, I congratulate them on the good deal that they obtained for the Territory. Mr Speaker, I seek leave to table my letter to the federal Treasurer.

Leave granted.

MOTION
Suspension of Standing Orders

Mr SMITH (Opposition Leader): Mr Speaker, whilst I am on my feet, I move that so much of standing orders be suspended as would prevent the Leader of the Opposition from moving the following motion forthwith:

that this Assembly, pursuant to section 4A of the Inquiries Act, resolve that a board of inquiry consisting of 1 person recommended by the Executive Council be appointed to inquire into and report by the 16 August 1988 on Hungerford Refrigeration and the Trade Development Zone in general and with particular reference to:

- (1) government, TIO and TDZA commitment to Hungerford Refrigeration, including the nature and extent of loans, operation concession incentives and terms and conditions of loans including interest rates and guarantees;
- (2) the documentation available to the government, TIO and the Trade Development Zone Authority when assessing the Hungerford deal, including technical reports, business plans, asset valuations, auditors' reports and any other related documentation;

- (3) the adequacy of these documents in fully assessing Hungerford's prospects;
- (4) the checks carried out by the government, the TIO and the TDZ concerning the business viability of Hungerfords, including market evaluation, gearing of the company corporate structure, personal checks about the standing of directors, trading history or any other aspects to do with the corporate operations and history of the company and its directors; and
- (5) the specific role played in any of these matters by Ministers Hanrahan, Coulter and Perron;

and - that the board of inquiry make any recommendations relating to future government involvement in operations within the Trade Development Zone.

Mr Speaker, I have sought to move a motion to suspend standing orders to allow for a full inquiry, under the Inquiries Act, into the Hungerford fiasco. I intend to limit, as I need to do, my contribution in this debate to the reasons for the suspension. There is no doubt that there is an urgent need for this Assembly to take a decisive step to address the issues that are involved in this particular matter. That is so because these issues go beyond the question of an individual firm, Hungerford Refrigeration, and its commercial viability or otherwise, and they go beyond the future of the workers currently at Hungerford Refrigeration. Obviously, we all have a concern for that, and that is what makes this an urgent matter. It goes to the credibility of the Territory Insurance Office, to the credibility of the Trade Development Zone, to the credibility of the government and to the confidence that business people in the Northern Territory have in the government and those government authorities. That is why it is urgent to address this particular motion today rather than present it today and address it when we have our next general business day at the next sittings.

To put it bluntly, the credibility of TIO and the Trade Development Zone is on the line. As I have said, the damage in this exercise has not been confined to Hungerfords, its work force or the local businesses which have become entangled in its fate. This matter extends all the way to a central and priceless asset: the business community's confidence in government-backed authorities. That is why this matter needs to be addressed urgently. I will give you an example, Mr Speaker. I received a phone call yesterday from a person whose company may well be affected by Hungerford Refrigeration's liquidity problems. He said that the reason ...

Mr COULTER: A point of order, Mr Speaker! The Leader of the Opposition has already pointed out that he must stick to the point of this debate, yet we are now to hear about a telephone call that he received recently. This House has before it a motion to suspend standing orders on a matter of urgency and we are now hearing about telephone calls about some other company which has no relevance at all to Hungerford Refrigeration or the motion that is before this Assembly. I believe that the Leader of the Opposition should restrict his remarks to the subject of the motion.

Mr SPEAKER: I ask the Leader of the Opposition to relate his remarks to the motion.

Mr SMITH: Thank you, Mr Speaker. I was, and I will continue to do so.

The point the caller put to me, if the Treasurer will only listen, is that the only reason he became involved in extending credit to Hungerford Refrigeration was because of the backing of the Territory Insurance Office. It is because of those concerns, because of the feeling in the community that the Territory Insurance Office has let people down and has actually put businesses at risk in this community, that we have put this motion on urgency and want to proceed with it today. We want to proceed with it today because it is the best opportunity for ministers to clear the air. What they have done so far is run for cover. Not one of them has been game to make a statement outside this Assembly about what is happening. Since this whole matter broke on Friday, not once have we heard from any of them. The Chief Minister had not been briefed, the Treasurer did not know anything about it and the Minister for Industries and Development could not be found. We are providing the government with the opportunity to come clean and set up an independent inquiry so that the facts can be ascertained and people in the Northern Territory can be reassured that a similar thing will not occur again.

The reason for urgency is that the longer this matter remains unclarified, the more damage it will do to the standing of the Trade Development Zone, to the standing of the Territory Insurance Office and to the standing of the government itself. In order to minimise that damage and to try to change the perceptions in the community, it is imperative that we come to grips with how to confront the problems that have been revealed and that we do that by setting up the inquiry.

If we do not provide the opportunity today for a full debate on this matter and if, at the end of the day, we do not have an inquiry that allows everybody who so desires to make a contribution, we will have let the people of the Territory down and, unfortunately, we will have encouraged the view in the community that the Territory Insurance Office, the Trade Development Zone and the relevant government ministers have been less than diligent in this regard.

If members opposite spoke with people outside their own offices, they would soon recognise the need for urgency. That is a simple reason why they should support this motion for urgency so that the whole matter can be brought out into the open and clarified. If there is blame to be attributed, it can be attributed. If there are lessons to be learned, they can be learned and, equally importantly, we can restore credibility to the Territory Insurance Office and the Trade Development Zone.

Mr Coulter: So that you can tear it down again.

Mr SMITH: We will tear it down if there is reason to tear it down.

Mr Finch: What about those current creditors? What do you think about them? What about the current workers?

Mr SMITH: I am worried about those current creditors and workers.

Mr Finch: Why don't you give them half a break?

Mr SMITH: Do you want to have a go? Mr Speaker, obviously the Minister for Transport and Works is anxious to participate in this debate and that is a good sign.

As I said, I am addressing the question of why this matter needs to be considered urgently. The perceived security of people dealing with TIO as a

major backer of the company was shaken to its foundations on Friday night when the announcement was made that the company has been placed in receivership by the TIO itself. That security was shattered by the TIO's revelation that it had sunk a further \$650 000 into the company without making that information public. All they had was the chairman's bland assurances that the total exposure of \$1.4m represented only a small part of the TIO's investment portfolio. It is true that the \$1.4m is only a small part of the TIO's total investment portfolio, but the \$30 000 or \$40 000 which is currently owed to some local businesses is an enormous amount for some of the firms that have been dealing with this particular outfit. That is another very important reason why we should try to come to grips with the reasons why this company has gone bad and the reasons why this company was selected by the government in the first place. I cannot think of a more important reason than the need to attempt to reassure those ...

Mr COULTER: A point of order, Mr Speaker! I come back to the question of the relevance of the Leader of the Opposition's speech to the motion for urgency. I will allow the Leader of the Opposition to examine the position he is in at the moment. However, unless he can give a reason why we should grant urgency, then he should not proceed. I have already told the Leader of the Opposition, in question time today, that the TIO has assured me ...

Mr LEO: A point of order, Mr Speaker!

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The honourable member will resume his seat.

Mr COULTER: The TIO has assured me that it will look closely at those in hardship, particularly those who have consistently supported the company in the past.

Mr Leo: He is not speaking directly to his point of order. He is debating. Mr Speaker, control him!

Mr COULTER: I have already given an undertaking yet the Leader of the Opposition continues to debate the question. The TIO has already made that decision.

Mr Leo: This is the most biased chairmanship of any meeting I have seen.

Mr SPEAKER: There is no point of order.

Mr COULTER: Mr Speaker, the member for Nhulunbuy has reflected on the Chair by saying this is the most biased chairmanship that he has seen. I believe he should be asked to withdraw that immediately.

Mr SPEAKER: The member or Nhulunbuy will withdraw that remark.

Mr LEO: I withdraw, Mr Speaker.

Mr SMITH (Opposition Leader): Mr Speaker, it is always apparent when one touches a nerve in this Assembly. The members opposite go right off.

To summarise, we have a situation where the confidence that people have had in the Territory Insurance Office and the Trade Development Zone Authority, 2 of our major government instrumentalities, has been damaged by their involvement with Hungerford Refrigeration.

My second point, related to the first, is that an inquiry is urgently needed to reassure those people who have some liquidity problems associated with Hungerford Refrigeration that this government will not sweep things under the carpet, that this Assembly is prepared to recognise that something has gone seriously wrong and is prepared to carry out its responsibility to administer the Territory properly. We need to reassure those people that we have their interests at heart and we can do that by proceeding with this motion to establish an inquiry as a matter of urgency.

Mr Speaker, our reasons for seeking urgency are as simple as that. Other points will be raised during the course of the debate itself.

Mr COULTER (Leader of Government Business): Mr Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition has not argued his case particularly well. He has given no reason to convince members of this side of the House to support his motion for the suspension of standing orders. One relevant issue he did not raise was his commitment to sink Hungerford from day 1. As I said, it is to his shame that we have compiled a book containing details of what he has done to this company. I will refer to some of the events which have resulted in the present circumstances. Unfortunately, Mr Speaker ...

Mr LEO: A point of order, Mr Speaker! Whilst the Leader of the Opposition was speaking, you directed that he should confine his remarks to the substance of the motion. I would suggest, in the interests of this House, that the Leader of Government Business be similarly directed.

Mr SPEAKER: I ask the minister to confine his remarks to the motion.

Mr COULTER: Mr Speaker, to appoint an inquiry under the Inquiries Act would be a grave injustice to the role of the receiver who has been appointed. The Leader of the Opposition has spoken about putting creditors at risk, which is exactly what his motion would do. A receiver was appointed at 6 pm last Friday and I believe that he should be given the right to carry out his responsibilities. The TIO has acted properly in allowing that receiver to be called in to sort out the affairs of the company. To usurp the role of the receiver, which is what the Leader of the Opposition would have us do, would be a considerable slight on the receiver. The government will not support the opposition's motion. We will allow the proper processes to take their course, following the responsible decision of the Territory Insurance Office.

The Leader of the Opposition has produced no arguments which indicate that there is a need for urgency. The affairs of the company will be sorted out in the correct manner by the receiver. Are we going to bring out the sniffer dogs and mount an inquiry every time a company finds itself in financial difficulties, especially when the inquiry is sought by the Leader of the Opposition who is responsible for bringing the affairs of this company into the political sphere. He has done more than any individual in the Northern Territory to bring the company down. Its present state is a direct result of his actions and he stands condemned for that. The government will not support his motion. I move that the question be now put.

The Assembly divided:

Ayes 15

Noes 7

Mr Coulter
Mr Dale
Mr Dondas

Mr Bell
Mr Ede
Mr Lanhupuy

Mr Finch
Mr Firmin
Mr Hanrahan
Mr Harris
Mr Hatton
Mr McCarthy
Mr Manzie
Mr Palmer
Mr Perron
Mr Poole
Mr Reed
Mr Setter

Mr Leo
Mr Smith
Mr Tipiloura
Mr Tuxworth

Motion agreed to.

Mr SPEAKER: The question is that the motion be agreed to.

The Assembly divided:

Ayes 8

Noes 15

Mr Bell
Mr Ede
Mr Lanhupuy
Mr Leo
Mrs Padgham-Purich
Mr Smith
Mr Tipiloura
Mr Tuxworth

Mr Coulter
Mr Dale
Mr Dondas
Mr Finch-
Mr Firmin
Mr Hanrahan
Mr Harris
Mr Hatton
Mr McCarthy
Mr Manzie
Mr Palmer
Mr Perron
Mr Poole
Mr Reed
Mr Setter

Motion negatived

LEAVE TO MAKE STATEMENT

Mr SMITH (Opposition Leader): Mr Speaker, I seek leave to make a short statement concerning Hungerford Refrigeration.

Leave denied.

SUSPENSION OF STANDING ORDERS

Mr EDE (Stuart): Mr Speaker, I move that so much of standing orders be suspended as would allow the Leader of the Opposition to make a short statement in relation to Hungerford Refrigeration. I am moving for the suspension of standing orders because it is becoming patently obvious that members opposite are not prepared to discuss in open forum the problems that ...

Mr COULTER: Mr Speaker, I move that the motion be now put.

Mr EDE: I am on my feet. That is disgraceful!

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The question is that the motion be now put.

The Assembly divided:

Ayes 15

Mr Coulter
Mr Dale
Mr Dondas
Mr Finch
Mr Firmin
Mr Hanrahan
Mr Harris
Mr Hatton
Mr McCarthy
Mr Manzie
Mr Palmer
Mr Perron
Mr Poole
Mr Reed
Mr Setter

Noes 8

Mr Bell
Mr Ede
Mr Lanhupuy
Mr Leo
Mrs Padgham-Purich
Mr Smith
Mr Tipiloura
Mr Tuxworth

Motion agreed to.

Mr SPEAKER: The question is that the motion be agreed to.

The Assembly divided:

Ayes 8

Mr Bell
Mr Ede
Mr Lanhupuy
Mr Leo
Mrs Padgham-Purich
Mr Smith
Mr Tipiloura
Mr Tuxworth

Noes 15

Mr Coulter
Mr Dale
Mr Dondas
Mr Finch
Mr Firmin
Mr Hanrahan
Mr Harris
Mr Hatton
Mr McCarthy
Mr Manzie
Mr Palmer
Mr Perron
Mr Poole
Mr Reed
Mr Setter

Motion negatived.

STATEMENT

Discharge of Members from Service on Committees

Mr SPEAKER: Honourable members, I have received letters from certain members seeking their discharge from further attendance on committees as follows: Mr Poole from membership of the Publications Committee, the Public Accounts Committee, the Standing Orders Committee and the Subordinate Legislation and Tabled Papers Committee and the Sessional Committee on the Environment; Mr Harris from membership of the Public Accounts Committee; Mr Palmer from membership of the Select Committee on Constitutional

Development; and Mr Firmin from membership of the Sessional Committee on the New Parliament House.

MOTION

Resignations from and Appointments to Parliamentary Committees

Mr COULTER (Leader of Government Business) (by leave): Mr Speaker, I move that:

- (1) the member for Araluen be discharged from further attendance on the Publications Committee, the Public Accounts Committee, the Standing Orders Committee, the Subordinate Legislation and Tabled Papers Committee and the Environment Committee;
- (2) the member for Port Darwin be discharged from further attendance on the Public Accounts Committee;
- (3) the member for Karama be discharged from further attendance on the Select Committee on Constitutional Development;
- (4) that the member for Ludmilla be discharged from further attendance on the Sessional Committee on the New Parliament House; and
- (5) members to be appointed to those committees as follows: the Publications Committee - Mr Dondas; the Public Accounts Committee - Mr Setter and Mr Reed; the Standing Orders Committee - Mr Coulter; the Subordinate Legislation and Tabled Papers Committee - Mr Hanrahan; the Sessional Committee on the Environment - Mr Firmin; the Sessional Committee on the New Parliament House - Mr Finch; and the Select Committee on Constitutional Development - Mr Harris.

Motion agreed to.

DEPUTY CHAIRMAN OF COMMITTEES

Mr SPEAKER: Honourable members, I lay on the Table my warrant revoking the appointment of the member for Araluen, Mr Poole, as a Deputy Chairman of Committees and appointing the member for Flynn, Mr Hanrahan, to be a Deputy Chairman of committees.

MOTION

Disallowance of Education (School Councils) Regulations

Continued from 25 February 1988.

Mr HARRIS (Education): Mr Speaker, I rise to speak to this motion and indicate at the outset that the government does not support it. I am not being bloody-minded about this.

Mr Ede: You are.

Mr HARRIS: Goodness me. You do not listen, do you? Just listen to what I have to say.

Mr Speaker, I thought I had made it very clear to the community, and I am now making it clear to honourable members, that it is my intention to

undertake a full review in relation to the school council regulations issue. I think that I have made it very clear that that is the direction that the government is taking. There are many issues that have been raised in this Assembly that need to be looked at in more detail. The answer is not to disallow the regulations at this time. In my view, further disruption would cause more concern in the community. The regulations, as introduced, were well-intentioned and I wish that honourable members would acknowledge that.

I admit that there has been - and I have made it very clear - much dissatisfaction in respect of certain aspects of the regulations. Some issues were raised that I would rather forget but there have been some very good aspects of this whole exercise. Indeed, there has been more parent involvement and that is something that the government has been trying to achieve. We needed a framework within which the councils could function correctly. We have been moving towards devolving powers to school councils and, as I said, those matters need to be examined in more detail. The review has begun and it will be a thorough one. I will be responsible for it rather than the department. The department will be providing me with reports, one of which I have already received. I will be holding discussions with councils on a number of issues to find out exactly what their feelings are.

To bring members up to date on the current state of affairs, I will quote some figures from a report compiled by departmental officers. There are 57 school councils and 5 interim councils, giving a total of 62. Of those, 41 have protested against the changes to the regulations. I must say here that there has been a great deal of goodwill in relation to this exercise because many councils have made the effort to ensure that their composition complies with the regulations. There are 49 of those. 27 councils have amended their constitutions to comply with the new regulations. Others have checked their constitutions and found that changes have not been necessary. At present, although negotiations and changes are continuing, 8 school councils do not comply with the new regulations. Of those, 3 require only 1 extra parent to join in order to comply with the regulations. 2 councils were set up in protest and they need radical changes. I will be talking to the chairmen of those councils and the principals.

I believe we need a proper assessment of what has happened. The initial reaction was emotional and related to the way in which the government had gone about this exercise. It has been acknowledged that there was a lack of consultation and poor timing. It was also acknowledged that there was perceived discrimination in relation to teachers and parents. I must stress that the regulations were well-intentioned. It also needs to be made clear that a number of councils had reason to complain, particularly small councils. For example, the Ludmilla Special School has a low number of parents. That situation has to be addressed by the government. I think Yirrkala wanted 32 members on its council. Such issues need to be examined in depth.

In the review, I will be talking to the chairmen of the various councils, particularly those who have not complied, because I want to ascertain the reasons for their concern. As I said, the timing and the way it was done created terrible problems but what we were trying to do was to obtain more parent involvement in school councils. I do not think that that was really questioned by a number of councils.

Mr Speaker, there does not appear to be any hardship at present. If honourable members are aware of any, they should let me know and I will ensure that we examine it very quickly.

Mr Ede: We have.

Mr HARRIS: You let me know where there is hardship.

Mr Ede: We have done that.

Mr HARRIS: We have gone through a very difficult process and no hardship is being experienced at the moment. I said that I will look at the issues responsibly. At this time, it would not be sensible to disallow the regulations because it would cause further disruption.

Mr Ede: What is your time frame?

Mr Bell: It is the same as the dry areas legislation.

Mr HARRIS: No, it is not the same as the dry areas legislation.

Mr Bell: I hope it will not take that long.

Mr HARRIS: Some of us take the matter seriously, member for MacDonnell.

Mr Smith: Some of us take it slowly.

Mr HARRIS: If we go too quickly, you go off your heads and, if we go too slowly, you go off your heads. This side of the Assembly wants to ensure that the decisions that we make are responsible and reflect the wishes of the people in the schools and in the community. I have indicated that the review will be carried out. It has already started. I have to talk to the people concerned. I will be going to Alice Springs as soon as these sittings are completed to talk with people there and I will be visiting a number of schools in relation to this issue.

The government's aim is to ensure that there is parent participation on school councils. It has been a question of how to go about it. I do not think anyone is questioning the involvement of parents in relation to councils. We want to ensure that it is done in a proper fashion. A review will be undertaken and I will ensure that it is carried out in a responsible manner.

Mr SMITH (Opposition Leader): Mr Speaker, the minister has indicated that he can make figures prove anything. If I understand the figures correctly, there are 57 functioning school councils in the Northern Territory and apparently 49 of them comply with the new regulations. But, of course, that does not answer the key question. The key figure that we would like to have is how many of the 49 have constitutions that comply with the new regulations. Certainly, it was the intent of the new regulations that the constitutions of school councils be changed to bring them into line with the regulations. The best guess that we can make is that at least 27 of the school councils have amended their constitutions to bring them into line with the new regulations.

Mr Harris: That is what I said.

Mr SMITH: Right. If that is the figure, I would have to say that the government has been involved in one of its major disasters because, 3 months down the track, less than half the school councils in the Northern Territory have taken on board the new government regulations and changed their school constitutions to make them comply.

Mr Coulter: Some did not require change.

Mr SMITH: Either I am to believe the Minister for Education or I am to believe the Treasurer on this particular matter. If a statement is made by the Minister for Education that 27 school councils have amended their constitutions to bring them into line with the new school council regulations, quite clearly, that is less than half of 62 and even less than half of 57. That is a spectacular failure rate on the part of the Northern Territory government. It indicates the level of hostility that there has been in the community to the school council regulations. Of course, there are a number of reasons for that. There are the regulations themselves but the manner in which the government went about changing the regulations is equally important.

The key element is that the previous, unlamented Minister for Education introduced these regulations by stealth. Not only did he introduce them by stealth and without consultation, he then made them retrospective. He instantly created a situation whereby almost all the school councils in the Northern Territory were unconstitutional for a time because of the retrospective nature of the new regulations. School councils were quite legitimately upset and angry.

One of the good things that this government has done in the last 2 or 3 years is that it has built a very strong sense of school community in schools. There is no longer a concept of teachers being on a different side of the school fence from parents. They are now all on the same side because they all know they have a common enemy and that enemy is this government. This government is the enemy because it refuses to listen to what is occurring in school councils. It does not take any notice. It talks about devolution of powers and responsibilities on the one hand and, on the other hand, in a very basic area - the determination of the membership of a school council - it takes away the powers that school councils previously had.

No wonder school communities have become a very important and vocal part of political life in the Northern Territory. We will continue to see evidence of that in the months ahead. In my view, it is a positive step for school councils to involve themselves in the wider political debate in relation to education issues, and one which can only assist the development of education in the Northern Territory. It is a pity that that involvement had to come about because of the hostility generated by the way the government has treated school communities over the past few months. Those of us with memories will recall that the hostility began prior to the matter of the new regulations, with the 'Towards the 90s' debacle and individual school problems, all of which have brought school communities closer together.

The opposition moved this motion at the last sittings when there were significant problems with the new regulations. These problems affected a large number of school communities and, even now, when some of those regulations have been changed, we still have situation where less than half the school councils in the Northern Territory have felt it necessary to change their constitutions to bring them into line with the new regulations. Less than half, Mr Speaker! Although the government has made some concessions in terms of stating that the regulations do not apply to part-time personnel and that MLAs can be coopted without the minister's approval, school councils feel that these are insufficient. For evidence of that, one needs look no further than school council meetings held during the past month or so. Parap Primary School determined by a majority of 38 to 2 not to change its constitution and, at the Casuarina Secondary College, the vote was 54 to 13. Those were comprehensive defeats for the government proposition that councils should

change their constitutions to restrict the rights of people who happen to be teachers or employed by the Department of Education. That proposition was a government attempt to turn into second-class citizens parents who happen to be teachers or full-time employees of the department. That is the nub of the debate: the concern and dissension in the community.

No one in the school communities I have spoken with disputes the need for a proper balance between teachers and parents on school councils. Nobody has argued with the proposition that teachers should be limited to one-third of the membership of councils whilst parents comprise two-thirds. People are upset, however, with moves to make certain people second-class citizens with decreased opportunities to join school councils simply because of their employment. That is an inequitable proposition for any government to advance, let alone a government which supposedly operates within the democratic system in Australia. That is the problem, Mr Speaker. That is why school communities have kicked up such a fuss and that is why the government has received a black eye so massive that, 3 months after it introduced the regulations, fewer than half the total number of school councils have changed their constitutions to comply with the regulations.

This issue will not go away and the minister must come to grips with it. I am pleased to note that he is undertaking a major review of the regulations as they stand and that, at least, is positive. It is, however, disappointing that, having announced that decision nearly a month ago, the minister is still unable to report to this parliament in a meaningful way on the progress of his review and is still unable to provide parliament and school communities in the Northern Territory with the timetable that he intends to follow in examining the issues involved. Surely that should not be too difficult. The government was quick to provide school councils with a timetable as to how quickly they had to change their constitutions. Initially, it was the previous week. Later, it became the end of March and then it was extended once more. It should not be too difficult for the minister to show some commitment by telling the community when he intends to come to the end of his considerations on this particular matter. He should be particularly cognisant of the fact that less than half the total number of school councils have come into line with the new regulations.

This motion was presented by the opposition in the last sittings in response to considerable community concern and alarm about the content of the new regulations. Nothing has changed in respect of that community concern. It has, in fact, become more widespread. The schools which have voted most recently have voted most strongly against the new regulations. We now have a situation where 8 schools have councils which do not meet the new requirements. On the minister's own figures, we have at least another 19 councils which comply in terms of their membership but certainly do not comply in terms of their constitutions. That has been a really easy out for the government, hasn't it? The government is proud to boast that 49 of them comply with the new regulations when we all know that no more than 27 have changed their constitutions.

This government has a real problem with these particular regulations and the sensible thing that it could and should do on this particular matter is to accept the motion that is before us because the effect of that motion would be a return to the pre-February 1988 composition of school councils. The majority of school councils are still saying, 3 months later, that they are happy with those previous regulations. It would enable us to have a look at the issues involved, as the minister is doing, and to come back with a new set of regulations that might encompass any of the concerns that the minister and

the school councils have. What we are proposing is, in fact, the sensible, sane and the simple way out of this mess that the Northern Territory government has got itself into. I must say, though, that I sometimes wonder why we bother to point out the simple means of resolving the messes that the government gets itself into.

Certainly, this is the simplest way to do it. If the regulations are repealed, the minister will be able to undertake his consultations without the thorn that presently exists in the sides of many school councils. The minister could explain that he has removed that thorn, that everything is out in the open and above board and invite school councils to discuss the matter calmly and rationally. If the minister does not follow that course of action, he will be met by a wall of frustration and resistance at the efforts of this government to override the legitimate concerns and interests of school communities.

I call on the new minister, the recycled minister, to take a positive step that will gain him enormous goodwill amongst the school councils and that step is to support this motion which will mean that the regulations will be withdrawn. In the positive climate that will be developed by that action, he will be able to talk to school councils about his concerns and their concerns about the operation of the school council regulations. If he does that, I am sure he will be surprised and gratified by the response.

Mr COLLINS (Sadadeen): Mr Speaker, I welcome the minister's announcement that he will review the regulations, particularly those that were forced on the school councils at the start of this year. He said that the regulations were well-intentioned. Unfortunately, the reason for the regulations was never explained to the public. People had to try to read between the lines. It was only on the very last day of the last sittings of this Assembly that the real reason emerged when the Chief Minister explained that, in Tennant Creek or Elliott, members of the Teachers Federation had told him that they would stack the school councils and take them over. As a result, the new regulations were forced on the school councils.

I believe it was a gross overreaction to a threat which would have been very difficult to implement. Apart from the 3 elected staff representatives, who are endorsed by the school council, and the principal, everybody else on a school council has to be a parent of a student at the school. It would be extremely difficult for the threat made by the Teachers Federation to be carried out. As I said at the last sittings, when teachers are elected to school councils as parents, the majority of them change their attitude. They move away from the cares and concerns as producers of the service and become concerned as consumers of the service. There may be exceptions but in my experience, the vast majority of teachers on school councils have the best interests of the children at heart.

The regulations may have been well-intentioned as a means of overcoming the problem. However, the government could have indicated that the threat had been made and trusted that the good judgment and common sense of the parents would not allow the producers of the service to dominate the councils. The parents representing the children are the ones who must dominate the school councils. The Leader of the Opposition has said that he has no problem with one-third teacher and two-third parent representation. Unless the parents really take an active role in the school councils, even with a 2 to 1 majority dominance could fall back largely to the producers of the service.

If the new minister intends to introduce new regulations, I urge him not to ram them down people's throats. Consideration and discussion should be given to the idea that the chairman of a school council should be someone who is not involved with the Department of Education. That may not be always possible, but it would be one way of ensuring that a person who is not part of the Department of Education would be very much involved with the school council and would represent the consumers. Naturally, the principal plays a very large role on the school council. He has a big influence and, if the chairman also happens to be employed by the department, they tend to get into the same rut and the same line of thinking. It is very important that the chairman of the school council have a different perspective. He has the key role of ensuring that the council is very keen, that the consumers of the service have full representation in relation to matters raised in the council and that these do not become matters of politics but matters relating to the well-being of the children in the school. I ask the minister to consider that. I am not asking him to ram the idea through but to discuss it with the school councils. I think it is an important matter.

The way in which the amendment of the regulations was handled was very poor indeed. It flew right in the face of the government devolution plan, which I strongly support. For example, it was reported in the media that, if a school council would not adopt its constitution to fit in with the new regulations, the government threatened that the school council would be scrubbed and the department would run the show. Of course, that is the reverse of devolution; it really is. I know the new minister can appreciate that.

Of course, there are those in the school community who do not want devolution because they are frightened of it. They are frightened that teachers might be under contract and the school council might have enough power to make the teachers shape up or dispense with their services. If the government had handled the threat from the Teachers Federation by laughing it off and trusting the wisdom and maturity of the community, this situation could have been circumvented. The councils should have been warned that a threat had been made and the matter left at that. The government could have sought peoples' ideas and initiated dialogue and it would have won points on the matter. Unfortunately, it has lost a host of points. I recall a masterstroke by the present Minister for Education when he held that portfolio previously: he decided not to allow payment of union dues by deduction from salary payments and a host of teachers did not renew their membership.

Mr Ede: They are now.

Mr COLLINS: Indeed they are, but that was their free choice. As one teacher put it to me, they were sick of belonging to a federation which was sending people away on lesbian conferences on education and so on, but they did not quite have the courage to pull out. However, when the honourable minister gave them the opportunity by saying members would have to sign a new form and pay their own dues to the federation, they left it in droves. That was their own free choice, as any the membership of any union should be. Unfortunately, the new regulations have whipped up a storm and caused a host of teachers to rejoin. That is their free choice also and I do not deny them that right but it indicates that the government has lost a host of brownie points over an issue that it should have won. It was handled badly.

I hope that the minister will complete this review very quickly and go back to the people, the school councils, COGSO and other such bodies and get a dialogue going again. There are numerous regulations governing school

councils but they have all been discussed over a long period and have been seen to be valuable. They have been agreed upon and there are no problems. I urge the minister to consult with the councils and sort the matter out because, at the moment, the government is doing tremendous harm and is setting back the achievement of the policy of devolution.

On the subject of devolution, I am concerned that it will not only be a matter of councils having the courage to take it step by step, but there may also be a problem with the government, in this case the Department of Education. The challenge is whether the department has the maturity to hand over the power to the school councils. Will departmental officers let the school councils make some mistakes, which will invariably happen, and not be there waiting to take over the controls the first time that a council appears to be faltering? Maturity will be required of school councils. A tremendous amount of work and dedication will need to come from the community but, by the same token, the Department of Education and the government will require the courage to hand over the powers if devolution is to work in any shape or form.

I welcome the minister's promised review. I urge him to act quickly on it. It should not really take very long at all for him to put things in motion and reveal the real reasons why the regulations were introduced in the first place so that dialogue can occur between school councils, COGSO, parents and teachers and the matter can be resolved in a sane and sensible manner to the satisfaction of the people and for the good government of the Territory.

Mr BELL (MacDonnell): Mr Speaker, this really is one of the most bizarre debates that I have ever listened to in this Assembly. Not the least reason for my judgment in that regard is the total lack of contribution from government members. Let us just go around the House. Perhaps the member for Palmerston has a couple of school councils in his electorate. Let us look at the backbenches. I dare say the Chief Minister has a couple in his electorate and then there is the half-w ...

Mr SPEAKER: Order!

Mr BELL: I withdraw unreservedly, Mr Speaker. I dare say the member for Ludmilla has a couple of school councils in his electorate. He has even walked out. There is a total inability of government members to contribute to a most serious debate in relation to the constitution of school councils, a debate that is likely to have the most far-reaching impact on the quality of education that Territory kids are able to receive. That would be bad enough in itself, but another aspect of this debate is quite bizarre.

I took the opportunity during the luncheon recess to re-read the comments made by the Deputy Leader of the Opposition in support of his motion. He certainly gave a cogent argument in favour of disallowing the changed regulations. Mr Speaker, you will recall that, after that particularly cogent speech from the shadow minister for education, we heard from the temporary Minister for Education. He is not even in the Chamber at present. He has been relaxing on the backbench being utterly selfish, as he himself confessed. However, when he was still the minister, instead of contributing in a sensible way to the cogent arguments put forward by my colleague, he decided that he would adjourn the debate because he thought he would still be the Minister for Education when the House assembled again. It just shows how wrong you can be, doesn't it? His attitude gave an indication of this government's totally bizarre approach to one of the most serious issues that has confronted us in the field of education for some time. There are others, such as the Darwin International Grammar School, the public funding of private schools and

tertiary education. I look forward to debating those subjects as well as the school council regulations.

Mr Finch: What about the Wran Report?

Mr BELL: It is interesting to hear the member for Leanyer interjecting. I recall that the council of the Leanyer Primary School was particularly concerned about the outrageous paternalism - that is exactly what it is - of this government. The member for Leanyer is prepared to ignore entirely the representations made by a school council in his electorate. That is rather surprising, Mr Speaker.

Whilst I am on the subject of MLAs and school councils, I must say that it should be relatively easy for government members to garner views from school councils where their electorates contain only 1 or 2 such councils. I would point out that members such as myself and the shadow minister for education have electorates which contain many school councils to which the new regulations would apply. In my electorate in particular, a number of school councils would not function if it were not for the hard work of teachers. I do not refer solely to Aboriginal communities. For the benefit of the Minister for Education, the school council at Yulara operates as much because of the input from teaching staff as it does from parental input. I have had the chance to experience that. The total distrust that this government evinces towards teachers is something that I find quite surprising. That I am surprised by it is bad enough but, more importantly, it actively militates against quality education in Territory schools and that is why I condemn the government.

Having dispensed with the former minister, who is now appropriately banished to the outer darkness, let me return to the present Minister for Education. At least he had the good grace to appear somewhat shamefaced about what has occurred. He bumbled on about carrying out a review and so forth - climb down, climb down, climb down. If he wants to pursue that line, he should climb down far enough to say that the opposition has it right and that people in the school communities have it right and that the regulations should be disallowed. Just as a point of public administration, I point out for the benefit of the Minister for Education that, if he is carrying out a review, he is obliged to let the status quo remain. The status quo is the regulations that applied before 1 February this year.

Members interjecting.

Mr BELL: Unless the Minister for Industries and Development has been privatising school councils and awarding parents of children at Anzac Hill High School shares in the local school council, I can quite honestly say that I have no direct or indirect financial interest in this matter. I will say, however, that I have a deep personal stake as you have, Mr Speaker, and, I dare say, as other member of this Assembly has. I have 2 kids, 1 at a primary school and 1 at a secondary school, and I am deeply concerned about the quality of education that is provided for them. I am deeply concerned about the attacks on school councils, about the attacks on the teaching service and the attacks generally on public education by members opposite.

Mr Perron: What school do they go to?

Mr BELL: To answer the interjection from the member for Fannie Bay, I do have a deep personal interest and I will do whatever I can to ensure that not only my own kids, but other kids receive a decent education. If the member

for Fannie Bay wants more evidence of that, let me tell him that I am prepared to put my money where my mouth is.

Mr Perron: Is that why they are in private schools?

Mr BELL: Mr Speaker, the point is that, in terms of appropriate public administration, the status quo should prevail. Let us look at the legislation for a minute. What the member for Sadadeen so correctly referred to as 'a gross overreaction on the part of the government' is indicated by the already existing powers the minister has. Under section 71K of the school councils part of the Education Act, the minister already has the power to intervene in a council he does not believe is working appropriately. I have no clear recollection about where the comment came from. I do not believe it came from the Teachers Federation. If it resulted from the actions of a group of teachers, it was, as the member for Sadadeen has so correctly suggested, a gross overreaction. The power is already there if the minister has real concerns in respect of a school council. The fact is that school councils are battling to make this relatively new legislation work and that is why the Minister for Education has a responsibility to maintain the status quo.

This government is running around like a chicken with its head cut off: one week it is threatening to knock off school councils and, the next week, it intends to kick in millions of dollars to an international grammar school. It really has no clear, rational idea of where schools are going in the Northern Territory. It is very fortunate to have teachers working in the Territory who are able to provide a bit of leadership and direction in that regard.

Mr Coulter: Tell us about the constitution of Melbourne Grammar.

Mr BELL: I will pick that interjection up, Mr Speaker, and say that, when the government brings on a debate about the Darwin International Grammar School, I will be more than happy to talk about Melbourne Grammar School and my children's education both in the Territory and at Melbourne Grammar School or wherever. However, it is not germane to the school councils debate. I appreciate the intellectual problems that the new Leader of Government Business has in getting on top of his job but he should at least ensure that his interjections are relevant to the debate.

One of the problems is with subsections 71(3) and 71(4) of the Education Act. Those 2 subsections prescribe the membership and the terms and conditions of members of school councils. Since this issue has occasioned such great public debate - and I presume that even government members who believe that the amendments to school councils along this line are acceptable will hear me out and agree with me in this regard - it is the parliament that should be deciding what happens. This debate has come about in the Assembly because, inappropriately, this major public policy issue was dealt with by way of delegated legislation.

I refer members to a paper which was recently circulated. It emanated from the Department of the Senate. It is the first in a series of papers on parliament and it is written by Mr Peter O'Keefe. It is called 'Spoilt for a H'P'Worth of Tar: How Bureaucratic Law-making Can Undermine the Ideals of Civil Liberty'. I recommend it to honourable members who are interested in the parliamentary issues involved in this matter. There is a problem with delegated legislation. Mr Speaker, as you will appreciate with your infinite understanding of parliamentary tradition, a tension developed with the introduction of delegated legislation. You will appreciate that, prior to the industrial revolution and the Great Reform Act of 1832 in the mother of

parliaments, delegated legislation was by no means the tool of government which it became in the wake of the industrial revolution, when the powers of government were increasingly applied to solve a whole range of social, economic and welfare difficulties that confronted the increasingly urbanised social environment of Great Britain at the time.

However, a tension developed. Parliaments have quite rightly been distrustful of the delegation of legislative powers because it takes a decision-making power away from the parliament. All honourable members, particularly those who have worked on the Subordinate Legislation and Tabled Papers Committee, will appreciate that significant issues arise because of this delegation and, clearly, we are dealing with one in this instance. It is true, of course, that everything cannot be decided by the parliament. There is a need to delegate. Honourable members do not always have the time to wade through the abstruse technicalities that occasionally arise in delegated legislation.

I quote from page 4 of Peter O'Keefe's paper: 'The whole question of delegated law-making sits uneasily within the parameters of parliamentary government'. I suggest that this is exactly one of those issues where delegated law-making not only 'sits uneasily', but has been inappropriately delegated. What I would suggest to the Minister for Education is that his review should consider subsections 71(3) and (4) and that it should determine that the composition of school councils should not be prescribed by regulation only. Obviously, if that issue stimulates the level of debate which is occurring in this House today, it should most appropriately be a matter determined by this Assembly rather than some administrator or bureaucrat. The amendments to the regulations have come about through a quite extraordinary process and have been, as my colleague the member for Sadadeen has suggested, a gross overreaction.

My final point relates to Ludmilla Special School. I do not pretend to be acquainted with that school. I suggest the member for Ludmilla might like to contribute; there is still time for him to do so. I would suggest, however, that the situation at Ludmilla Special School is not unique and that there are a large number of school councils, particularly in the bush and particularly where many of the parents have not completed secondary education themselves, which are very dependent on the input of teachers who work in and devote considerable time to those school communities.

I urge the honourable minister to disallow these regulations and to carry out his review de novo to allow the status quo to remain, as it existed at 31 January.

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH (Koolpinyah): Mr Deputy Speaker, in speaking in this debate today regarding the introduction of the school council regulations, I have to say at the outset that it is a long time since I have seen so much antagonism in the community to the introduction of regulations. I believe that the implementation of these regulations was bungled completely. It was handled in a most cack-handed way and there is still considerable bad feeling in the community in consequence.

Mr Hatton: What kind of way?

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH: Cack-handed.

Mr Deputy Speaker, the current Minister for Education said that the regulations, as introduced, were well-intentioned. Knowing the honourable

minister quite well, I believe he intends to do the right thing. However, when the previous minister introduced these regulations, it was like using a D9 to kill a green ant. It will kill the green ant but it is a bit of an overkill. If these school regulations were introduced to correct a certain problem, it was an unnecessary overkill.

These regulations were suggested in haste and implemented in haste, but we are repenting them at our leisure. If the honourable minister wanted to encourage more parent involvement and more active parent involvement in school councils, I can understand that perhaps he felt that something could be done about it. However, if the parents themselves do not wish to have an active involvement and if they wish to have more teachers on a school council than the regulations allow, I believe that is their prerogative.

One school in the rural area, at whose AGM I contributed to some of the debate, elected 1 more teacher than it was supposed to have. It was fully discussed by those present and the view was adopted that that was what they wanted and they would wear any consequences. They also said that, as there was a new Minister for Education, they were quite happy to discuss the situation with him, but they could not see why they had to change because that was what the parents wanted. The AGM was very well attended. One other school did conform to the new regulations but only because it feared retribution of a financial kind. Whether that was justified or not, I cannot say. I think many schools may have also considered that, if they did not knuckle down and do as they were told, even though it was against their own wishes, they might suffer financial retribution. I am very critical of that, if that was the intention of this legislation.

There are still remnants of confusion in the school communities and this is coupled with considerable hostility. The Treasurer tried to alleviate the situation somewhat when he was Acting Minister for Education after the previous Minister for Education left the scene for a short time before he resigned. The Treasurer removed the necessity for MLAs to be vetted by the Minister for Education if they wished to sit on a council and made other amendments. He also had sense enough to see that the principal had to be on the school council if the school council was to be run properly. The new regulations stipulated that a principal could be on a school council for 2 terms only, and that was absolutely ridiculous in anybody's view.

Both myself and school communities agreed with those decisions made by the Treasurer when he was the Acting Minister for Education. However, they caused a great disarray of thinking on the matter. There was also antagonism in the school community in the rural area to the idea of being under the continuous surveillance of the Department of Education through the presence of a representative of the departmental secretary at school council meetings. If the minister or the Secretary of the Department of Education cannot trust school councils, things are in a bad way.

I know that the current Minister for Education is reasonable and I know that he will listen to the school communities. I know that he is not a little despot. Considerable time will be taken up with the consultative process and in trying to convince aberrant school councils to return to the fold. I believe much less time would be needed and more political advantage would accrue to the minister if the slate were wiped clean, if the regulations introduced a couple of months ago were wiped away and we started again with new council regulations at a later date if necessary. At the moment, it would be better if we reinstated the regulations everybody was happy with. To be perfectly honest, I did not hear any views expressed by school councils at the

beginning of the year that those should be changed. I believe that school councils in my electorate probably hold views similar to those held by other school councils throughout the Territory. I therefore question why the government introduced changes to the regulations when the people did not want them. All it did was cause antagonism in the community. The school councils were running quite smoothly until the changes were introduced.

I hope the Minister for Education can sort the situation out but he will waste a considerable amount of his time doing it and much of the time of the Secretary of the Department of Education. I believe that it would be much better all round if the slate were wiped completely clean and we went back to the status quo of the regulations as they were at the beginning of the year.

Mr TUXWORTH (Barkly): Mr Speaker, I want to support the contention of earlier speakers that the smart thing to do would be to get rid of the new regulations and start from laws. The new regulations are based on a false premise. The real reason behind them did not emerge until the last 5 minutes of the debate during the last sittings when the Chief Minister said that the government had to act because the Teachers Federation had threatened to take over school councils and give it a hard time. That is the false premise to which I refer and I would like to dwell on it for a moment because, quite often, we become afraid of things that we do not understand and are inclined to punch at shadows.

I would have thought that the government would be above worrying overly about the power of the Northern Territory Teachers Federation. To start with, the federation is made up of less than one third of working teachers in the Northern Territory. The reason for that is because most teachers are so solid and reasonable that they will not join the organisation. To say that the Teachers Federation has the ability to take over school councils in the Northern Territory is really drawing a long bow. Most teachers would not be interested in being involved in that sort of activity and, even if a few members of the Teachers Federation did take over a school council or two and made life difficult for the government, something good might come of it. If they made a mess of it, they would be quite swiftly removed at the next school council election.

I am reminded of a story which I heard years ago after I was first elected. I was told how a leading member of the Northern Territory Administration in the days when the Commonwealth was in control summoned all the heads of the churches into his office in Darwin. He said: 'We are most concerned about some activities in the missions and settlements. We have reason to believe that there is communist infiltration into Aboriginal communities and that there will be big trouble. We are most alarmed and concerned about what to do. I have called you together as representatives of the churches operating in Arnhem Land and at places like Daly River in order to obtain your views'. After the departmental officer had spoken, people around the table gave their views. To a man, they were astounded that such a terrible thing could occur in the Northern Territory and that communists might be infiltrating the settlements and causing trouble for the churches or the government. Eventually, it was the turn of Bishop O'Loughlin who was sitting in the corner smoking on his pipe. He was asked what he thought. He said: 'I think it is very interesting and that we should let them come. My church has been working with Aboriginals for nearly 100 years and we have had a certain measure of success in motivating Aboriginals but, if the communists can do all the things that you say they can, I think we should let them come because I would like to see how they are going to do those things'.

Another interesting situation occurred at the time when the Department of Health was handed over to the Territory government. There was a big push to maintain an independent Aboriginal health service at Papunya. Some members might remember that. There was a big fuss about it at the time.

Mr Ede: My understanding of the facts might be a little different to yours.

Mr TUXWORTH: Mr Speaker, I do not know what the member for Stuart's recollection of the facts is, but if he listens for a minute he might hear part of the story which he has never heard before.

There was enormous pressure on the Northern Territory to ensure that Papunya was made part of the Northern Territory health service. It was argued that it would be quite impractical to have an independent health service operating out at Papunya when all other health services were under the Territory government banner. I sat down with Dr Gurd and we agreed that it might not be such a bad thing to allow an independent health service to flourish at Papunya. Perhaps it would do exciting things that we could learn from in terms of delivering health care to Aboriginal people. The service at Papunya turned out to be the greatest shambles imaginable. Morbidity levels and infant mortality rates rose whilst the level of hygiene in the community sank to depths that no one had ever thought possible. All this occurred under an independent health service. In the end, we received a call one afternoon from the Papunya Council asking us to come out. The council had just sacked the doctor and all the nurses and wanted to talk to us. Members of the council had been to Yuendumu and Warrabri and decided that they were getting the rough end of the pineapple at Papunya with the independent health service. They wanted a health service like all the others in the Northern Territory. As I recall it, Dr Deveneson went to Papunya with us and stayed on to begin to put in place a framework for the new health service.

Mr Ede: He was the last doctor they ever saw.

Mr TUXWORTH: It may be that matters were improved so much that there was never a need for a doctor to go back.

My point is that the prospect of the Teachers Federation taking over the school councils of the Northern Territory is nothing to be afraid of. I would like to see how it might go about it. If it can motivate the parents, students and teachers in the community to become involved and really give the school councils a zip along, then perhaps we ought to give it a fly.

The most important aspect of the whole matter is that school councils be onside with the government because, if that is not the case, the job of delivering education services becomes almost impossible. At present, it is fair to say that just about every school council is offside with the government and there are a few which are absolutely aggro. The losers are not the parents and the teachers, or you and I, Mr Speaker. The losers are the children. The only way I can see to get back on an even keel is to wipe the slate clean. The government should say that it has an objective of devolving authority to school councils, that it wants to achieve that in an orderly way and that, in the next 12 months, it will sit down and negotiate on how that might be achieved in the various school communities.

I want to point out to the Minister for Education, because he did hold the portfolio when I said it before, that there are many schools which do not have school councils because the makeup of the community is such that people are

not available to form those councils and do good things for the school and its students. That is a great pity. It is not the minister's fault and it is not anyone else's fault. It is just part of the process of developing some communities. I have mentioned communities like Elliott, Warrabri, some of the Aboriginal communities, Borrooloola and Robinson River. This sort of regulation is particularly inappropriate for schools in those places. It is impractical and simply does not work. It makes a nonsense of the whole business of attracting parental involvement. I would ask the minister, when he comes down through the central region, to visit places on the Queensland border and some of the cattle stations that are run by Aboriginal families and have a good hard look at how the regulations relating to school councils apply there.

It is an absolute nonsense and a joke for us to put this sort of regulation through the parliament and pretend it is good for schools and for children. It merely lowers the standing of this House in the eyes of the community. We have to do practical things to help people instead of inventing rules because the government thinks that some school councils might be taken over by the Teachers Federation. I urge the minister not to be shy but to be brave and to throw out the new regulations and start again. The minister has the capacity to negotiate with people involved in the administration of education and with parents. Now is the time for him to start doing that.

Mr EDE (Stuart): Mr Speaker, I would like to thank those honourable members who have participated in this debate. All honourable members know that the issue has caused a major reaction. There has been considerable community debate and I cannot recall any issue since the casino wrangle a few years ago leading to so many letters to the newspapers from people of all walks of life and so many calls to talkback radio programs. Large numbers of people have been involved in stating their points of view and attempting to get the government to listen and understand.

The minister admitted that small schools would have substantial problems in operating under the new regulations. He acknowledged that there was a significant level of community concern about the regulations and stated that this worried him. He said that he would very much like to hear from anybody who had particular concerns or problems and then, for some strange reason, went on to say that he would leave the regulations in place.

If he had taken the trouble to reread my initial speech, he would have seen that there are problems. I am getting very tired of fixing up his mistakes and the mistakes of the various ministers, acting ministers and walkabout ministers that we have had in charge of education over the last 6 months. Because he was on the backbench at the time, he may have paid no attention to what I was saying. Perhaps the only ones to take some notice were the other 2 ministers who have been looking after the portfolio since we last debated this issue.

For the sake of the current minister, I will spell out the problems again. The first major problem is that the legality of school councils is in doubt. For some of the school councils, it is not even in doubt; it is quite clear that they are unlawful. These no longer have legal standing as incorporated bodies because they indicated that they would not amend their constitutions to fit in with the new regulations. They are unlawful and unlawful bodies are not able to enter into lawful contracts. Thus, for months now, we have had such councils going about their normal business, entering into contracts, employing staff, buying goods and services etc. Those councils are not legally constituted and those contracts are unlawful. They are not binding. The government has to rectify that problem.

At the last sittings, we told government members that there were problems. All the government wanted to do was to gag the debate and run away. It ran away and hid, Mr Speaker. It installed a stopgap minister for a couple of months. It got the previous minister to resign. It found itself a new minister, but it still has not rectified the problem. The government must disallow these regulations. It must get together with the government lawyers and the school councils and arrive at a solution because the longer the problem is allowed to continue, the bigger it will become.

The Leader of the Opposition referred to the figures and pointed out that, in spite of the government's attempt to say that only 8 school councils were not complying, that is only a small aspect of what is happening. It is not a matter of whether schools coincidentally happen to have elected a school council which happens to fit in with the regulations, it is a matter of whether they actually have a constitution which conforms to the regulations. That is the point that establishes whether they are lawful or unlawful. The Leader of the Opposition made the point that, depending on how the minister uses his figures, between 30 and 35 school councils fit into that category. That is the size of the problem and, as we have said, it is continuing.

The member for Sadadeen made a valid point when he spoke of the problem with lack of maturity in relation to the devolution of powers. The government is saying that the school councils have the power of self-determination and their hands are on the wheel, but departmental officers are looking over their shoulders and maintaining remote control.

I thought the member for MacDonnell was quite correct in paying tribute to teachers throughout the Territory who put in an enormous amount of work to ensure that school councils operate effectively, efficiently and well. As he said, and as the member for Barkly said after him, the government must now return to the status quo because, apart from the problem of the legal status of councils, the status quo is the only position from which it will be able to enter into meaningful negotiations with school councils, the federation, teachers and members of the public. As long as the honourable minister continues to show that he is so pig-headed and bull-arrogant that he will not disallow these regulations ...

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The honourable member will withdraw that reference to the honourable minister.

Mr EDE: Both references?

Mr SPEAKER: Yes.

Mr EDE: Mr Speaker, I withdraw both references.

Mr Speaker, the honourable minister's arrogance in refusing to rescind these new regulations so that negotiation can start from the status quo will ensure that people will not believe in the negotiation process. They will not believe that he will take their problems on board as long as he maintains the untenable position which they have already rejected.

Mr Speaker, the member for Koolpinyah has said that there is too much surveillance, and I agree with that. The member for Barkly seemed to advocate an alternative to privatisation: the handing over of a number of school councils to the Northern Territory Teachers Federation. In fact, not even the Northern Territory Teachers Federation has gone that far but, given the way

the government is handling education and the issue of the school councils, a number of school councils may feel that the Teachers Federation is a far more worthy alternative. The work that has been done by the Teachers Federation on this matter has clarified a number of the issues in people's minds. That is part of its function and I am quite happy to have seen it do that.

The comment was made earlier by the Chief Minister, as mentioned by the member for Sadadeen, that the whole point of these regulations was to prevent the Teachers Federation taking over school councils. In the hurly-burly of throwing political points backwards and forwards, in the mad rush that his government has made to get at the throat of the union by not obeying the ILO Convention in relation to deduction of union dues from wages, it forgets that the union is there to try to obtain conditions of service for its members. That might offer some some chance of redressing the massive carnage that has been wrought on the teaching profession in the Northern Territory by this government in its drive to reduce the numbers of teachers. We have a situation now whereby it is extremely difficult to get teachers to go out bush. There are schools in my electorate that are understaffed. There is a school in the Barkly electorate which does not have a teacher at all. That is the situation that the Teachers Federation is trying to redress, and I say good luck to it.

I also say good luck to the Teachers Federation in relation to the peace plan which it has proposed, a plan which the minister would not even refer to. I am prepared to table the document, Mr Speaker. It is important that honourable members are able to see how the Teachers Federation has proposed a series of amendments which would satisfy the government's aim that no more than one-third of the membership of a school council can be members of the teaching staff of that school but also avoid some of the other problems.

Mr Speaker, you and I know that there is not one member on either side of the House who believes in these regulations. Every honourable member would admit that privately. Members opposite have admitted it publicly by not rising to defend the regulations. They know that to do so would be electoral suicide. They know that it would be reported that the member for Ludmilla attempted to rise in the Legislative Assembly to support the sotto voce remarks of the minister as he attempted to bumble his way through 7 minutes of justification. They know that the Ludmilla Special School would have reacted quite strenuously against the lack of support for its position by its local member and would realise that he did not represent the views put by members of that school council. I am afraid that all those people will be able to acknowledge is that, on the government side, there is a pack of ...

Mr Dale: Careful.

A Member: Cowards.

Mr EDE: Mr Speaker, if I were to say 'cowards', it would be ruled unparliamentary. Let us say that they are not particularly courageous and that they lack any conviction in the position that they are trying to adopt on this issue. We know that the minister before the acting minister before this one, the honourable feather duster on the backbench nowadays ...

Mr SPEAKER: The honourable member will withdraw that remark.

Mr EDE: I withdraw, Mr Speaker.

Mr Speaker, the minister at the time would not debate this issue. He refused to debate it because there was nothing he could say which would in any way, shape or form back up the position that the government has taken on this issue. Subsequently, the acting minister at least had the grace to make a few amendments, paltry and inadequate as they were, as has been demonstrated by my colleagues today. The current minister had the opportunity to clean out the Augean stables and go back to the people. He would have gained an incredible amount of kudos with parents, with councils, with teachers, with people on this side of the House and extreme kudos with his own colleagues who have had to face rubbish about this every time they visit a school. I believe the member for Katherine still has not been to a school council meeting.

In the few minutes remaining to me, I would like to demonstrate just how the unparliamentary things that I am not able to say about the honourable minister reflect the general view of people in the community. We have some more answers to questionnaires. I tabled a considerable number at the last sittings and I am quite happy to table all of these if the honourable the minister wishes to see just what people think of him: 'Discriminates against departmental employees', 'Education Department employees have rights as parents and individuals' and on and on.

Here is one from Victoria River. We did not hear from the member for Victoria River but the Batchelor Area School says that the regulations should be repealed, that they are unacceptable and that consultation is required. Why didn't we hear from the member for Victoria River? Why didn't we hear from the member for Katherine who is hiding his head in a book? Mr Speaker, I have many letters from the Katherine High School and other Katherine schools which completely reject these school council regulations and call them an insult. We had responses from Sadadeen but the member for Sadadeen at least entered into the debate. What about the member for Fannie Bay? Look at all the responses I have from Darwin High School. Its council even sent copies to the local member. Why didn't he enter into the debate?

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The honourable member's time has expired. The question is that the motion be agreed to.

The Assembly divided:

Ayes 6

Mr Bell
Mr Ede
Mr Lanhupuy
Mr Leo
Mrs Padgham-Purich
Mr Smith

Noes 17

Mr Collins
Mr Coulter
Mr Dale
Mr Dondas
Mr Finch
Mr Firmin
Mr Hanrahan
Mr Harris
Mr Hatton
Mr McCarthy
Mr Manzie
Mr Palmer
Mr Perron
Mr Poole
Mr Reed
Mr Setter
Mr Vale

Motion negatived.

FIRE SERVICE AMENDMENT BILL
(Serial 70)

Continued from 3 March 1988.

Mr LANHUPUY (Arnhem): Mr Speaker, the opposition supports the bill. The existing legislation does not permit the Fire Service to charge people for false alarms. I believe that such a provision is in accordance with the wishes of members of the Firefighters' Association. We therefore have no difficulty in supporting the bill.

Mr SETTER (Jingili): Mr Speaker, the Fire Service of the Northern Territory is totally funded by the taxpayer. We all know that, throughout the Northern Territory, quite a number of personnel are employed in fire protection services utilising a considerable number of fire stations and service units. I have not checked to see what the total cost of that operation is but I can imagine that it is considerable. Perhaps the Chief Minister may be able to enlighten the House on the total cost of the Fire Service. To the best of my knowledge, the only money generated by the Fire Service is through charges levied for actual fires attended. If the service is called out on a false alarm, there is no charge. That is taking good service to an extreme. I have great sympathy for people who suffer as a result of fires and believe that it is unreasonable that they be the only ones who have to pay for fire services. At present, no charge is levied when the Fire Service is called out on a false alarm. I do not think that is very fair. That matter is addressed in this amendment bill.

In his second-reading speech on 3 March 1988, the minister quoted some very interesting figures. He said that, in 1986, there was a total of 1600 false alarms in the Northern Territory. He then broke that figure down. He said there were 160 call-outs to false alarms resulting from malicious reports. These were instances where the service was called out by people who knew there was no fire, by people motivated by the desire to play a prank or cause a problem for another member of the community. Who pays in such cases? The taxpayer. Another 1440 false alarms were due to malfunctions. That points to a need for more frequent checking of fire alarms. I am quite sure that that is something that will be addressed as a result of the passage of this bill.

The 1986 figure shows that 1600 of the 3668 calls received by the Fire Service were false alarms. I am sure that members will agree that that is a very high percentage. I am told by the Director of the Fire Service that that proportion is in line with the national figure. That may well be the case, but I believe that it is totally unreasonable for attendance at those false alarms not to be charged for. It may well be, for example, that people who own high-rise buildings or commercial premises which contain a considerable number of alarm devices do not have those devices checked or serviced from year to year. When those devices go off occasionally and the Fire Service turns out at a considerable cost with a vehicle, half a dozen firemen and all the associated equipment, no charge is levied. Mr Speaker, that is totally unreasonable. I am very pleased to see that this bill introduces the option to charge.

Mr Speaker, fire alarms go off for a number of reasons. One reason is that there is a fire but there are many others, including power fluctuations, faulty equipment and tampering with equipment. That is why I said earlier that it is necessary to levy the charge to ensure that people who have fire alarms actually maintain them. That is very important.

There is another option, and I will keep my voice down when I mention it. It is the introduction of a fire service levy.

Mrs Padgham-Purich: Not out our way.

Mr Palmer: Especially out there. They throw matches around and then call the fire brigade.

Mrs Padgham-Purich: They do not.

Mr SETTER: It may well be inappropriate in the rural area. I know that my colleague the member for Karama is very familiar with the rural area when it comes to these matters. It may well be that a fire service levy is an option which will need to be looked at in the future. It is an option that has been taken up in Queensland, where a fire service levy is added to insurance policies where such policies cover the possibility of fire damage. The levy is expressed as a percentage. It is very interesting to note that the levy is added to rates and collected by local government, which passes the funds on to the fire service. The levy covers the costs of all fire brigades throughout the state of Queensland. Such a levy is an option for the future although we are not advocating it on this occasion.

Mrs Padgham-Purich: You had better not be.

Mr SETTER: We are not and I am not suggesting that we do so. I am saying that it is an option that could be considered in the future because there is no doubt that we need a more equitable means of recouping the costs of operating the fire service.

The bill introduces a charge for attending false alarm calls. The charge is at the discretion of the Director of the Northern Territory Fire Service. I understand from the minister's second-reading speech that this will only occur after 3 calls have been attended within 28 days. I think that is very generous indeed. It will be assessed on the basis of merit, depending on the cause, at the discretion of the director.

A schedule of charges was introduced in 1983. The charges are not indexed. We know that the inflation rate since 1983 has been between 7% and 10% every year. However, the fire service charges have not increased at all. Once again, I think we are being very generous. Let us have a look at some of these charges. I quote from schedule 4 of the regulations, which is set out on page 18.

The hourly charges for equipment and personnel will apply from the time of leaving the station until the time of return to the station or as approved. Charges for a motor fire engine where it may in certain circumstances be used only for the purpose of transporting equipment or personnel are to be at the rate applicable to a motor truck.

The schedule then quotes a figure of \$15 per hour for a motor car or truck. That is not bad: \$15 per hour for a great big fire engine. For an officer, the charge is \$20 per hour and for a fireman it is \$15 per hour. I think that is extremely cheap and, indeed, that the Treasurer should be looking at the matter. Those charges have not been increased since 1983 and we should do something about that in this age of user-pays.

I understand that it is the policy of the department to encourage the installation of fire alarms. That is fair enough. As many fire alarms as possible should be installed throughout the community, provided that people understand that a charge is involved if they do not operate properly and lead to false alarms. Some people may not be able to afford the capital investment and might prefer to take the risk and throw the responsibility on the insurance company. In that instance, of course, their premiums would increase. It is therefore in everybody's interests to ensure that as many fire alarms are installed as possible. Having said that, we have to cope with the problem of fire alarms malfunctioning. This brings me back to my point about the necessity of ensuring that equipment is checked on a regular basis. I hope and trust that the introduction of these charges will encourage the owners and the operators of these fire alarms to check them on a regular basis and so reduce the risk to themselves of incurring the charges which will be reduced as a result of the passage of this bill.

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH (Koolpinyah): Mr Speaker, in rising to support this amendment to the Fire Service Act, I would like to say at the outset that it is a nice sort of bill; it is all motherhood and apple pie. Nobody will object to it and nobody in his right mind would and we all say that it is a good idea - but. You would probably think me pretty vulgar if I were to say that the honourable minister is peeing in the wind if he thinks he can implement this in all cases.

Mr Speaker: Order! the honourable member will withdraw that reference.

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH: I will withdraw it, Mr Speaker, and say that he has Buckley's chance of implementing this legislation successfully in most cases, unless he puts the blame where it may not belong.

The legislation talks about charging for false fire alarm calls. That looks good on paper but what happens if people maliciously set off alarms in big buildings such as the hospital? The owners, the managers or the lessees of the building will be charged, not those people who maliciously set off the alarms. Is that fair, Mr Speaker? The owners of the buildings may maintain their alarms in perfectly good order but, if they are set off maliciously by other people, the owners will be charged for attendance of the fire service.

I was very interested to hear the member for Jingili hinting at a fire service levy. Out our way, that would be a bit like waving a red rag at a bull, and I do not care what the Grants Commission has recommended. We already have 13 volunteer bushfire brigades in the rural area. I do not think any member can say that people in his electorate try to look after the control of bushfires, wildfires and accidental fires as much as people in the Darwin rural area. To whack a fire service levy on top of that would be completely unacceptable to our community and, no doubt, to other communities.

The previous speaker also referred to the user-pays principle. From a reading of the existing legislation, it appears that the minister or his delegate does have the power to charge for attendance at fires by the Northern Territory Fire but that, to my knowledge, this is not being implemented. In all the time we have lived in the rural area, I am sure that we have had to call on the services of the Northern Territory Fire Service, the Bushfires Council and the volunteer bushfire brigades more than any other member of this House. At no time have we ever been charged for this service. Certainly, we have appreciated the service and the promptness with which our calls are answered. As a token of our thanks, we always supply a little refreshment afterwards. That is greatly appreciated, especially if it has been a big fire and has taken a while to put out.

Mr Speaker, whilst I agree with the legislation, I think it will be very difficult to implement and I am rather disturbed by the Chief Minister's comment in his second-reading speech where he said that the 'provisions of the bill do not include a definition of "excessive" nor how the system will operate'. Thus, we are introducing legislation willy-nilly and the Chief Minister, the sponsor of the bill, says he does not know how the system will operate. I would have thought that the sponsor of the legislation would have at least some idea of that. If he sees fit to speak after I have spoken, I would like him to tell me whether he now has some idea of how the system will operate.

I know that the firemen are hard workers and they do a good job. I can only speak for the people who operate in the rural area and are based in Palmerston. I can speak very highly of their work. If the Chief Minister does not know how this legislation is to work, somebody will have to spend considerable time trying to work out how it is to be implemented. That time could be put to better use in fire prevention, not only in the rural area but also in town. I do not have any basic objection to the legislation, but I am very doubtful about its successful implementation. I would like to know whether the Chief Minister can now tell us how it will operate.

Mr HATTON (Chief Minister): Mr Speaker, I thank honourable members for their contribution to this debate and I appreciate the support that this bill has received.

The member for Koolpinyah asked if I knew how the legislation will operate and claimed that, when I introduced the bill, I did not know how it would operate. I am aware of how it is proposed to operate and I am sure that the member for Koolpinyah who, if nothing else, is a very basic and pragmatic person, would recognise the value of putting commonsense measures into legislation.

As I outlined in the second-reading speech, there are a multitude of circumstances where, quite frankly, discretion needs to be exercised as to whether or not it is appropriate to charge. For example, if an alarm were set off as a consequence of a lightning strike or as a result of malicious damage, it might be appropriate in a discretionary sense to say that that really was beyond the control of the building owner or occupier and it would be unreasonable to impose a fixed charge in those circumstances. On the other hand, it is unfortunately a fact of life that a large number of premises have fire alarms that are faulty and that are not regularly serviced or maintained. In my view, that is often the result of negligence, carelessness or penny-pinching on the part of the owners. As a consequence, false alarms occur purely because equipment has become faulty through lack of service and maintenance. It is in those circumstances, in particular, that we are trying to create a financial incentive for people to do what they should be doing as a matter of prudence and propriety; that is, ensuring that their fire alarm systems are properly maintained, are activated when there is a fire and not activated when there is not a fire.

Mrs Padgham-Purich: Why didn't you put that in your second-reading speech?

Mr HATTON: We need to exercise discretion because, as I said in my second-reading speech, there are significant differences between a place like the Royal Darwin Hospital, which has hundreds of fire alarms, and a small shop which may have only 1 fire alarm. If a small shop or business premises has 3 alarms which all go off, the impact of that is significantly different to

the same thing happening with 3 alarms in a building like the Royal Darwin Hospital. It would be hard to say, in that example, that there have been excessive problems. Similarly, the Casuarina Shopping Complex could be compared with a smaller shopping centre.

False alarms are a real problem. As I stated in my second-reading speech, in the period from January to December 1986, the Fire Service attended 1600 false alarms throughout the Territory, 160 of those being malicious and 1440 due to accidental operation or system malfunction. It is fundamentally clear that the major problem is inadequately serviced and inadequately maintained fire alarm systems. This legislation aims to ensure that, if people are not prepared to take proper steps to ensure that their fire alarm systems are properly maintained, they and not the Northern Territory Fire Service will wear the costs in relation to false alarms. The legislation provides an incentive to maintain fire alarm equipment through the impost of charges for false alarm call-outs. Having said that, I again thank honourable members for their contributions to this debate.

Motion agreed to; bill read a second time.

Mr HATTON (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 HATTON (Chief Minister): Mr Speaker, I move that the Assembly do now adjourn.

Mr DALE (Health and Community Services): Mr Speaker, I want to touch on a couple of matters today. One of them is extremely important to this side of the House because members opposite so often accuse us of politicising the public service. This morning, I was rather alarmed to be informed by the secretary of my department that a senior member of the department received a telephone call yesterday from the Leader of the Opposition asking that person why an appointment between a former member of his personal staff and the Secretary of the Department of Health and Community Services had been cancelled. The Leader of the Opposition asked whether or not that person was being used as a political football.

Mr Speaker, it causes me great concern that the Leader of the Opposition, who is already on record in this Assembly as saying that he agrees with public servants looking through files and feeding information to the opposition and who accuses us of politicising the public service, is apparently trying to intimidate staff members of my department in respect of a former member of his personal staff. For his information, the reason the appointment was cancelled was because of an urgent request by the member for MacDonnell to inspect the radiology section at the Royal Darwin Hospital. The secretary of the department considered that that was far more important than the interview which, obviously, could be arranged for some other time.

I want to place on record that I do not in any way interfere with the employment of persons within my department and, as a personal fact of life, I do not in any way discriminate against any person getting a job anywhere because of that person's political affiliations. I hope that the Leader of the Opposition will grow up and let the professionals in the Northern Territory Public Service do their job.

The other matter that I wish to raise concerns the State of Origin Rugby League Competition. The first game is to be held tonight. I have been involved in negotiations with Channel 8 during the day and I am pleased to say that the Chief Minister of the Northern Territory has approved an amount of \$500 as a contribution towards the cost of screening the game tonight. The screening on Channel 8 will commence at 12 midnight. I believe that Channel 8 will televise the other games live and I would like to congratulate the channel for its endeavours in this respect.

We heard this morning about a flood of letters concerning the Darwin International Grammar School. I can assure all members of this House that the flood of telephone calls in the past 48 hours in relation to the televising of the State of Origin matches, not only to my office but also to the Chief Minister's office, indicates that it is a matter of far more concern in the community than any issue relating to the Darwin International Grammar School.

Mr BELL (MacDonnell): Mr Speaker, I rise to make some comments in relation to town planning exercises in Darwin and in Alice Springs. These have been matters of considerable concern to various people right around the Territory. Since we are in Darwin, I will start with the situation here.

I draw the attention of honourable members to the magazine 'Construction' which, of course, is produced by the Master Builders Association. Most honourable members will be familiar with it. I do not propose at this stage to discuss the pros and cons of the so-called Anderson proposal, which would cause the relocation of this place as well as a considerable burden on the Territory exchequer. I will save those comments for another day. I wish to draw the attention of honourable members and the Minister for Lands and Housing to the comments made by the Master Builders Association of the Northern Territory on the Anderson proposal and its implications for planning processes in Darwin.

The first point made by an editorial writer for the Master Builders Association magazine says that there are additional lessons to be learned from the Anderson exercise. He says that the first concerns 'the need for the government to develop a long-term strategic town plan for Darwin'. The editorial writer goes on to say: 'It is not good enough for the government to accept new proposals, close roads and create new ones unless they are part of that strategic plan, which everyone is aware of, and follow it'. The basic point is that the rules have to be the same for everybody. Time and time again, we see that this government is prepared to bend the rules for its mates. That should be of concern to the business community and every Territorian.

The second point made by the editorial writer of 'Construction' is that it is not good enough for the government to create new land-use proposals - and he is referring in this case to the new business development block created by the extension of Bennett Street to the Esplanade - and 'to grant this land to a developer without others even knowing about it'. There are some basic principles which should be of concern to the Minister for Lands and Housing and to everybody who wants to see an equitable system of land development in the Territory. I hasten to add that these comments are not coming from just anybody but from the major construction organisation in the Northern Territory and I suggest to you, Mr Speaker, that the government can ill afford to ignore them.

Turning to the other end of the Territory, I noticed in rather large headlines in last weekend's Centralian Advocate, that I was referred to as

being 'ignorant of the planning process'. Mr Speaker, I suggest to you that, having been involved with the lands portfolio for several years now and having made contributions at various points in public debate on land development in the Territory, I have learnt a few things. I suggest that my comments in relation to the Northcorp development are actually quite apposite and I wish to place them on record in the Assembly today.

You will recall, Mr Speaker, that the former Minister for Lands and Housing, the member for Flynn, in whose electorate this current Northcorp proposal would have occurred, made an announcement in June last year about the Alice Springs structure plan. The problem for organisations like the Master Builders Association and for anybody who is interested in sensible land development is that nobody knows when a structure plan is a structure plan. In June last year, the minister announced the Alice Springs structure plan and told us that its key element was that Cabinet 'had endorsed the Undoolya option as the future residential growth area of Alice Springs'. Various important considerations were appended and the minister referred to the major advantages of the Undoolya option, one of them being - and this is so interesting that I will come back to it later - that future traffic problems through the Gap were likely to be avoided for a longer period.

Before the Undoolya option proceeds, what happens? We see an application to the Planning Authority by Northcorp Pty Ltd. Just to reassure both the Minister for Lands and Housing and Mr Brian Vaughan, I make it clear that I accept that Northcorp Pty Ltd has a right to buy Bert Kramer's farm and that it has a right to apply to the Planning Authority. It can apply to the Planning Authority as many times as it wishes to if it wants a particular area rezoned. What I am saying is that the buck stops with the minister and that the Northcorp proposal to subdivide land in the Emily Hills area is absurd - and the honourable minister knows it.

A few serious implications flow from this. Let me point to the assets of Northcorp. I have done a bit of digging, and I understand that Northcorp has 3 key assets. One is Lot 1729 on the Ross Highway, which was the subject of a planning instrument to set up the Alice resort. I remember that being gazetted last year. Not one brick has been laid upon another in connection with that project although the application has been approved. The second of the 3 assets is Lot 6930 on the corner of Larapinta and Bradshaw Drives in the electorate of the member for Araluen, and I am sure that the member for Araluen will be aware that only yesterday the Racing, Gaming and Liquor Commission rejected a proposal for a takeaway licence for that particular supermarket. I point out that the supermarket is perhaps 2 good drop kicks from the Flynn Drive supermarket and I rather wonder about the wisdom of that particular application and the development of facilities in that regard. Of course, as the member for Araluen knows, his unfortunate constituents are, once again, the victims of the CLP government's refusal to plan with any long-term idea of the growth rates in Alice Springs. It is always ready to claim credit for the rapid growth rates but, as he has gone on public record himself as saying, it is never prepared to come up with the necessary facilities. The third asset of Northcorp is Bert Kramer's block, Lot 2406 on the Ross Highway.

Those are the assets of Northcorp Pty Ltd. I do not have the amounts of money that were paid for those blocks. I do not have the valuations but it seems probable that they will only be worth what was paid for them if they can be subdivided in a way which is considered absurd by everybody who is concerned about town planning in the Northern Territory.

In case the Minister for Lands and Housing thinks that I am trying to interfere in the operations of a private company, let us have a look at how private this little company is. At lunchtime, I took a stroll down to the Corporate Affairs Office and I was able to obtain an extract in relation to Northcorp Pty Ltd. It is public information, which is quite appropriate in the context of frequent debates in this Assembly. It is a public company that issued 2.410 million 50¢ shares which were allotted on 16 November 1987. Unfortunately, share listings from the Perth Stock Exchange reported in the West Australian on Saturday indicated that Northcorp was selling at 40¢ which means that the people and institutions who have purchased shares are a bit down on their investment at the moment. That by itself ...

Mr Manzie: What has that got to do with an application to the Planning Authority?

Mr BELL: Let me inform the Minister for Lands and Housing and the Treasurer. I would have thought that at least the Treasurer would have been very interested in this because he knows that the Territory Insurance Office has 300 000 of those shares, doesn't it? And it paid ...

Mr Manzie: Oh, an attack on the TIO.

Mr BELL: An attack on the TIO! Goodness me, I get it time and time again from the Minister for Lands and Housing. He has publicly called me a liar on 2 occasions, Mr Speaker. We produce document after document to prove that I am not a liar and he consistently refuses to apologise when I demonstrate that to him.

I am raising this matter for 2 good reasons, 1 of which concerns the Minister for Lands and Housing.

Mr Manzie: You don't want the processes to go smoothly. You want a stink so you can get your name in the paper. You are a dishonest person.

Mr BELL: Are you going to get up and talk about this, Daryl?

Mr Manzie: What a brilliant contribution!

Mr SPEAKER: Order!

Mr BELL: I do apologise, Mr Speaker. I will address my remarks through the Chair. I will challenge the minister. He will not take me up. He will not take me up because he is so lacking in intestinal fortitude. He knows he has no arguments to support his position. He will not get up and say in full what he is prepared to burble under his breath.

I will finish on this note. I have 2 concerns that should be of vital interest and should receive vital consideration from, firstly, the Minister for Lands and Housing and, secondly, from the Treasurer. I want the Minister for Lands and Housing to try to justify why he is prepared to countenance a subdivision proposal of this sort that flies in the face of the Alice Springs structure plan to which his predecessor referred. He is muttering over there so I am quite confident he will rise to give us the good oil in a minute.

My final question is for the Treasurer. The Territory Insurance Office has 300 000 of the 50¢ shares that are now valued at 40¢. Is that a matter of concern? To what extent does the TIO's interest qualify town planning decisions that should be taken in an unbiased, unemotional manner that will

allow for the best planning options for the town of Alice Springs to be adopted or, as the MBA said, for the town of Darwin?

Mr Coulter: For \$150 000, I can buy out the Department of Lands. Is that what you are suggesting?

Mr BELL: I reckon you would be capable of anything, Barry.

Mr COLLINS (Sadadeen): Mr Deputy Speaker, this morning I asked the Minister for Mines and Energy what the government was doing concerning the connection of gas from the gas pipeline north of Stott Terrace into the northern part of the central business district in Alice Springs. I am heartened by the minister's remarks and the pressure that he intends to put on his colleague to remove a little problem. It may seem very much of a parish pump issue but there have been objections to the methods proposed by the company, which is 50% Boral and 50% South Australian Gas Co, in crossing one of the roads over which the government has control. I refer to Stott Terrace and the lane behind Malanka and other buildings, including my office, in that area.

It seems that there has been a communications problem. In fact, the manager from Boral has complained to me quite strongly about not getting answers to his correspondence. The company wanted to dig a channel across the road, digging certain parts by hand to avoid service lines. Evidently, a letter had been sent to an address that had some connection with the project but it certainly did not reach the person in charge at Boral. The letter indicated that the channel had to be thrust-bored. Thrust-boring is a process whereby a hole is drilled about 3 m beneath the road. In certain circumstances, that is very sensible. For example, on the Stuart Highway where motorists travel at 100 km per hour, it can be dangerous to have even a small bump in the road. The problem in this instance is that the lane which is being used for the easement is rather small. The thrust-boring machines available in the Territory are too big for the job.

The matter of expenses has been argued back and forth in the last week or so. I have been assured by the manager that the cheapest quote the company has been able to obtain for a thrust-boring machine of suitable size is \$22 000. It would have to come from an interstate capital and the company would take no responsibility if it happened to cut the electricity main. The Power and Water Authority is quite concerned that it could black out the entire central business district. The expense involved is rather large.

The company doing the job believes that the job can be done for between \$1500 and \$1800 simply by cutting across the road. It has already done that in several places. It cut across Gap Road near the Memorial Club. It used steel sheeting to close no more than half of the road at a time so that vehicular traffic could pass. I appreciate the concerns of the engineer in Alice Springs that the final result should not be too large a bump. I know that is something that concerns most of the community when a cut is made across the road. I am sure that some technology ought to be applied somewhere along the line. Maybe some heating of the whole surface area and rolling could incorporate the new area in the old area. I see an engineer scratching his head over there but it is something that should be looked at. I believe the company will be testing the work it has done at the hospital and other places tomorrow. I would like to see the gas go through the northern part of the town. I am sure the Minister for Mines and Energy does too. I will be thankful for any help in resolving this problem so that consumers on the northern side can receive cheaper gas.

Mr Deputy Speaker, on the Monday before Easter, I recall thinking to myself that an issue I have raised in this House many times would not reach the ears of people. I refer to the matter of flooding in Alice Springs. It seemed as though we were experiencing a great drought. The countryside around was looking pretty bare yet, on the Thursday before Easter, we had 8 inches of rain in the catchment area of Alice Springs and the biggest flow of the Todd that I have seen in the 18 years that I have been there. For those who know Alice Springs, at the height of the flow, the water went over the top of the decking of the footbridge on Wills Terrace. It certainly was not a 1-in-100-year flood which the emergency service people indicated on the maps in pamphlets some time ago. Such a flood would have had water from the Todd coming in my back door in Burke Street. The Easter floods, however, did a considerable amount of damage. One life was definitely lost and there may have been many more.

I would commend the emergency service people. The pamphlet that was issued helped many people to minimise damage. I have taken on board the point made by an Alice Springs resident at a meeting called by the mayor. It was that, if the 15 inches which fell at Hermannsburg on the same weekend had fallen in Alice Springs, we might have had the big flood that I have often preached about. It would have resulted in horrendous damage. I have always said that, if there were nothing we could do to prevent such floods, we would just have to accept the risks. There is, however, something we can do: we can mitigate the effects of flooding by erecting structures which will slow down the rate of flow and contain it so that the water which presently takes only hours to pass through will pass through over 3 or 4 days. That can be done with passive structures. The Snowy Mountains Authority demonstrated that. It constructed the models and calculated the flows, and videos are available showing that. I urge that the work be carried out.

At the meeting called by the Mayor, much credence was given to a study in relation to a recreation lake in Alice Springs. Certain people on the 3-party committee had a bee in their bonnet regarding the lake at the Telegraph Station. They opposed it. As one of them said to me: 'We are not going to have the government riding roughshod over Aboriginal people'. They proposed options which they were not really asked for in terms of preventing flooding in Alice Springs. Remember that the study was about providing a recreation lake in Alice Springs.

Mr Ede: Their comments were in relation to flood mitigation effects and they were asked to make them.

Mr COLLINS: They made some comments, Mr Deputy Speaker. Their suggestion was to build a series of low walls through the Todd River area north of the Telegraph Station.

On a number of occasions, both privately and publicly, Aboriginal people have expressed to me their wish that Alice Springs should have a recreational lake. The politics of the situation are such that it will not happen overnight. I make a very strong recommendation that, if structures are to be built to mitigate the flooding to which Alice Springs is prone, one should be built at the Telegraph Station. Incorporated at the base of the structure should be a couple of pipes of about 6 ft in diameter so that water can be drained away. The Aboriginal people and even the Sacred Sites Protection Authority have said that they accept that certain sacred sites are covered with water from time to time. The wall should be built as if it was for a recreation lake, with its spillway on the eastern side of the hill next to where the Telegraph Station waterhole forms from time to time. If it does not

become silted up, depending upon the rates of flow which occur, it will provide a flood-mitigating wall, something which will protect the town of Alice Springs and the lives of its citizens, including Aborigines, whether they are still camping in the Todd or not. That is important.

The Lloyd Report of 1983 suggested that a series of walls be built. The engineering feasibilities of that approach were not proven but, assuming that it would work, the structures could not be used to create a recreation lake. I believe that the ball is in the hands of the traditional owners. If they decide, in their own wisdom and of their own free will, that a recreation lake should go ahead at the Telegraph Station, all that would be required would be the incorporation of 2 outlet pipes at the base of the wall. The recreation lake has been demonstrated to be practical by the Snowy Mountains Authority which put its reputation on the line. Even if that recreation lake was brimming with water, a 1-in-100-year flood could be reduced to a 1-in-20-year flood and be basically contained in the Todd River.

Mr Ede: It is not true.

Mr COLLINS: It is true. The Snowy Mountains Authority study shows it. I have studied that report for years. You are just a Johnny-come-lately on this matter. You have climbed onto the bandwagon.

Mr Ede: Table the report.

Mr COLLINS: It is up to the minister to do that. His department has the report and I request him to table it. I am not backing off on anything. It is a most sensible way of using public money. The flood-mitigation effect of the dam wall is all-important to Alice Springs and I will continue to work for it but, in the process, I say that the wall should be built at the Telegraph Station where there is capacity for water to escape into the Todd River through pipes at bed level. If, in the future, people in their wisdom agree that the area should be used as a recreation lake, devices could be installed to close off the pipes, thus creating the lake. If a number of lower walls are built in the valley, they will never have any use other than flood mitigation.

I put the proposal to the government and ask that it be taken up. I believe it is a proposition which could be accepted by the total Alice Springs community if they are fair dinkum about flood mitigation. It leaves an option open, if agreement can be reached in future, for Alice Springs to have a recreation lake whilst retaining the ability to mitigate the flow of the Todd River. An additional feature which might please the member for Stuart is that valves could be opened early if recording devices indicated large rainfalls in the catchment area, allowing water to pass through early. However, that would not be totally necessary, as the Snowy Mountains Authority has demonstrated.

Mr REED (Katherine): Mr Speaker, I rise tonight to provide some details of a trade survey to north-west Western Australia which it was my pleasure to lead on behalf of the Minister for Industries and Development during the period 14 to 18 March this year. The objective of the survey was to determine what business opportunities exist for Darwin and Katherine-based suppliers of goods and services to local government organisations, community governments and businesses throughout the top end of Western Australia. To this end, members of the group gathered market intelligence, viewed the economy of the Kimberley region at first hand, gauged potential for future growth and identified new opportunities for Territory-based suppliers.

The Kimberley region is geographically close to the Territory and it covers an area of some 422 000 km². The people of this region have much in common with the people of the Territory. We share a similar climate, isolation, lifestyle and the need for services appropriate to specific needs and relevant to those factors. To put the matter of geographic isolation in perspective, it is relevant to note that the distance from Perth to Kununurra is 3200 km, from Kununurra to Darwin some 870 km and from Kununurra to Katherine 510 km. In terms of distance, Territory suppliers already have some advantage over Perth suppliers. Broome was the southernmost centre visited by the group. It is 2365 km from Perth and 1950 km from Darwin.

The isolation of the communities in the north-west from the centre of state services in Perth was the impetus in recognising the potential for Territory business to promote its activities in the area. The survey delegates, of whom there were 10, were representatives of a wide range of goods and service suppliers in Katherine and Darwin, together with Northern Territory government representatives, the executive officer of the Industrial Supplies Office and the Northern Territory Confederation of Industry and Commerce. The group visited the centres of Kununurra, Halls Creek, Derby, Broome, Fitzroy Crossing, the Bow River Diamond Mine and Argyle Diamond Mine. In each centre, members of the group visited business houses and the local government organisation and held a community function to which various representatives were invited. It is indicative of the interest in the group's visit to the north-west that all of those functions were very well-attended and it is fair to say that our trip created a great deal of interest. Local business people and representatives from shire councils and outlying community organisations - which might be expected to be a little reticent about dealing with areas outside Western Australia - were very interested in what we had to offer. Indeed, we found that many people were already obtaining supplies from the Territory.

As I have said, the survey group was enthusiastically received. It was apparent that the barriers to trade between the Kimberley region and the Territory were more of a traditional nature than a result of any lack of desire to do business. When businesses in the Kimberley region have needed supplies, the traditional pattern has been for them to telephone or write to Perth to obtain those supplies. We found that, apart from the lack of a dedicated freight service to the area, this was the only factor which influenced the purchase of supplies from the Territory with the exception, in some cases, of cost. Whilst the Territory was found to be fairly competitive in many circumstances, there were some cost disadvantages. However, in recent years, with the arrival of capital city pricing in many Darwin businesses, we found that this influence was on the wane.

As I mentioned earlier, some businesses and organisations are already sourcing from Darwin. Although that applied particularly to people in the Kununurra area, it was of interest to find that the pharmacist at Broome stated at one of the functions that 95% of his stock was purchased from Darwin. From time to time, we came across businesses which were actively trading with the Territory.

Broome was the most active centre. It displayed an immediate vitality. The degree of vitality in its economy is illustrated by the fact that building approvals in the town are running at some \$25m this year. The anticipated McAlpine Tourist Resort and Hotel upgrading is expected to increase that figure to something in the order of \$50m. That will give honourable members some indication of the amount of development being undertaken in that area. It was also interesting to note some of the other demands for services,

particularly in Broome, where requests for the supply of fresh horticultural produce, dairy products and even seafood were received from a number of suppliers who supply to the hotel motel industry. All dairy products from Broome to Kununurra are received frozen from Perth. There was great interest in obtaining fresh dairy products, particularly milk.

Mrs Padgham-Purich: From Rowlands?

Mr REED: To respond to the honourable member's interjection, we are very keen to promote any opportunities for local business people including, in this case, the Rowlands Dairy in Katherine. Naturally, we brought to the people's attention the availability of fresh milk from that supplier. It may be of interest if I indicate some of the trade opportunities identified by members of the survey group. These included vehicle, plant and equipment supplies, spare parts, stationery and printing supplies, reticulation and irrigation equipment, air-conditioning, computer hardware and software, a wide range of professional services, including architects, engineers and the legal profession, and fresh food.

The other area of some considerable activity in the Kimberley region was, of course, the Argyle Diamond Mine. This mine is the largest producer of diamonds in the world. It produces some 25 million carats of diamonds per year and the largest proportion of these diamonds are of industrial quality although 5% are of gem quality. Nearly all supplies for the Argyle Diamond Mine are obtained ex-Perth and it was interesting to note the extent of some purchases. We had an opportunity to look over the whole of the operation of the mine. It was interesting to see the stores warehouse which services the mining and related activities of the whole operation. The value of stock at any one time in the warehouse was \$14.5m and, as \$2m of that relates to fast-moving operational items, there is particular opportunity for Darwin businesses to supply spare parts and related items. It was clear that there are many business opportunities for Territory suppliers.

As I indicated before, the major impediment to keying into some of these business opportunities was the absence of a dedicated freight service to that area. That was one of the major factors which the group concentrated on. The key to maximising opportunities for Territory businesses to supply goods and services to the north-west of Western Australia is the provision of a dedicated freight line. I was pleased to hear recently that some advances appear to be taking place in that area. Perhaps, in the near future, we can expect to hear details of a weekly road freight service ex-Darwin to centres in the Kimberley region. The indicative pricing for this service is that there will be a sliding scale: 16c per kilogram into Broome for quantities of 0 kg to 1000 kg, 6.8c per kilogram for quantities in excess of 20 000 kg and a basic charge of \$7 per consignment. Compare that with the current cost of 21c per kilogram from Darwin to Fitzroy Crossing. I understand that the charges that I have mentioned relate to straight freight. Services for chilled and frozen freight may follow depending on the success of the operation.

I found it particularly encouraging to find that opportunities exist for Territory suppliers to key into business opportunities in the north-west of Western Australia. It will be interesting to see what follow-up action is taken by Territory businesses. I would certainly encourage any businessman to investigate the opportunities in Western Australia. Certainly, those businessmen who took part in the survey wrote quite an amount of business on a wide range of business opportunities and I think those who participated in the survey were very pleased with the result. There will be a need to pass on

information to business organisations and the Industrial Supplies Office has already undertaken to do that. There will be a need to follow up activities of the survey group and to pursue the establishment, as I have indicated, of freight services, but I believe that there are real opportunities there. I would encourage suppliers of goods and services in the Territory to investigate those opportunities and I take this opportunity to record in the adjournment debate tonight the results of that survey.

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH (Koolpinyah): Mr Deputy Speaker, tonight I would like to comment briefly on the secrecy surrounding an intended purchase by the Department of Health and Community Services for building in the rural area. This secrecy has caused considerable disquiet to many people. It smacks of a certain ignorance of the local situation, an arrogance and a complete disregard for community feelings. I hope the honourable minister is listening. My remarks are directed at a development application submitted recently to the Planning Authority for the establishment of a group home in the rural area. The secrecy surrounding it ...

Mr Dale: What secrecy, Noel?

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH: There is secrecy. If the honourable minister would just button up, I will tell him what the secrecy involves.

Mr Deputy Speaker, before I talk about the secrecy, for the benefit of honourable members who may not be aware of it, I will indicate the process involved in a development application. The area I am talking about is a Rural Living 1 area and there are about 5 permissible occupations in an RL1 area. Some occupations are expressly prohibited and there is a third category of occupations that are permissible with the consent of the neighbours. The group home can be established in an RL1 area only after consent has been given by the Rural Planning Authority. A development application has to be submitted and publicised for the requisite number of days so that people can comment on it. In this case, not only has secrecy surrounded this development application, but misinformation has been disseminated by either the Planning Branch of the Department of Lands and Housing or by the Department of Health and Community Services.

The development application issued by the Northern Territory Planning Authority refers to a group home for 'disadvantaged children'. We all know that the trendy term for juvenile delinquents is 'disadvantaged children'. When this was first publicised in my office, I was flooded by inquiries about the definition of 'disadvantaged children' because nobody wants a home for juvenile delinquents in our midst in Howard Springs. I was assured by the public servants in the Planning Authority and also by public servants in the Department of Health and Community Services that it was not a home for disadvantaged children but for disabled children. In my many conversations with people from the 2 departments, the term 'disabled children' was used again and again. If it is the intention of the Department of Health and Community services to purchase a block of land so that Somerville Homes can set up a group home for disabled children - kiddies in wheelchairs who cannot walk and so forth - nobody would have any objection. I said that on the phone. I also asked if I could have some information to satisfy my constituents' comments and inquiries.

This notice was exhibited in my office from 15 to 18 April. As soon as I received it, I asked for more information, and that was before 15 April or about that time. I received the information today - 17 May! I want to know, and the people in the area whose blocks immediately adjoin the site for the

proposed group home want to know, why there has been such secrecy. Why weren't those people told what the group home was to be used for?

Mr Dale: My officers have gone down to speak to them.

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH: They have not! I am telling you that they have not. I have been contacted by 2 people whose blocks immediately adjoin the site for the proposed group home. Neither of those 2 people was notified.

Mr Dale: They are whistling in your ear.

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH: They are not whistling in my ear. I would say that the public servants who have given you the information have been whistling in your ear - and doing more than that.

Mr Deputy Speaker, the minister is implying that my constituents have been lying. I would like him to say that outside. They have not been lying.

Because information was not made available, those 2 people thought the worst. They still do not know what the group home is to be used for because I am pretty sure that they would not have received the information that I received today.

Mr Dale: They have been told. There is a briefing note and if you go down to your little old office ...

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH: I have it here. It was faxed through to me today. The information came to me today. I would say that the department has Buckley's chance of sending it out to all the local people. It did not pay them the courtesy of even notifying them that the group home is to be built.

Mr Dale: Yes it did.

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH: It did not. Would you like me to tell you the names of the people concerned?

Mr Dale: Certainly. Can you write them down?

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH: They are Mrs Oates and Mrs Nichols. Neither have been told. I am not writing them down. You can write as well as I can, so you write them down. You probably did not go to school as long as I did.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I do not know what the outcome of this development application will be when it is heard by the Rural Planning Authority. If it is for disabled young children, I do not think that anybody will have any objection. I would not have any objection. I want it to be made clear, however, whether or not it is for disadvantaged children. When I read through the information that has been sent out by the Department of Health and Community Services, I see that the group home is not for children at all but for adults.

Mr Dale: Adolescents.

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH: Adults.

Mr Dale: Adolescents.

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH: They are not adolescents. A 25-year-old is not an adolescent and that is what your paper refers to. You do not know what is going on in your own department.

Mr Dale: Adolescents-adults.

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH: It refers to 16- to 25-year-olds. A 25-year-old is not an adolescent.

Mr Deputy Speaker, the next subject I would like to speak on today is the Fred's Pass Show. I would like to compliment the organisers, the members of the Litchfield Apex Club. A number of honourable members attended although it is a pity that a few more did not do so. I saw 3 ministers there and perhaps I would have seen more if I had been near the CLP stall.

Mr Coulter: You saw more at the official opening.

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH: I saw you. I saw the Minister for Lands and Housing and the Minister for Transport and Works but I did not see any others.

The Litchfield Apex Club has to be complimented. It is a very active group. The Fred's Pass Show gets bigger and better every year and it is a community show. The Apex group takes on any recommendation for change put forward by community groups if it is for the betterment of the community. The show provides a great opportunity for community groups, charitable groups and service groups to set up stalls and earn money for their particular causes. It is a great place for an active involvement by small businesses in the area, which can display their wares in a very intimate atmosphere. It is also a great opportunity for people who make things themselves to display their wares and sell them.

I would like to tell honourable members a little story about the 3 political parties which all had stalls at the show. This story was told to me by a couple of people. Being an independent member, I speak to people from the 3 political parties. The story is quite telling in terms of the political situation. The ALP stall had a raffle and was charging \$1 per ticket. I checked it out and I think members of the ALP are well on the way to capitalism despite their socialistic tendencies. They did not give away balloons, probably because they think that the disadvantaged in the community are getting enough help from the government. You had to buy a raffle ticket from them before you got a balloon.

The CLP also had a stall where its members were working very hard to raise money. In raising that money, they were plagiarising someone else's idea. They kicked out the member for Sadadeen but, when they saw that he was making pancakes to raise money for charitable groups in Alice Springs, they thought it was a good idea and they too set about making pancakes. I heard they had considerable trouble selling them because many people saw them eating their own pancakes. They also had a lot of trouble giving away their balloons.

Now we come to the National Party. I do not know whether the Leader of the Territory National Party will speak on this later. Perhaps he will, perhaps he will not. The Nationals had a raffle and they only charged 50c per ticket. The National Party is supposed to represent capitalistic people. Its members had enough sense to know that the best way of selling tickets was to keep the price down. As an added attraction, they gave away balloons. I know about those because I had my Noel's Ark, my animal nursery, at the show and I was becoming fed up with all the National Party balloons that were

coming in. I had to take charge of only a couple of ALP balloons but it looked as though I belonged to the National Party because, in order to stop its balloons getting past my door, I had to hold on to them. It is only a comment, perhaps tongue-in-cheek, but the people in the rural area are pretty basic and they place a lot of importance on these matters.

Mr McCARTHY (Victoria River): Mr Speaker, I have received a petition from 539 citizens of the Northern Territory which does not bear the Clerk's certificate as it does not conform with the requirements of standing orders. The petition reads:

At Lot No 108 Adelaide River is an historical site on the National Trust listing. This site has the old cell block in situ and adjacent are the quarters to the police station. We would appreciate all interested parties who would like to see this block preserved in its natural state and not turned into a bus terminal and parking area to please sign this petition to show public interest in retaining this historical site for the preservation of history.

Before seeking leave to table this petition from such a large number of people, I would like to relate my concern and disappointment that such a petition has been raised under the banner of the Adelaide River Historical Society because it does not relate to the actual situation. In fact, there was an application for that block of land on which the old police cell block is situated and that application was under consideration by the Department of Lands and Housing. I believe that an offer may have been made. A condition of the offer is that the purchaser would be required to restore and maintain the old police cell block and, to my way of thinking, that is a sensible way to go.

The building has been falling into disrepair for many years. In consultation with the local progress association, I examined it about 3 years ago. At that time, the association was considering obtaining it and improving it for use as a meeting place. Because of the very poor state of the building, the association decided that the project was not worth while. I think it is unfortunate that this fairly misleading petition has been circulated. I suspect it would not have been signed by quite so many people had it related the full facts including the requirement that the building be repaired and maintained by the purchaser of the block on which it is situated.

I hope my comments will be taken into account if consideration is to be given to the contents of the petition. I do not make them lightly. There are a large number of signatories to the petition but I think that, in many cases, they have been misled. Mr Speaker, I seek leave to table the petition.

Leave granted.

Mr McCARTHY: Mr Speaker, in answer to a question this morning, the Minister for Industries and Development spoke of trade links with Guam. A couple of years ago, I had the good fortune of visiting Guam and, when I returned, I spoke about the trade in fruit bats. Perhaps I am in danger of becoming known as the person who was keen to sell fruit bats to Guam. Nevertheless, fruit bats are regarded as a great delicacy in Guam whereas in Australia they are regarded as a nuisance. It was put to me this morning that perhaps fruit bats are protected in some way and therefore are unavailable for sale to Guam. However, we have been able to obtain approval to farm crocodiles for commercial use and I believe we should also have the ability to harvest fruit bats. I am fairly certain that fruit bats would be easy to

harvest. The Guamanians were paying \$US10 per carcass. It is worth considering the potential of that trade because there is certainly no shortage of fruit bats in the Northern Territory. It would be a new trade and perhaps one in which Aboriginal people could become involved. I find the possibility of great interest.

The population of Guam is about 140 000 to 150 000 people - very similar to that of the Northern Territory - although the island is only 26 km long and 13 km wide. Approximately half of the population comprises US servicemen and people who are there because the US servicemen are there. One of their major problems was finding reasonable places to go for holidays at a reasonable rate. Many wished to be able to visit Australia. Their only opportunity normally was via rest and recreation on the refuelling aircraft and those people were very keen to find easy links to Australia rather than having to travel via Manila, Singapore or Tokyo, as they had to at that stage, which was very expensive. If transport links could be established, that could be a valuable trade.

Mr Coulter: They could come down on the back of flying foxes.

Mr McCARTHY: Yes, they could.

Mr Speaker, last week, while in Brisbane for a meeting of Ministers for Labour, I had the opportunity to visit the Expo site in Brisbane. Because it was a Saturday afternoon, the Expo site was extremely crowded and I spent some time at the Northern Territory stand. After seeing some of displays and the pavilions at the Expo, on which large sums had obviously been spent, I think it is a credit to the Northern Territory that, for a very minimal sum, we have been able to produce such an eye-catching display that is attracting so many people. I give credit to all those responsible for that stand and to the Department of Industries and Development which was responsible for getting it up and running.

Recently, I was able to visit the start of Droving Australia at Newcastle Waters. I had hoped to be there for the whole weekend, but that was not possible as it turned out. However, I was down there for a reasonable time because Droving Australia interested me greatly. Again, it is a clear indication that the Northern Territory can provide a great show for very minimal cost. The Treasurer is looking at me with a frown. The Northern Territory government and private sponsors have been able to put together what I believe is one of the truly Australian bicentennial events - something that will live in the minds of many people for a long time. If it is well recorded on film, I believe it will be rank with all of the other great events of the bicentennial. Unfortunately, I suspect it has not been made as familiar to people around Australia as perhaps it has to people in the Northern Territory. Nevertheless, it is a great endeavour.

In talking about that event, I would like to pay tribute to Syd Saville whose idea it was. At the time, Syd Saville was the Secretary of the Department of Primary Production and he was able to come up with this significant idea of Droving Australia. All credit should be given for his idea and for the original working up of the proposal. Until last year, as the Secretary of the Department of Primary Production, Syd had the responsibility for that particular event and it is a great credit to him and to others who have been involved with it. The drovers' camps, the only feature that was supported by the Bicentennial Authority, will continue for some time throughout this year. I am hopeful that they will be maintained in some form because I think they have a great relevance to our tourism industry for the

bush. I would like to think that private persons would be prepared to take them on as an ongoing sign that the droving spirit in Australia is not dead.

Mr EDE (Stuart): Mr Speaker, like the member for Sadadeen, I wish to talk about the floods in Alice Springs. The first point I wish to make is that the people of Alice Springs are not prepared to have a half-baked flood mitigation measure that, somehow or other, incorporates a recreational component. We do not want compromise. We do not want the whole concept of mitigation to be, if I can use the expression, watered down to allow the government to have a cheap recreation dam.

Mr Speaker, apart from the deaths that occurred in the river, the thing that turned me off most about those floods was the remarks of the Chief Minister. The day after the floods, the Chief Minister, on camera, blamed the Aboriginal people of Alice Springs for the damage that the floods had caused. I said at the time on radio in Alice Springs and elsewhere that I thought it was a most cowardly attack by the Chief Minister. He did not attempt to rebut that charge because, in retrospect, I think he would have to admit that his attack was most cowardly. From his position of power and privilege, he made patently untrue statements directed at one group of people in the community, some of whom had died as a result of the floods. I could say that the victim in this case was blamed to an extent that we do not often witness even in this House.

Mr Speaker, I must tell you that I was also most disappointed at the member for Braiuling's remarks reported in the NT News, which seemed to back up the Chief Minister's statements. The facts speak otherwise. The facts are that the traditional owners of Alice Springs have never opposed a flood mitigation proposal that has been put to them. In fact, they have agreed with every one of them. They themselves have proposed a number of ideas which they feel could be of assistance.

I was also present at the meeting in the council chambers to which the member for Sadadeen referred. In fact, the member may have taken some exception to the fact that I was sitting up the front whilst he was sitting in the crowd. The reason was that the Mayor and I had recognised the need for that meeting to allow people to express their views. It was very clear that the people at that meeting were not willing to compromise flood mitigation for recreation. They stated that they wished to have a total flood mitigation plan developed for the area. In fact, I put before them a number of different ideas, a range of which could have a very substantial effect. I spoke on the flood mitigation levies on the Charles and Todd Rivers which the member from Sadadeen dismisses because he says they will have only a flood mitigation effect. Mr Speaker, that is what we are on about: flood mitigation.

I spoke about replacing the road through Heavitree Gap with a cantilever bridge. The road development through Heavitree Gap is already having a damming effect in that area as the water is building up behind it. In the context of future development, people are already talking about the possible need for a 4-lane highway through that area. We must start looking at alternatives and I believe a cantilever bridge may be one of the options.

Sandmining in the Charles and Todd Rivers, down to the Ross Highway causeway and behind the flood mitigation levies, will provide a source of sand which, while it is not adequate in its present form for use in the construction industry, is quite attractive.

Mr Collins interjecting.

Mr EDE: That is how much you know, Denis. Why don't you keep quiet? Mr Speaker, the sand is dirty sand. The Todd River is different from most of the other mainland rivers that run through the MacDonnell Ranges in that the others run through gaps and are much more ancient in their formation. In geological terms, the Todd River is much younger. The amount of fines brought down the Todd is far higher as a proportion of the total load than is the case with rivers such as the Hugh, Jay Creek etc. That is why the sands out of the Todd have to be washed before they can be used. It is one of the reasons why the water in any recreation dam would have a very high proportion of fines in it and would not be anywhere near as attractive as a recreation lake on the Hugh River or Jay Creek.

I spoke of alternative usage of the headwaters area of the Charles-Todd system to increase the ground cover and reduce run-off. The Attorney-General, who happened to be there, stated that it was 4%. It is the top 4% that we are worried about. We are not talking about reducing the flooding by 100%. The flooding is a natural occurrence and the water will go down the river. We are talking about trying to hold back the top 20% and reduce a 1-in-100-year flood to a 1-in-20-year flood. If, by means of one measure, you can effect 25% of the saving you require, it is well worth looking at. The casino access bridge needs to be replaced with a riverbed causeway and an upgradable alternative emergency access to the St John Valley via the powerhouse road. That would stop much of the local flooding in that area.

I spoke about the construction of earthen levee banks using sand mined from the Todd. In areas such as your own, Mr Speaker, where the flooding was well above that predicted as 1-in-100-year flooding, the development of earthen banks along the Charles River may help to contain those waters.

In terms of the dam at Welatje Therre, one idea which was discussed was that of a half-level wall with a v-section rising up to a higher level wall which would contain a fair amount of water before it rose above a certain level and discharged through the v-section. That is the half-and-half idea to which I was referring: the compromise between mitigation and recreation. On the other hand, if the v-section were deepened to riverbed level, there would be a much more substantial mitigating effect because the water would commence its discharge as soon as the river started to flow. The rate of discharge would increase as the river rose behind the dam, with the v-section diminishing what would otherwise be a 1-in-a-100-year flow to a 1-in-20-year flow. The water would not start to back up at the commencement of the flow. It is necessary to discharge water in the early stages because that water causes no harm whatsoever. The rate of discharge is increased as the rain continues and water builds up behind the wall, thus maximising the flood mitigation effect.

Mr Speaker, to return to my original point, it is a fact that lives were lost because of the floods. In 1983, the Northern Territory government talked about all the flood mitigation work it would undertake in the area. It has been talking for 5 years. In 1988, we had our worst floods and more lives were lost. In reflecting on the lack of action in the 5 years since lives were lost in the 1983 flood, all the government could do was make a cowardly attack on the Aboriginal people of the Alice Springs region who, in fact, have agreed to the flood mitigation areas. It has been the government which has been preventing flood mitigation from going ahead. It has not shown any interest. It put the issue on the back burner, deciding that it had a low priority and could wait until another day.

Mr Speaker, I almost forgot to mention the minister responsible for the Power and Water Authority who has managed to establish a new low in his negotiations with the Sacred Sites Protection Authority. He was in a position to put a proposal which could have been fairly easily negotiated and settled. If it had been put properly, it is likely that the traditional owners would have said: 'It hurts but maybe we can discuss it with other people. If we can point out the flood mitigation effects and determine the limits of the work, we can discuss it with other people up and down the dreaming track'. It probably could have been worked out with very little heartburn and trouble. However, this proposal was the only one since 1983 on which there was absolutely no consultation with the Aboriginal Sacred Sites Protection Authority. The authority was not even informed of the proposal. The first that it heard about it was on the morning before the meeting attended by the Attorney-General in the Garden Room.

Mr Coulter: Is that correct?

Mr EDE: That is absolutely stupid, Mr Speaker! It is snatching defeat from the jaws of victory.

Mr Coulter: You do not know what you are talking about.

Mr EDE: Mr Speaker, my information comes from a person whom I have found over the years to have far more credibility than the Treasurer.

Mr Coulter: That is good. He has been selling you down the drain all these years.

Mr MANZIE (Attorney-General): Mr Speaker, I must make some comments in response to the previous speaker. I was present at a public meeting when the member for Stuart gave the same expert comment on the floods according to Brian Ede. The hydraulic engineer who was present quite competently pointed out that everything that the honourable member said was absolute myth and bore no relation to the facts.

In regard to the notification of the Sacred Sites Protection Authority of a particular proposal, the Director of the Sacred Sites Protection Authority was informed of the proposal by me, prior to attending the press conference of the minister responsible for the Power and Water Authority. That was 3 or 4 weeks before any work was carried out. The member for Stuart's remarks tonight typify his approach. Truth means very little to him but a good story is all important.

My main subject tonight is the proposed Emily Hills subdivision. There are 2 proposals for subdivisions at Emily Hills, which is just outside Alice Springs. Unfortunately, having made his little contribution on the subject, the member for MacDonnell has left the Assembly as he always does. Looking around, one can see that members of the opposition are behaving in their normal fashion: they simply do not attend.

One of the proposed subdivisions is comparatively small. It would involve 50 ha divided into 67 lots with an average area of about 6000 m². The other is considerably larger. It would involve 218 ha divided into 440 lots, ranging in area from 1000 m² to 5000 m². Any proposal for subdivision in Emily Hills is liable to be contentious because of the public perception that the Territory government's endorsement of the Undoolya option for the expansion of Alice Springs in June last year meant that all future development of Emily Hills was off. However, the second proposal is particularly

contentious because it contains small blocks roughly equal in size to large suburban house blocks. Such a proposal can be easily equated in the public mind with a suburban subdivision rather than a rural subdivision which would certainly be in conflict with the government's stated intention of proceeding with the development of Undoolya. Both proposals are due to be considered by the Planning Authority in June and this raises the additional complicating factor that the authority will be considering the proposals before the release of the Alice Springs strategy plan which was announced by the then Minister for Lands, Mr Ray Hanrahan, at the time of the Undoolya decision.

Alderman Bob Kennedy, who is running for Mayor, has called on the Planning Authority to defer consideration of the proposal until after the strategy plan has been released. He has also pointed out that the TIO is a major shareholder in Northcorp, the company behind the larger of the 2 subdivision proposals. The member for MacDonnell has called for the Northcorp proposal to be rejected on the ground that it conflicts with the government's intention of proceeding with the Undoolya option.

The government's position is as follows. First and foremost, the proposals for subdivision at Emily Hills are the product of private developers acting independently. They are not supported or sponsored by the Territory government in any way. The public planning process has been set up to enable members of the public to view and to comment on development proposals and to have their opinions taken into consideration by the Planning Authority. It would certainly be wrong for me, as the minister, to intervene in that process. However, it is not true to say that all development in Emily Hills was precluded by the government's decision in favour of the Undoolya option.

It is expected that stage 1 of Undoolya will cater for 10 000 people. That is what we are talking about when we talk about the future expansion of Alice Springs, not some small rural subdivision. Indeed, the future development of Emily Hills was definitely not precluded by the Cabinet decision on Undoolya. In fact, Cabinet said only that future development proposals for Emily Hills must first be considered by the joint planning group in Alice Springs. That group consists of representatives from the Power and Water Authority, the Department of Transport and Works, the Department of Lands and Housing and the Alice Springs Town Council. This Cabinet decision was read out in full to the Alice Springs Town Council by the then minister, so that there could be no suggestion that the council did not know what was occurring. A technical sub-group of the joint planning group considered the Northcorp proposal late last year. It considered that the proposal had reached the point where it should be put to the Planning Authority so that it could go through the public planning process. Far from being a secret deal pushed through by the government, it is in fact a private proposal from a private group. It is proceeding through the appropriate public planning processes.

Until the outburst from the member for MacDonnell, I had no knowledge of the shareholdings of Northcorp. There is no reason why I should have had such knowledge. To suggest that there is some hidden agenda because of the TIO involvement is not only impertinent but borders on being defamatory. In addition, I am somewhat at a loss to explain why it should be claimed that I intend to consider these proposals before the Alice Springs Regional Strategy Plan is released. It seems to me that, until recently, the only person who has never been asked about what I would do when considering the proposals was myself. The member for MacDonnell has given his version of what I would do and Alderman Kennedy made similar statements. It would certainly have been helpful if someone had asked me.

For the record, I find it insulting to suggest that I would not wait for the plan to be released before considering either of the proposed subdivisions. It has always been my intention to wait for the plan before making decisions and I do not intend to change my mind to satisfy various individuals who wish to achieve some sort of political glory for themselves. Also, for the record, it is totally incorrect to assume that, because a proposal is before the Planning Authority, the Planning Authority will recommend it for approval or, indeed, that I will approve it. One of the most distressing aspects of this issue has been the appalling disrespect that has been shown to the Planning Authority. The system has been established to allow the public to have a say on planning matters and any suggestion that it should be compromised in any way is reprehensible.

On a number of occasions, the member for MacDonnell has made untruthful comments about planning and land matters. He has a habit of making remarks which hint at improper behaviour or dishonesty in relation to land matters. Either he never supports these with facts or he makes untruthful claims to support his arguments. It is appropriate that members opposite question government policy or comment on government actions but to continually suggest dishonesty or shonky behaviour by the government in relation to land matters, simply to gain cheap headlines, with absolutely nothing to substantiate those claims, is certainly most inappropriate and unfortunate. I only hope that members of the Territory media and the Territory's community will take a close look at the member for MacDonnell's modus operandi over the last 4 or 5 years in respect of land matters and will treat his comments accordingly.

Mr SETTER (Jingili): Mr Deputy Speaker, quite recently, I had the privilege of visiting Ambon to represent the Chief Minister at the Anzac Day ceremony in that city. I must say that it was quite a moving and stimulating experience. The setting is absolutely magnificent. One might ask how a war cemetery can be a magnificent sight but the beautiful landscaping, the lovely green grass, the gardens and the enormous rain trees that overlook that solemn place make it very inspiring. It is particularly magnificent at 7.30 in the morning with the smoke of the village fires from the night before hanging in the coolness of the morning and the sunlight gleaming through and being highlighted by the haze hanging there amongst those trees. It is a sight that I will remember for a long time.

Since October 1967, it has been the custom that the remnants of Gull Force - the 2/21 battalion - who were encamped on Ambon during the war, return there for Anzac Day. They commenced an annual pilgrimage to that city in 1967. They have returned every year since then and, in more recent times, they have been accompanied by the RAN Corvette Association and 13 Squadron RAAF or a least those members who still remain with us today. Mr Miles Cooper from the Australian Embassy also attended the ceremony. I note that the Australian Ambassador to Indonesia, Mr Bill Morrison, is in Darwin today. Mr Cooper works at the Australian Embassy in Jakarta and is the most senior officer after Ambassador Morrison. Also present was the Defence Attache, the Naval Attache, Colonel Bryant representing the Army from Darwin, Group Captain Leach representing the RAAF and Commander Eames from the RAN. The ship's company from HMAS Gawler, which had travelled to Ambon, were also there. They had taken with them about 14 members of the Gull Force Group, Mr Ross Mangan representing the RSL, and myself.

When we arrived in Ambon, we visited a site at Laha. Laha is the airstrip in Ambon and during the war it was defended by 300-odd members of the 2/21 Battalion. We visited that site because it was convenient as we headed into the city on that Saturday afternoon. The interesting thing about the

site is that a number of the 300 men who defended Laha were killed in battle. I forget the exact number, but I will come to that in a moment. The remainder, who surrendered, were marched about 2 km to a little village just off the strip. Within a few hours, they were executed by the Japanese. Their bodies were placed in 2 mass graves and they remained there until after the war, when their bodies were recovered and relocated in Tantui War Cemetery. It really brings one back to earth to stand there amongst the palm trees, surrounded by villagers and smiling children, and to think that, just 40 years ago, 229 men were decapitated by the samurai sword.

As I indicated earlier, the ceremony took place at 7.30 on Anzac Day morning and the Indonesian navy turned out a party of military people to effect a guard of honour. Also, there was the ship's company from HMAS Gawler. The official, whom I mentioned earlier, a number of supporters who travelled over from Darwin and from other places and quite a number of Indonesian officials were there to pay their respects. The chaplain from the RAAF conducted the ceremony and afterwards we moved behind the city to a hillside where there is a road that comes down through the forest. These days, of course, there are little villages all around but, back in those days, it was scrub and bush. It was at that site that a Corporal Doolan effected a rearguard action. He climbed into a big banyan tree and managed to take 30 Japanese with him before he was eventually shot dead. In so doing, he enabled his comrades to effect their retreat back up into the mountains.

Of course, it was to no avail because the Japanese had landed something like 30 000 troops on Ambon and the 2/21 Battalion had a company of about 1000. There were some Dutch there but I understand they surrendered almost immediately. The troops were hopelessly outnumbered and their forces were split because of the size of Ambon and the need to defend Laha. Ambon city itself is large. They had no hope at all. It was almost murder.

Mr Deputy Speaker, let me read for you the account given by retired Lieutenant Colonel Rod Gabriel. I will quote from his account.

In December 1941, 1131 members of Gull Force were encamped in quarters at Tantui on the site of this cemetery. Of the 292 members of Gull Force defending the Laha airstrip in the battles against the Japanese forces at the end of January 1942, 47 were killed and 229 were later executed. The members defending the town of Ambon were overrun and those holding the Nona and Amhusu lines were pushed back to Eri and Latuhalat by overwhelming numbers. On 4 February 1942, 809 members of Gull Force were marched into Tantui Camp which became the POW camp.

In October 1942, a third of the POWs were shipped to Hainan off the south coast of China. Of the 267 moved to Hainan, 75 died and are buried in the British Commonwealth War Cemetery in Yokohama in Japan. 10 unaccounted for are named on the Singapore memorial at the Kranji War Cemetery in Singapore, and 181 were recovered.

Of the 528 who remained in the POW camp at Tantui, 407 died and were buried in the POW Camp cemetery, and 121 were recovered. Of the 1131 original members of Gull Force, 52 escaped either before the surrender or from the POW Camp and returned to Australia. 300 were repatriated to Australia afterwards and the death toll numbered 779, of whom 694 are buried or commemorated in this beautiful Ambon War Cemetery.

On 15 August 1945, a RAN force attempted to recover the Allied POWs in Ambon but, as surrender formalities had not been completed, the Japanese refused to cooperate and the mission was cancelled in order to avoid possible retaliation against the POWs. However, on 10 September, 4 RAN corvettes (HMAS Glenelg, Cootamundra, Junee and Latrobe) came alongside the main wharf in Ambon and recovered the POWs who had endured over 3 years and 7 months of captivity.

The same 4 corvettes, together with other RAN ships carrying the occupation force, returned to Ambon later in September to effect the formal surrender of the Japanese.

13 Squadron RAAF operated from Laha (Ambon), Namlea (Buru) and Babo (West Irian) on long-range bombing and strafing missions on Japanese bases at the absolute range limit of their Lockheed Hudsons. The squadron also carried out long-range air and sea patrols and attacked enemy naval and merchant shipping. Losses incurred amounted to over 80% of aircrew and aircraft.

You can appreciate, Mr Deputy Speaker, that Ambon is indeed very important for the Northern Territory in this regard because that battalion encamped here and embarked from here. In fact, 13 Squadron RAAF was raised in Darwin and one of its members still lives in Parap. Those members of the squadron who are still alive recall the happy days that they spent in Darwin before they embarked on that horrendous expedition. They hold Darwin very close to their hearts. I believe that it is a responsibility of the Northern Territory government to ensure that we respect their memory and continue to involve ourselves in the annual pilgrimage to Ambon. I will certainly be putting that recommendation to the Chief Minister because I think it is an inherent responsibility of this government and the people of the Northern Territory to maintain that contact and to support the members of Gull Force and those other associations in that very important pilgrimage to Ambon in Indonesia.

Mr PERRON (Industries and Development): Mr Deputy Speaker, I want to place on record a few comments about the attitude of a couple of journalists with regard to the incident recently in Darwin during which some Indonesian journalists were offended by posters on a wall at the Darwin Press Club. Honourable members will no doubt be aware of the issue as it has received considerable press coverage over the last couple of weeks. I would like to comment on the attitude of a couple of the reporters. First, I will quote from a transcript prepared from Territory Extra on 6 May 1988 in which Chris Bond, the President of the Australian Journalists' Association, was interviewed by a reporter. I will put a few comments from that transcript on the record.

As honourable members are aware, of course, the reporters from Indonesia had been to Expo in Brisbane and had taken some footage there, no doubt to be shown on Indonesian television. I understand they had been invited to come to Darwin on their return journey to Indonesia, to pick up some more footage and generally speak to people here, to hopefully gain a good impression and to take back a feeling of goodwill to Indonesia. During their stay, they were invited to the Darwin Press Club where the offending posters, advertising the play 'Death at Balibo' which is being performed in Darwin at present, were on the wall. I will quote a few items from this transcript of the interview between the reporter and Chris Bond, President of the AJA in Darwin.

Reporter: Did you know that this Indonesian crew would be in the press club later in the day?

The reporter was talking to her about putting the posters up.

Chris Bond: Yes, I did. I understood from the Press Club organisers that a get-together had been arranged through the Protocol Department and the Press Club for them to come in and meet fellow journalists here in Darwin.

Obviously, that was a commendable activity by the Chief Minister's Protocol and Public Relations Branch in conjunction with whoever manages the Darwin Press Club. It would be appropriate for a get-together to occur in a social atmosphere so that those people might get to know each other a little better. The motives were there and I think they were quite good.

Reporter: Were the posters put up so that the Indonesians would see them?

Chris Bond: Oh, certainly not. They were there to advertise primarily the special AJA night that we were sponsoring and I think it was purely coincidental that it coincided with the afternoon in which the Indonesian journalists were due to have a get-together, social gathering with journalists here.

We will see in just a moment that she changes the story a little about this being a completely coincidental matter.

Report: Nevertheless, you must have assumed that they would see them?

Chris Bond: Oh, yes I did, and in many ways I was happy that they would see it. I felt it was a subject of obvious mutual interest.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I heard the interview and I could not help but think at the time what delight was in this lady's voice in responding to the question. She was beside herself that this had had so much impact and she had obviously played a very big role in it herself.

Reporter: Did it occur to you that the Indonesians may be offended by the posters at all?

Chris Bond: I thought, as professional journalists, that they would not be offended. I could understand them feeling, one could say, possibly a little awkward that the situation was being, if you like, revived. But I felt, 'we are all professionals; we can wear that'.

I am sure that, as a professional, she can wear it. Of course, it was not Chris Bond who was wearing the embarrassment, the awkwardness and the lack of diplomacy. The people who were wearing it were a couple of young Indonesian journalists. I know they were young because I spoke to them myself a day or two before this event. They seemed to be quite young men who were trying to do their job for their country, their government and whomever else they were working for. That was Chris Bond's reaction.

I was very pleased to note that not all journalists were feeling quite as delighted about the results of those posters going on the wall as Chris Bond was. I quote from another transcript. At 5 pm on 5 May on ABC radio, Claire Colyer interviewed Keith Lovard, who had been in the Press Club on the day of the event or just prior to the visit by the Indonesians:

Keith Lovard: As I understand it, there was an element of provocation in putting the posters where they were.

Reporter: It seemed that way, do you mean?

Keith Lovard: Well, I was in fact in the Press Club earlier in the day when one was put up and there was a comment by the person involved that 'they should see that' so I don't think there is any doubt that it was done to draw attention to what happened in 1975.

There was no doubt whatsoever in that reporter's mind of the intention of those people who put the posters up. Later in the interview, the interviewer did not seem to be making very much headway with Mr Lovard. The transcript registers the fact that he was not saying what she wanted to hear:

Claire Colyer: As a journalist, can I ask if you would be offended in the same sort of way had the inverse event occurred, had you had such an experience in Indonesia?

Keith Lovard: If I was in Indonesia and something, say, pointing out Australian Aboriginal problems was plastered over a wall where I had been invited, yes, I think I would feel embarrassed by that situation.

I think that it is pretty commendable for him to have said that on air - I understand that he is a journalist with the ABC - and for him to have put forward the views which obviously he felt quite strongly.

The most excellent coverage from my point of view of the incident was that by Dave Nason. I do not think I have ever said a nice word about Dave Nason, certainly not in this Assembly. I found his article on the subject in the Northern Territory News of Saturday 7 May 1988, headed 'Posters Were Insulting', to be a very unusual and commendable piece of journalism. Dave Nason accepted a degree of blame on behalf of people who should have known better. I thought that was a very commendable attitude. I will read a section because I would like to have it recorded in Hansard. In the latter part of his article, he discussed the various ramifications of this event. He said:

The posters were discussed at length before the Indonesians arrived and during their short stay. The tone of the conversation tended to be sniggering. There was even smug self-satisfaction that an act of international daring was taking place.

That was dead right; that is exactly what was taking place. He continued:

I know; I was there and I was part of the conversations. Many of us felt that the posters were somehow wrong for the occasion. None of us cared enough to bite the bullet and insist that they come down. Now that the damage has been done, there are many of us who wish we had because it has become apparent that future access to Indonesia will not be easy if you are an Australian journalist. This is a tragedy. Those who put up the posters did so, by their own admission, to challenge the Indonesian visitors to discussion about East Timor and the deaths of the Australian journalists.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I think that piece of writing by Dave Nason, casting aspersions on some of his journalistic colleagues in the Press Club and on

himself in his admission that he wished he had done something about it, was very big of him. I congratulate him for having written it because it tends to renew my faith in journalism a little to think that there are people who are prepared to write that sort of material when the chips are down. I think it should be recorded in Hansard.

Mr TUXWORTH (Barkly): Mr Deputy Speaker, I would like to raise a few matters in the adjournment this afternoon. One follows on from the remarks made earlier concerning Droving Australia. I would like to put a couple of points on record because I believe some people involved in setting up Droving Australia have really escaped the limelight and have not received some of the thanks they deserve.

The concept of Droving Australia was first raised at a Primary Production Ministers Conference in Cairns in 1984-85. In closing the meeting, the chairman, John Kerin, indicated to the ministers that something special should be done by the primary production sector for the bicentennial occasion. He asked the ministers to give a little thought before the next meeting as to what could be done because it is not easy to base an activity around primary production that would commemorate the 200th year. Off the top of his head, one of the ministers at the table said: 'I reckon we ought to have a big cattle drive, the way we used to do it in the early days'. Nothing more was said. Each minister agreed to come back at the next meeting and put forward some proposals.

I must confess that, as Minister for Primary Production at that time, I came back to Darwin and did not think any more about it. However, about a week later, Syd Saville - who is fondly known in local writings as El Cid and who was then the secretary of the department - came in and said: 'We have been doing a bit of work on this proposal and we would like you to look at what we have done and tell us what you think'. He outlined a proposal for a cattle drive from McArthur River to Camooweal which, in fact, was the route taken by some of the very early drives. Syd commissioned a couple of people in the department to put their thinking caps on and they came up with some very inventive ideas that captured the imagination. I was quite happy for them to flush things out further and, about a week later, they came back with the idea of the drive right across from the VRD into Queensland. It grew from that. It was one of those things that captured the imagination of just about everybody who was involved in it.

It is important that Syd Saville and the team of people who worked with him in the early days of Droving Australia should be mentioned in Hansard, more for their ingenuity than for the work they did. They had the ingenuity to devise the concept of Droving Australia and I think it would be pretty hard in this country today to find a group of people who could put together an idea like that. You either have that sort of flair or you don't. I must say that there were times when I was absolutely horrified at the cost. The dollar signs were clicking over between \$600 000 and \$1m. However, as the project developed and became something of a national symbol, and provision was made for old drovers and young stockmen and families to be involved, along with company sponsors, Territorians began to take a great deal of pride in the project. I was more than delighted to see it come to fruition.

The highlight was the weekend at Newcastle Waters, which was like 'old home' week. There were people there who had not seen each other for 30 or 40 years. One man I met there, who is still a constituent of mine, met a girl he was engaged to when they were both 18. He is now close to 60 and she had come back especially for the occasion. There were people there who

had been on drives together right across the Tablelands, going back as far as 1948 and 1952. On the Sunday morning, when all the drovers assembled in front of the crowd, among the drovers I saw men whom I have known since I was a young fellow of 9. I did not know they were drovers on the big trail. It was certainly very interesting to see how people turned out to recapture for the last time the atmosphere of a very early pioneering activity that was really our bread and butter.

To top it all off, a man came into my office 2 weeks ago, just before the drive. He was a fellow I went to school with. He said: 'I have come back for the big drive at Newcastle Waters'. I said that I did not even know he had been at Newcastle. He said: 'Yes, my dad brought the store from old man Elliott in 1936 and we lived there until 1949, when we went to Alice and started the butcher shops in Alice Springs. At one stage, we had 4 butcher shops in Alice'. I remember him quite clearly from boarding school. He produced a number of photographs which would have to be classed as priceless. I would like to obtain one of them for my own personal gratification. It shows George Man Fong and Bullwaddy Bates, who was one of Starlight's gang. It was taken in 1936 outside the store at Newcastle Waters. They were both done up in suits, collars, ties and flash hats. They looked as though they were about to go into a restaurant in Pitt Street or be married, as people used to do in those days.

One of the great results of the bicentennial celebrations in the Territory during the last few months is the amount of interest they have generated amongst people in the community who have in their possession an enormous amount of historical material, particularly photographs. Every time we have a celebration like Droving Australia or a book launching, such as the one which the Minister for Education participated in the other day at the Wongabilla Pony Club, somebody else stands up and says that they have a picture, a photograph or story about some person or incident in the past. All of this information is now emerging and being recorded and that is a tremendous thing for the Territory because we are so young and our population has been so mobile. Much of our history has been lost to us and it is very gratifying to have the opportunity of getting much of it back this year.

I must declare my own personal interest in this subject. During the past 15 years, I have watched my mother collecting historical information, cross-referencing all the data she obtains from people, scrounging photographs, asking people to enlarge them and writing away for information. It is a never-ending process. Every time our mail box at home is cleared, there are 2 or 3 letters from someone she has written to checking up on facts about something that happened 50 or 80 years ago. To give an example of that, the other day there was a letter from a man who was involved in the sale of Helen Springs Station at a time when cattle were valued at 3 pounds 12 shillings each. You are flat out buying a steak today for 3 pounds 12 shillings, which would be the equivalent of \$7.

The other issue I would like to touch on tonight is of great importance to the people in the Nicholson River area of my electorate. There has been considerable fuss and bother in the last week about the government's commitment to the Darwin International Grammar School. I am a great supporter of the Darwin International Grammar School and any help the government can give it. But the reality is that, in the community, the government has lost the PR race. People think it is a rip-off. The government can put out as many letters as it likes but, in the eyes of the people, the benefits of government support for the project do not exist. What is important is establishing in the minds of the people that there is equity in education.

I raise now and place on record for the benefit of the minister - and we have discussed it privately - the absolutely desperate need for people in the Nicholson River area to be given a formal education. It is not common to have Aboriginal parents come forward and say: 'I want my kids educated!' However, in the last 6 months, I have had the parents from the Nicholson River area, who live in very basic and primitive conditions by any standard, come into my office and say: 'We must have a school. We have about 25 kids between 5 and 15. None of them has been to school, and we have been out there for 4 years. Something ought to happen'.

They have been told that it is too hard and there is not enough money to do the job. If you are a bureaucrat trying to get people off your doorstep, that is perhaps a nice way of being able to do it. The minister and I know that that is a load of codswallop. We are funded by the Grants Commission to provide an education to people in remote areas. All we are talking about from this point on is how we do it and when we do it. What do people in circumstances like that think - and the minister is aware of similar situations at Robinson River - when they read about \$9m being made available to the Darwin International Grammar School while they cannot get any kind of education for their kids?

As I said a moment ago, it is pretty rare for Aboriginal parents to be knocking on one's door asking how they can get their kids educated and pointing out that they have not had a formal school of any sort for 4 years. I think that we should strike while the iron is hot and ensure that those people obtain the education they want for their children so that they do not lose heart and give it away as a bad joke. Before we realise it, those kids will be 15, 20 or 25 and will have been right through their teens without receiving a formal education.

Having spoken with the minister, I know that he is most sympathetic to the needs of those people, but I wanted to place on record the fact that there is no more time to waste. The excuses that have been put forward so far about funds should be dispelled with great haste, particularly in light of the Darwin International Grammar School furor. It leaves a very bad taste in the mouths of the electorate to think that that sort of thing can happen for the Darwin International Grammar School but, if you are black and live at the back of nowhere, you can whistle Dixie. I know that is not the case and I would ask the minister to really start cracking the whip to see that those kids receive a formal education.

It was also put to me, and I raise this for the minister's benefit, that one of the propositions being considered by the department was stationing a teacher at Borroloola or at Alexandria and flying him or her in on a 4-day-in and 3-day-out basis. That is the greatest load of nonsense that I have ever heard. I hope that the minister will take hold of the issue and give his department a good shake to get some common sense into its thinking.

The situation is chronic and does need addressing. I agree that it is not a matter of money. It is a matter of mechanics and how to do it. I would urge the minister to communicate with the people, let them know that people do care, that there are funds and that something will be done. We do not need this sort of thing appearing on southern television screens. It is the sort of thing that southern television stations feast on. It does us enormous damage and we ought to be making a move to ensure that it does not rear its ugly head.

Mr HARRIS (Education): Mr Deputy Speaker, I will take up the last points that the member for Barkly raised in relation to Nicholson River and indicate to him, as I did privately, that funds have been made available for the establishment of the school. As the honourable member realises, it is very difficult to ensure that staff are made available to attend schools in those isolated communities but I can give him an assurance that the government is concerned about people in the bush areas. I think the issue of assistance given to the Darwin International Grammar School has got out of hand somewhat ...

Mr Tuxworth: That would be the understatement of the week.

Mr HARRIS: That is right. It is the understatement of the week. Even the mention of millions of dollars makes it appear that it is up front. The assistance that we are giving to the Darwin International Grammar School is in line with similar assistance that we give to other schools. It is \$1.45m per year over a 6-year period, and that will take a load off our government education system in Darwin. Also, it will provide opportunities for people out in the bush, as the member for Barkly has acknowledged.

I want to indicate that we are aware of the concerns of the people in isolated communities, particularly in relation to Nicholson River for which money has been made available to establish a school. I still have a few fights on my hand in relation to funding further down the line, but we are very much aware of the needs of the people in those particular communities. I wanted to place that on record.

Motion agreed to; the Assembly adjourned.

Mr Speaker Vale took the Chair at 10 am.

PETITIONS
Air-conditioning of Jingili Preschool

Mr SETTER (Jingili): Mr Speaker, I present a petition from 36 citizens of Jingili and surrounding areas requesting the Assembly to approve the installation of air-conditioning in the Jingili preschool. The petition bears the Clerk's signature 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 in parliament assembled, the humble petition of the undersigned citizens of Jingili and surrounding areas do respectfully petition you to approve the installation of air-conditioning in the Jingili Preschool. We make this request in the knowledge that the students and teachers attending Jingili Preschool operate in a premises which is excessively hot, poorly-ventilated and therefore not conducive to the good health, education and welfare of our children.

Lot 108 Adelaide River

Mr McCARTHY (Victoria River): Mr Speaker, I present a petition from 316 citizens of the Northern Territory requesting that Lot 108 Adelaide River be preserved as an historical site on the National Trust listing. 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:

The humble petition of concerned citizens of the Northern Territory respectfully showeth that Lot No 108 Adelaide River is an historical site on the National Trust listing. This site has the old cell block in situ and adjacent are the quarters to the police station. Your petitioners therefore humbly pray that the Legislative Assembly take such action as is necessary to preserve Block 108 in Adelaide River as an historical site in its natural state and not turn it into a bus terminal or parking area, and your petitioners, as in duty bound, will ever pray.

Air-conditioning of Moil Preschool

Mr SETTER (Jingili): Mr Speaker, I present a petition from 88 citizens of Moil and surrounding areas requesting the Assembly to approve the installation of air-conditioning in the Moil Preschool. 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 and members of the Legislative Assembly in the parliament assembled, the humble petition of the undersigned citizens of Moil and surrounding areas do respectfully petition you to approve the installation of air-conditioning in the Moil Preschool. We make this request in the knowledge that students and teachers attending Moil Preschool operate in a premises which is

excessively hot, poorly-ventilated and therefore not conducive to the good health, education and welfare of our children.

Air-conditioning of Wagaman Preschool

Mr SETTER (Jingili): Mr Speaker, I present a petition from 109 citizens of Wagaman and surrounding areas requesting the Assembly to approve the installation of air-conditioning in the Wagaman Preschool. 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 in parliament assembled, the humble petition of the undersigned citizens of Wagaman and surrounding areas do respectfully petition you to approve the installation of air-conditioning in the Wagaman Preschool. We make this request in the knowledge that students and teachers attending Wagaman Preschool operate in a premises which is excessively hot, poorly-ventilated and therefore not conducive to the good health, education and welfare of our children.

TABLED PAPER Report on Review of Consumer Affairs Policy and Legislation

Mr DALE (Health and Community Services): Mr Speaker, I have a great deal of pleasure in tabling the final report of the working group that conducted a review of consumer affairs policy and legislation in the Northern Territory.

In establishing its inquiry, the government recognised the need to strengthen existing consumer affairs measures in line with modern community expectations. The review represents one of the most wide-ranging inquiries into consumer affairs ever undertaken in this country. The recommendations cover a range of initiatives and their objective is to improve and streamline existing structures and to adapt them to a modern market environment consistent with business realities. The report calls for an overhaul of the existing legislative base to achieve a logical, rational and consistent approach to consumer affairs in the Northern Territory. This report is significant for all Territory residents and crucial to the direction this government takes in framing future policy in this area. For too long, governments throughout Australia have tried to reconcile the legitimate but competing interests of consumers and businesses by providing limited legislative protection in a piecemeal fashion without reference to any coherent or consistent policy. Generally, consumer agencies have directed their energies toward developing protective measures and have taken little interest in promoting appropriate means of self-protection or simplifying avenues of redress.

The working group concluded that, if the interests of both consumers and traders were to be genuinely advanced in a modern-market environment, a coherent and consistent government policy was required - a policy that relied less on legislative intervention in the marketplace and put far greater emphasis on self-regulation, responsible and ethical conduct, individual self-reliance and the provision of practical remedies or redress. This policy ignores the need for legislative action in certain instances, especially in the areas of unfair business practices and the need to ensure the maintenance of minimum standards of performance, but recognises the need to encourage an environment where individual operators can act responsibly.

Mr Speaker, I draw your attention to recommendations in the report for the adoption of a set of policy guidelines. These firm guidelines will act as a frame of reference against which present and future proposals can be assessed and thus ensure a constant and logical approach to consumer affairs. Another proposal broadens the term 'consumer' to encompass certain groups presently denied access to consumer affairs remedies. In particular, I refer to the non-business transactions of small traders, pastoralists and farmers when operating outside their area of business expertise. At present, all such transactions are excluded from consumer protection processes. The recommendations recognise that this is unfair and that these people are entitled to equal access to consumer affairs services in respect of non-business transactions.

The working group concluded that consumer affairs officers should not only inform, advise and protect consumers on an individual basis but that they should do the same for business operators and primary producers in order that ethical traders prosper and a fair market is maintained. I hasten to add that this proposal in no way alters established legal arrangements covering normal commercial transactions nor is there a desire to interfere with these arrangements.

I draw honourable members' attention to other significant recommendations, including the codification of legislation into one act, the introduction of uniform legislative provisions so that Territory businesses and residents are not denied the remedies and protections existing elsewhere in Australia, the emphasis placed on clarifying rights and responsibilities of traders and consumers, the greater attention to be paid to product safety, the simplification of the various remedies of redress, especially the recommendations for a revamped Small Claims Act so that the court system can become a far more accessible venue for the resolution of consumer grievances and the provision of legislative sanctions against unfair or reprehensible business practices.

The thrust of the recommendations is to enhance competition by providing effective remedies for both consumers and businesses who suffer loss through the actions of dishonest or unfair operators. Unfair practices are outside the control of the individual and the community is entitled to expect government action to prohibit such behaviour. This approach recognises that not only consumers are adversely affected by unfair practices in the marketplace but ethical traders as well.

The report acknowledges that both businessmen and consumers have a legitimate interest in maintaining and promoting honest dealing and fair competition. Undesirable business practices often distort the market, damaging and injuring the operations of honest and legitimate businesses while denying consumers a choice or other advantages of a competitive environment. The recommendations seek to establish an environment in which consumers can make purchasing decisions while traders can compete in a market which has practical sanctions against unfair dealing. The legislative sanctions recommended are based on those in the federal Trade Practices Act and on various prohibitions in uniform legislation operating interstate.

The working group recommended that the proposal to codify consumer legislation be discussed with the Parliamentary Counsel. The Parliamentary Counsel has advised that codification would be a formidable and daunting task, expanding the scope of consumer affairs in a manner never envisaged by the working group. It is proposed therefore that, as an alternative, all existing legislation be repealed and replaced by a single consolidated act without

resort to codification. Consolidation of legislative provisions would achieve a consistency of definition, administration and enforcement in line with the spirit of the working group's recommendations. Should the government implement the recommendations, it is envisaged that the proposal for consolidation would be followed in preference to codification. Consolidation would mean that costs to business would be lower. There would be one common set of rules governing the marketplace instead of the present uncoordinated set of regulations.

There is great emphasis throughout Australia today on the need for deregulation. The significance of this issue has not been lost on the working group. An integral part of the recommendations, which I am sure will appeal to the business community, is that relating to self-regulation. Some other measures recommended for consideration include: codes of practice, standard form contracts and mechanisms to encourage individual self-reliance rather than reliance on the bureaucracy. In the spirit of encouraging self-reliance and individual initiatives, the report recommends that an increased emphasis be given to public awareness and education for both consumers and traders and that the feasibility of a one-stop-shop concept for information or advice be investigated.

This report recommends the recasting of the role of consumer affairs in our community to extend its services to all those entitled to have their activities in the marketplace protected and promoted. It recognises the need to provide the necessary legislative support and self-regulatory mechanism to ensure a fair market is maintained, a marketplace where traders and consumers may operate with confidence, have their interests defined, protected and promoted and where unethical traders have no sanction to operate. The report is about implementing measures to maintain standards of behaviour and protecting ethical traders against the predatory activities of undesirable merchants who prefer to concentrate on unfair, deceptive and anti-competitive behaviour. The report is not about inhibiting business operations, nor stifling competition with further red tape. Its intention is to encourage a market environment where ethical traders can get on with the job, where remedies of redress are clarified and simplified, and where standards consistent with strengthening our economy are promoted.

The report is of fundamental significance to all Territorians and, with that in mind, the government intends to invite community comment on its recommendations. To ensure wide-ranging participation, a period of 3 months will be set aside for this purpose. During that time, every opportunity will be given to Territory residents to have access to the report and familiarise themselves with its recommendations. Finally, Mr Speaker, may I emphasise that the report proposes a standard for good business conduct based on the principles of equity and honesty - principles that we all seek to promote.

Mr Speaker, I move that the Assembly take note of the paper.

Mr LEO (Nhulunbuy): Mr Deputy Speaker, it is impossible to go through the entire report but I will draw attention to the fact that consumer issues are very important in my electorate. Whilst I cannot direct my comments to the report, I can certainly direct them to the minister and his statement on the report. Nhulunbuy is similar to many small communities throughout the Northern Territory in that the normal constraints on businesses and trading houses frequently do not exist. The strongest constraint on trading practices within Australia is competition.

Mr Coulter: Will you send this to your electorate?

Mr LEO: The fact is that, in Nhulunbuy and in many other small communities throughout the Northern Territory, fundamental consumer protection does not exist. There is a lack of competition between trading houses. There is nothing secret about that and, if the Leader of Government Business wants to send my comments to any part of my electorate, he is more than welcome to do so because the reality is as I have stated. That applies not only in Nhulunbuy but in many other small communities in the Northern Territory.

Whilst all of the minister's comments related to the trading situation in Darwin, very little of what he said was relevant to communities whose commercial environment completely lacks any form of competition. The minister may feel that relying on trading ethics will solve the problems and I do not doubt that many business houses, including the bulk of business houses in small communities, do their very best to operate ethically. I also suspect that traders in small communities do not abuse their privileged positions. Unfortunately, however, consumers have no basis of comparison for prices of items in their community. They cannot relate the quality or the price of oranges in 1 shop to the quality or price of oranges in another shop. Because of that, they tend to believe that they are being ripped off.

The minister may ask what he can do about that. I appreciate that there is a raging debate about the concept of deregulation, both locally and nationally. The issue has a very high profile in the Australian community. However, for people in small communities, who cannot rely on the norms of commercial constraint, regulation is their only protection. They need some degree of assurance that they are not being ripped off.

I will scrutinise the minister's report very carefully, something which I have not had the opportunity to do at this stage. Judging from the tone of the minister's statement, my impression is that he needs to take a broader look at consumer issues throughout the Northern Territory rather than simply as they relate to retail operations in Darwin and Alice Springs. It appears that the report contains nothing to reassure people in constituencies like mine and those of many other members of this Assembly.

I will give you some of the facts of life, Mr Deputy Speaker. Nhulunbuy has one shipping service. Whether one likes it or not, its prices are the ones which must be paid. People have no choice. I am not saying that the shipping service is inefficient or a rip-off operation. I am saying that the consumer has no choice. He cannot compare the prices of one operation with another.

There are many retail outlets in Nhulunbuy which have absolutely no competition and I am sure the same thing happens in the member for Victoria River's electorate. How can any consumer reasonably compare the efficiency, effectiveness or quality of such services? It is impossible. I have made submissions to previous inquiries such as the freight inquiry. I suspect that was more politically motivated than concerned with the real problems of people in outlying areas. That inquiry made some very pertinent observations and came down with recommendations, but nothing has changed in Nhulunbuy. Nothing has changed in Galiwinku and Gapuwiyak. Nothing has changed in my electorate. People in remote areas still face exactly the same circumstances as they did before the inquiry. I suggest that the member of Victoria River could tell exactly the same story: that nothing has changed within his electorate as a result of that freight inquiry and that consumers there are no more confident now that they are not being ripped off. Nothing has changed.

From time to time, I make great play in this House about the Berrimah line. I make great play about the wonderland in suburban Darwin. It is a fact of life that many Territorians do not live in suburban Darwin and their lives bear little relationship to the existence of people in Darwin. The biggest gripe among my constituents, bar none, relates to consumerism. I doubt that there is a single member from a remote or rural electorate who could claim differently. The biggest electoral gripe relates to consumerism, the prices people pay and the quality of the products they receive for the substantial amounts of money that they pay out for consumable items. When he replies to this statement or in another statement in the House, I hope that the minister will tell us that he will conduct a detailed inquiry into the circumstances of consumers in the rural areas of the Northern Territory. I hope that he will indicate in this House that the government has been made sufficiently aware of the circumstances of those consumers in rural parts of the Northern Territory and that it will institute an inquiry which will provide recommendations which the government will support and implement so that consumers in the remote parts of the Northern Territory - not in suburban Darwin - can be confident that the system of laissez faire, the system of deregulation, will allow them to exist in the parts of Australia in which they choose to live.

I would hope that, in this debate, other members from rural areas, particularly the member for Victoria River, will express their concerns because I doubt that they would be very different from mine. I am sure that some of the member for Katherine's constituents are affected, though not necessarily all of them. Some of his constituents would share similar concerns as would those of the member for Barkly, and I am sure at least 4 of my colleagues.

This is only my interpretation of the minister's speech and he is quite free to debunk anything that I have said. However, my interpretation of his speech is that none of those concerns for rural Northern Territory constituents have been addressed in this report, and that is most unfortunate. If the development of the Northern Territory is to be focused on Darwin and if the Berrimah line is to become not just a myth but a reality incorporated in government policy, then the minister should come out and say so. Not all of the Territory's population live in Darwin. We expect to develop mines. Mines in the Northern Territory have a great deal ...

Mr COULTER: A point of order, Mr Deputy Speaker! I refer to standing order 67, digression from the subject. We are well aware that the member for Nhulunbuy is trying to take up the time of this Assembly. He has digressed from the subject. He has not had an opportunity to read the report, and I admire him for admitting that in the first instance. We are well aware of the tactic that he is using, but it would be nice for him not to embarrass himself and for him to stick to the subject. The subject of this report is quite definite. It is preferable that he not digress and talk about mining and the geographical location of various population groups in the Northern Territory.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: I ask the member for Nhulunbuy to confine his remarks to the subject of the report.

Mr LEO: If the Treasurer and Leader of Government Business does not believe that consumerism in remote parts of the Northern Territory is the most pressing concern involved in the development of the remote parts of the Northern Territory, then he is sadly deluded. If, as the Minister for Mines and Energy, he does not understand that the very thing that inhibits many ...

Mr COULTER: A point of order, Mr Deputy Speaker! Still the member for Nhulunbuy has not addressed himself to the statement before us. He is trying to set himself up so that he can speak on and on, as he does consistently even when he knows nothing about the subject, so that the Leader of the Opposition does not have to rise to his feet to participate in a debate which the Leader of the Opposition believes is very important. That debate will be on the statement on Hungerford Refrigeration.

Mr LEO: This is pretty important too, fella! This is outrageous.

Mr BELL: Mr Deputy Speaker, I would certainly like to speak to the point of order. I think that was one of the most amazing outbursts I have ever heard, even from somebody as garrulous as the Leader of Government Business. I want to reinforce the comments made by the member for Nhulunbuy. I am shadow spokesman for consumer affairs, and I found the comments of the member for Nhulunbuy germane to the issue of consumer affairs, consumer affairs policy and the relevant legislation. In fact, I am making notes because I intend to raise similar points with respect to my electorate. Mr Deputy Speaker, I suggest that it is quite appropriate, in a debate of this sort that touches so clearly on the cost of living of ordinary Territorians, that honourable members ...

Mr Dale: Have you read the report?

Mr BELL: Whether I have read the report or not, I have listened to the honourable minister's comments. I also listened to the comments from the member for Nhulunbuy and I am quite satisfied that they are entirely relevant. I can appreciate that the Treasurer is hot to trot on Hungerford Refrigeration and so on, but I point out that he is in control. He is supposed to be the Leader of Government Business. The honourable minister in charge of consumer affairs introduced this report, and the question of debate, the quality of debate and the understandings that the members bring ...

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: I ask the honourable member to make his point.

Mr BELL: I am speaking to the point of order, Mr Deputy Speaker. The Leader of Government Business was trying to suggest that the member for Nhulunbuy was making comments that were not relevant. I suggest to you, Mr Deputy Speaker, that nothing could be more relevant to the issue of consumer affairs than the question of the cost of living of Territorians, be they living in Nhulunbuy, the Victoria River electorate ...

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! I think the member for MacDonnell has made his point and I will now call on the member for Nhulunbuy and ask that he confine his remarks to the recommendations and the subject matter of the report.

Mr LEO: Mr Deputy Speaker, in fact I believed, and I am quite sure the Clerk is more than prepared to correct myself or advise you, that I was addressing my comments to the statement made by the minister. I am addressing the statement made by the minister.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Pray continue.

Mr LEO: Thank you very much, Mr Deputy Speaker.

As the member for MacDonnell has just pointed out, consumerism and the cost of living in the Northern Territory are germane to the development of the Northern Territory. This is not some filibuster, as the minister would have

it. I appreciate that he considers himself something of an expert at filibustering but, in fact, consumerism and the cost of living in remote parts of the Northern Territory are of the utmost pertinence to my constituents. It is the most important single factor affecting the development of the Northern Territory as far as I can see. The minister is responsible, or so he says, for the development of mining in the Northern Territory, and yet the cost of living means nothing to him. He has rocks in his head, Mr Deputy Speaker! If we are to do anything to develop the Northern Territory then, in some way, we must have some control over the cost of living. Otherwise, the venture is doomed before it starts. If the minister cannot understand that, if that means nothing to him, then he should not have his job.

It is a fact that the cost of living in Nhulunbuy bears a direct relationship to this government's policy on consumer affairs. The Chief Minister has lived in Nhulunbuy and he knows what it costs. He knows that his own department is investigating that aspect because, in order to keep public servants there, the government needs to find some way to subsidise the cost of living via a freight proposal. I applaud it for that. I do not know whether or not it is achievable, but the cost of living directly affects this government's presence, its public servants' presence, in Nhulunbuy.

I know and the Chief Minister knows, as do the Minister for Education and the Minister for Health and Community Services, keeping public servants in Nhulunbuy is extraordinarily difficult because it costs them an arm and a leg to live there. If that fact has no relationship to this government's policies on consumer affairs, I do not know what has. You have me beaten, I am afraid; I am stumped. I would suggest that those difficulties are not just the experience of my electorate, they are also the experience of the member for Victoria River's electorate. In fact, it affects everybody who does not live out there in wonderland.

These people have rocks in their heads; they think the world revolves around Darwin. When we went into the great self-government debate, it was because we were sick and tired of being controlled by bureaucrats who operated from Canberra and people who could not think north of the Tropic of Capricorn. Out there in the rural areas of the Northern Territory, we may as well not have statehood because we are controlled by bureaucrats who cannot think past the Berrimah line. The consumer problems we face are a direct consequence of the small-mindedness of decision-makers who cannot think beyond their urban environment. If the minister and his leader do not understand that and its inevitable consequences for the development of the Northern Territory, then I give up. There is no hope for them and we may as well throw in the towel now. If anybody thinks that people are prepared to go on pouring their money out because of the government's inability to control the cost of living, he is wrong and living in wonderland.

Mr DALE: A point of order, Mr Deputy Speaker! Perhaps the honourable member would like to mention that the cost of living is discussed in my statement so that we can see its relevance to what he is saying.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: There is no point of order.

Mr Hatton: Keep the filibuster going, Dan.

Mr LEO: I am certainly happy to inform my constituents that he says I am filibustering when I raise their difficulties in the House. I am certainly not filibustering. I am saying that consumer problems and the cost of living are major issues in remote parts of the Northern Territory.

Mr Hatton: What is your suggestion?

Mr LEO: If the Chief Minister had bothered to listen to my speech, he would have heard me suggest that there is a need to rely on regulation where the normal safeguards of competition, which operate in suburban Australia, do not exist. I know that there is a huge debate about deregulation and I appreciate that it is the flavour of the month in most of the rest of Australia and in suburban areas of the Northern Territory. However, regulation is the only safeguard for people in remote areas.

I will go as far as to say that 90% - or even 100% - of the businesses in the Northern Territory are excellent operations which do not have greedy proprietors and which serve genuine public needs. I accept that.

Mr Hatton: What about house rentals paid by your constituents?

Mr LEO: Those rentals vary dramatically. People employed by the mining company pay \$15 or \$20 per week.

Mr Hatton: What percentage of the population is involved?

Mr LEO: It certainly applies to most people, but those who are not employed by the mining company and who are not eligible for Housing Commission accommodation are paying about \$150 a week, the same as in Darwin.

Would the minister like to know about the price of fuel in Nhulunbuy? It costs on average, 10¢ per litre more than in Darwin. I could understand that if it had to be trucked in ...

Mr Hatton interjecting.

Mr LEO: The freight subsidy has absolutely nothing to do with it because, as the Chief Minister would be aware, fuel is delivered to the wharf in Nhulunbuy, just as it is in Darwin. It is delivered in bulk and trucked to the service stations exactly as it is in Darwin. It is precisely the same product. I will not mention the name of the service station or the brand name of the petrol, but precisely the same product sells, on average, 10¢ a litre cheaper in Darwin than in Nhulunbuy. In fact, I am reliably informed by the supplier that the wholesale cost of petrol in Nhulunbuy is 3¢ per litre dearer than in Darwin. The consumer, however, pays 10¢ more per litre. There may be very good reasons for that and, I am not suggesting that that is not the case. I am not suggesting for a second that the retailer in Nhulunbuy does not face considerable costs which may not have to be borne in Darwin. I accept that. However, the consumer who buys the fuel is not convinced of that, simply because there is no competition. There is nowhere else for him to go and he must pay through the nose. If the minister and his leader are not convinced that that is of real concern in the rural parts of the Northern Territory ...

Mr Hatton: It is. I accept that.

Mr Dale: Read the report. You have 3 months to put a submission together.

Mr LEO: Mr Deputy Speaker, I am addressing myself to the minister's statement. Not once in that statement did he address the consumer issues faced by rural residents of the Northern Territory.

This is a vitally important debate for the development of the Northern Territory and for my constituents. I hope that members on the government benches, particularly the members for Victoria River and Katherine, will rise and address the concerns of their constituents. I know that those members are confronted with those concerns every day. If they do not participate in this debate, they will be denying their constituents the opportunity to have their problems aired in a debate which is particularly germane to their circumstances.

Just to show that I am not filibustering, I will not continue for the 3 minutes I have left but conclude by saying to the minister that I hope that he sets up an inquiry. I will certainly supply it with whatever information I have. I hope that there will be a genuine pursuit of consumer concerns in the rural parts of the Northern Territory and that reasonable recommendations will be made in the context of any report which such an inquiry may generate. I hope that this government will act on them because, in my 7 years as member for Nhulunbuy, my observation is that consumer problems are the most pertinent and pressing concern of residents of rural areas.

Mr FIRMIN (Ludmilla): Mr Deputy Speaker, I move that the debate be adjourned.

The Assembly divided:

Ayes 17

Noes 6

Mr Collins
Mr Coulter
Mr Dale
Mr Dondas
Mr Finch
Mr Firmin
Mr Harris
Mr Hatton
Mr McCarthy
Mr Manzie
Mrs Padgham-Purich
Mr Palmer
Mr Perron
Mr Poole
Mr Reed
Mr Setter
Mr Tuxworth

Mr Bell
Mr Ede
Mr Lanhupuy
Mr Leo
Mr Smith
Mr Tipiloura

Motion agreed to.

Mr COULTER (Treasurer): Mr Deputy Speaker, it is good to see that the crossbenchers have joined this side of the House as a result of the very poor tactic used by the Leader of the Opposition so that he did not have to embarrass himself by having to talk about Hungerford Refrigeration before 12 o'clock.

Mr EDE: A point of order, Mr Deputy Speaker! The minister is debating a subject which has been adjourned.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: I ask the Treasurer to make his ministerial statement.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT
Hungerford Refrigeration Pty Ltd

Mr COULTER (Treasurer): Mr Speaker, in all the hype, mock outrage and hypocrisy that has been voiced on the subject of Hungerford Refrigeration, little attention has been given to the facts. Even though those facts have been explained time and again, the opposition has chosen to ignore them. 'Facts' are defined as - and I urge the Leader of the Opposition to watch my lips as I say this - things that are true. I want to summarise the facts of Hungerford Refrigeration's involvement in the TDZ. Most of them have already been explained in this Assembly but, obviously, they need to be repeated. Some are new and show more clearly than ever the sinister influence of the Leader of the Opposition in the demise of a company which he now so piously seeks to have investigated.

Hungerford Refrigeration first became known as a TDZ prospect in September 1986. Discussions between zone and company officials resulted in the preparation of a draft business plan and a marketing strategy. The company was clearly rapidly growing and had export potential but, like so many rapidly-growing companies, it needed additional equity and loan funds. The Territory Insurance Office was invited to assess the company by the TDZ. It was provided with financial statements, 5-year profit and loss projections, a business plan, a marketing plan and the results of credit checks carried out by 2 well-known credit assessment companies, Lawrence Management Services on 10 September 1986 and Dunn and Bradstreet on 12 September 1986.

The TIO arranged an accountant's report on the company by a leading firm of chartered accountants and an engineering report on the company product and production processes by an associate professor of mechanical engineering, Professor K.E.R. Bremhorst. These reports identified the company's strengths and weaknesses. An assessment of the weaknesses indicated a lack of financial control with poor management and a lack of liquidity. Solutions to these problems were seen to be achievable through a financial restructuring of the company including an injection of equity and loan funds, the appointment of an experienced managing director and the appointment of a financial controller. As the TIO was seeking to diversify its investment portfolio by taking on a small proportion of equity investments in Territory enterprises, the board approved this investment in Hungerford Refrigeration.

Since the investment was quite outside the standard, approved investments for the Territory Insurance Office, ministerial approval was sought and obtained under section 6(2)(n) of the Territory Insurance Act. The fact that formal approval was given by the minister under the act does not mean that the TIO was directed to make the involvement by the minister. This would be apparent to any reasonable person and is apparent to the Leader of the Opposition. Nevertheless, he continually promotes the myth that the minister directed or influenced the TIO to make the investment. That is totally false and the government denies it categorically.

Mr Speaker, for the benefit of the Leader of the Opposition, I will table a copy of the reports from the ministers involved, including myself, where approval was sought from the TIO.

The funds invested in the company were derived from the premium income of the TIO reserves. They were not taxpayers' funds in any normally-accepted meaning of that term. As the Leader of the Opposition knows, or should know, the government has no shareholding in the TIO although, as a statutory body, the TIO is government owned. In fact, the TIO was started with a small

government loan which was repaid in a few months. Since then, its growth in the space of only 9 years to an organisation with assets of \$125m has been managed entirely with moneys derived from premium income.

Immediately following the investment by the TIO in Hungerford Refrigeration, and before the company commenced manufacturing at the zone, the Leader of the Opposition started his campaign against this company - a campaign which goes a long way towards explaining why the company is in the position in which it finds itself today. Honourable members will remember his spy, and the 'Dear David' letter that was mentioned in this Assembly before. Now, he piously pretends he is the salvation of free enterprise and marketing effort in the Northern Territory - a man who has never committed himself to the development of a single project in the Northern Territory.

Immediately following the investment by the Territory Insurance Office, the company was subjected to rumours and innuendo generated by the Leader of the Opposition. We know from a number of sources that, throughout the period April to June 1987, the Leader of the Opposition himself and a member of his staff at the time made contact with previous employees, numerous past and present creditors and various businesses in Darwin and Brisbane. We do not know everything that was said in all those conversations nor, particularly, whether companies were urged to blacklist Hungerford Refrigeration.

Mr SMITH: A point of order, Mr Speaker! I do not intend to sit here and listen while unfounded aspersions that I may have participated in a process to blacklist a company in the Northern Territory are placed on the record. I ask the minister to withdraw that.

Mr COULTER: Mr Speaker, I simply said that we do not know everything that was said in all those conversations nor, particularly, whether companies were urged to blacklist Hungerford Refrigeration. I did not say that they were; I said that I was not sure.

Mr EDE: Mr Speaker, to say that he does not know that a person committed an act could result in all sorts of outrageous allegations being made. The minister cannot claim that he is not making an allegation. I think you yourself referred to a famous Pickering cartoon. An honourable member asked in parliament whether an honourable minister opposite had been caught in a compromising position with some animal in a brothel. The minister said that it was not true and the member said: 'Well, just ask him'.

Mr SPEAKER: There is a point of order. The honourable minister, either directly or by innuendo, has implied that the Leader of the Opposition was involved in blacklisting. I ask him to withdraw that inference.

Mr COULTER: I withdraw the inference, Mr Speaker.

What we do know at least is that the Leader of the Opposition went on a shopping expedition for any kind of bad news he could find about Hungerford Refrigeration. Once again, I refer to the 'Dear David' letter: 'I would be very interested to hear from you about any Australian companies that considered establishing in the Trade Development Zone'. His spy, an ex-employee, gave him that information. 'If you would prefer to telephone rather than write, please do not hesitate and reverse charges either to myself or Mike Scott on 81 7666'. That is a fact that everybody in the Northern Territory should know. This man tried to sink any Australian company that wanted to enter into the Trade Development Zone. The facts are very plain indeed, and let us see him rise to his feet on a point of order on that one.

Out of this came the so-called revelations about creditors and, on the basis of those, he claimed the company was going into liquidation. There can be no worse fate for any company than to have very public and untrue - for they were then untrue - comments made that it is going into liquidation. It is a self-fulfilling prophecy, and the Leader of the Opposition knew that fact only too well. Mr Speaker, just think for a moment what happens in such a situation because this is precisely what happened to Hungerford Refrigeration. Creditors said: 'That's it boys, no more credit. From now on, it is cash up front'. The loss of normal 30-day credit increased the company's cash requirements by an estimated \$150 000. Clients moved to other suppliers and sales fell off by 50%. Debtors said that, if the company was going into liquidation, they could forget about paying until the liquidator demanded payment. In a matter of weeks, the company was on its knees. The cash that had been provided by the shareholders as working capital was completely absorbed, funds earmarked for export promotion were absorbed in saving the company and an emergency injection of \$250 000 from shareholders had to be made.

I have no hesitation in saying that the statement made under the privilege of this House last year by the Leader of the Opposition that Hungerford Refrigeration was going into liquidation was the most treacherous single piece of commercial sabotage ever seen in the Northern Territory. For the same man now to voice his pious indignation about what he claims was a bad investment, to talk about his concern for the creditors and to call for an inquiry is utter hypocrisy. The only inquiry needed is into why Territorians should continue to pay the salary and allowances of a person who works against them, who has not built or created anything for the Northern Territory and who sees his role in terms of dismantling and depopulating the Northern Territory. When the history of these times is written, the Leader of the Opposition's contribution will be found under the chapter headed, 'Terry the Terminator'.

This House and the 30 employees of the company whose livelihood now hangs in the balance have a right to some kind of explanation from the Leader of the Opposition as to why he did something so commercially damaging to this company. At the time, his explanation was that he was protecting the creditors and taxpayers and, like the Phantom, exposing wrongdoing. Those are noble statements which nobody, not even the Leader of the Opposition himself, believes. If he were genuinely helping the creditors, he could have made inquiries directly with the company. Instead, he chose the most public and damaging forum he could find and then went further by making several media appearances during which the liquidation scare was further promoted.

I challenge the Leader of the Opposition to explain and justify his actions in this House when he gets to his feet after the luncheon break. All Territorians will be very interested to hear how he will justify his actions. 'Just helping' is what the Leader of the Opposition continually claims to explain his scandalous behaviour. That is what the Russians said when they took over Afghanistan: 'Just helping, fellas, just helping'. He made the same claim again when he turned up at the Hungerford factory on Monday, complete with 2 television crews in a prearranged stunt to show that he was helping once again. Quite rightfully, he was ordered off the premises by the managing director. It is interesting to note that Monday's visit was the first and only time he had attempted to visit the factory despite at least 4 separate invitations over the last year from both the chairman and the managing director. He has never wanted to know the good news about the positive side of this company; he was interested only in the bad news.

The Leader of the Opposition and the member for Barkly have both said that Hungerford Refrigeration was supplying Australian markets in contravention of the policies of the TDZA which are to supply export markets. The TDZ agreement allows an 18-month grace period during which companies in the zone may operate on the domestic market while they build up overseas markets. It is not possible to leap straight into the overseas markets because considerable costs and effort are involved in finding and building such markets. In the meantime, companies operating in the zone must have a base load of work in order to maintain cash flows and that can be obtained through the domestic markets. Even the domestic markets take some time to develop and can be damaged by the sort of criticism that was made against the company last year.

But the Leader of the Opposition was not the only problem the company had. Some time after the TIO bought in, numerous claims began to be made on the company by past clients and others in respect of the company's past activities. How or why these claims emerged so suddenly still remains a mystery. The existence of or the potential for most of them was not revealed either in the credit checks done on the company at the time or in the accountant's report. Although the Leader of the Opposition claims that it was known that this company had a poor reputation for paying, that information was not revealed in the credit checks which included an analysis over several months of promptness in settling accounts.

In terms of the overseas orders, I confirm that the report on the company was provided by a leading firm of accountants in March 1987. A report by an associate professor of mechanical engineering was supplied at the same time on the company's products and its production processes. A number of sales orders were at various stages of finalisation at or about this time. A heads of agreement was signed with Daikin in PNG for the purchase of up to \$100 000 worth of equipment from the company in the first year. Subsequently, this was not honoured after that company was taken over by another and the new owners wished to take another direction.

A preliminary order for 10 completely knockdown, one-tonne ice-making machines was under negotiation with the Kuala Lumpur firm, EMIR Manufacturing Eksport. A heads of agreement was signed shortly afterwards for the company to act as agent for Hungerford Refrigeration in Malaysia. The company then decided not to proceed with the initial order as it wanted to carry out more market research. This was done and the company provided Hungerford Refrigeration with a market report only 2 weeks ago which showed that there was a market for larger-sized units. The preliminary order had been for \$100 000 and was to have been followed by orders estimated to be worth \$500 000 per annum.

At the time, Hungerford Refrigeration was in advanced negotiations with P.T. Rodmanas Co Ltd. This was at the stage of a heads of agreement with an order for CKD units and trading for the Indonesian company's engineers. It fell through when a Japanese company got in ahead of Hungerford and concluded an agreement.

I have indicated before that I have no intention of tabling the papers relating to the internal affairs of this company, where the TIO is not involved. The Leader of the Opposition would have no basis for seeking information in this House, through question time, about a private company. I do not propose to allow him to use the involvement of the TIO as a means of claiming that he has the right to this information. Similarly, I see no reason to have tabled in this House confidential, commercial reports provided

in good faith by competent advisers to the TIO in the course of its operations.

In any event, the claims made on the company ...

Mr SMITH (Opposition Leader): Mr Speaker, I would ask that the document from which the honourable minister has just finished quoting be tabled as it is not part of the statement that has been circulated.

Mr SPEAKER: Does the honourable minister wish to reply to that request?

Mr COULTER: I could not understand why he would not wait for what I read from.

Mr Smith: The whole thing.

Mr COULTER: Mr Speaker, I could not see any reason. He could have waited for Hansard, but he may have a problem.

Mr Smith: I want to respond this afternoon, not tomorrow.

Mr COULTER: This is a separate document.

Mr Leo: It was attached.

Mr COULTER: Mr Speaker, that is how much information opposition members have. They have no information. They have entered into this vindictive campaign and, as I said, not one of them has ever created anything in the Northern Territory except trouble.

In any event, the claims made on the company created another unforeseen ...

Mr LEO: A point of order, Mr Speaker!

Mr SPEAKER: I advise all honourable members that, if they wish to raise a point of order, they should do so when they first rise.

Mr LEO: A point of order, Mr Speaker! I refer to standing order 255 which says that an entire document must be tabled unless the minister considers it contains privileged information.

Mr COULTER: Mr Speaker, I am happy to table the document. In fact, it is a press release which I issued on Friday 3 April 1987. For the benefit of honourable members, I have not read from it but, if anybody read the paper on that day, I am sure that he would agree that it was in there.

The view of the Territory Insurance Office is that at least some of these claims should have been known to the vendor shareholders, Mr Rupert Hungerford and Mr George Stack, at the time that the Territory Insurance Office bought an interest in their company. Their possible obligations under indemnities given to the Territory Insurance Office in respect of past claims will be examined.

The third and final major difficulty experienced by the company was in relation to sales. It was some 6 months before sales achieved target levels. Initially, following criticism of the company, sales actually declined and much work was needed to restore client confidence in order to regain lost orders. It was not until November 1987 that this was achieved and that the

target level of \$200 000 per month was reached. During the early stages, sales fell to as low as \$45 000 per month, a level which was totally non-viable and involved very substantial losses continuing over a period longer than that allowed for in the cash budget and giving rise to a requirement for additional financial support. At this stage, the directors faced a most difficult decision: whether to cut and run, thus losing the investment already made in the company or whether to provide further support in the hope that sales would rise to profitable levels. In the event, the Territory Insurance Office stood by the company with additional loan funds, and its decision was vindicated a few months later when sales reached their target levels.

In January 1988, the company obtained major orders to supply the Tindal Base with split-system air-conditioning units for defence personnel homes. In all, some 300 units were supplied. Tenders for continuation of this contract, with the supply of a further 300 units, closed on 14 April and a decision was to have been made on 2 May. Because of assurances that the company's product and performance had been fully satisfactory in the first contract, there were high hopes of winning the second contract. However, advice received last week is that the contract is to be awarded to a southern company and, as of today's date, Hungerford Refrigeration still has not been advised formally of this decision.

Mr Speaker, the loss of this contract is a very serious blow to the company because it has not yet recovered from its earlier problems. Cash reserves have not built up to allow it to withstand another period of low sales, even for a short period. Had the contract been obtained, arrangements were in hand to further restructure the company by bringing in another shareholder. In an emergency meeting last Friday, the directors decided that the loss of the Tindal contract would have a major effect on the company's solvency. In order to protect the position of creditors and the employees of the company, it was decided to put it into receivership immediately. I believe that the directors have acted responsibly in doing this and have properly responded to the impossible position in which the company was placed.

Mr Speaker, I said I would give this House the facts. Those are the facts. I believe any reasonable and unbiased person would conclude that this is not a story of mismanagement but of a calculated commercial endeavour that came very close to succeeding and failed only because of outside factors. It involved risk, and it was known right from the start that this would be so. No worthwhile endeavour is without risk. Sometimes the risk pays off, sometimes it does not and sometimes failure is helped along by a vindictive hand. That is the saddest part of this whole story: that a project that came so close to succeeding, which was designed to help the Territory and employ Territorians, was turned into a failure by a Territorian.

There is one final point that I want to clarify, Mr Speaker. The Leader of the Opposition has sought to paint a picture of confusion amongst government ministers and officials over this issue. He has claimed that ministers were unaware of developments and the fact that the company was placed in receivership. I can assure him that relevant ministers were briefed about the situation faced by Hungerford Refrigeration. Several briefings and discussions took place in the weeks before the decision was taken. In fact, I made an appeal to the federal minister pointing out the serious implications for the company if the Tindal contract were lost. What I did not know was the absolute fact of an official receiver being appointed. This was simply because I was interstate at the Premiers Conference and, in the main, en route to Darwin.

Mr Speaker, I will respond to a further question raised by the Leader of the Opposition during question time this morning. It relates to Hungerford Refrigeration's operations in Queensland. I am advised that, when production commenced in Darwin on 7 April 1987, production in Queensland effectively ceased on that same date.

The Leader of the Opposition also asked me about the delivery date for export orders which I mentioned in a press statement of 3 April 1987. I am still trying to obtain that information for him.

Mr Speaker, I move that the Assembly take note of the statement.

Mr SMITH (Opposition Leader): Mr Speaker, I am sure that the Treasurer could have obtained a job to help to bring down the walls of Jericho. In his own inimitable style, he generated a great deal of heat and noise but, unfortunately for the people of the Northern Territory, he generated no light whatsoever on the Hungerford Refrigeration saga. The cover-up continues.

Yesterday, I invited the Treasurer to table 3 specific pieces of information. One was a report by a firm of chartered accountants into the prospects of Hungerford Refrigeration. Another was a report by a professor of mechanical engineering into the technological aspects of the Hungerford operation and a third related to the export prospects of the company as reported by the Treasurer on 3 April 1987.

In remarks which were not part of the Treasurer's written speech, he quoted from and subsequently tabled a document concerning overseas orders. Mr Speaker, let us look at what the Treasurer said on Friday 3 April 1987. The press release said: 'Mr Coulter said the company had been exploring South-east Asian markets in conjunction with Nortrade, and large orders had already been secured'. Those words - 'large orders had already been secured' - will come back to haunt the Treasurer because of what we learned from the information supplied by him this morning. There were 3 orders. One was a heads of agreement signed with Daikin PNG for the purchase of up to \$100 000 worth of equipment in the first year. This may well be a case of misleading the parliament because, at another stage, the Treasurer spoke in the parliament about a heads of agreement involving 500 000 kina. We will be pursuing that later.

Mr Coulter interjecting.

Mr SMITH: That is separate, is it? The second order, a preliminary order for 10 completely knockdown 1-tonne ice-making machines, was under negotiation. The third order, which was in an advanced stage of negotiation, was with P.T. Rhodamas Co Ltd. It was a heads of agreement with an order for CKD units and training for the Indonesian company's engineers.

None of those large orders which, to quote the Treasurer 'had been secured', have come to fruition. I want to know why, if they were secured, Hungerford has not taken out a law suit for breach of contract. The reason is that they were not secured. In the first case, there was only a heads of agreement, in the second there was only a preliminary order under negotiation and, in the third, there were discussions leading to a heads of agreement. The Treasurer blatantly failed to tell the people of the Northern Territory the truth in relation to these orders. He deceived the people of the Northern Territory in his statement of 3 April 1987.

Mr Speaker, let us look at the reasons why preliminary negotiations for these major export contracts with Hungerford, a company which the Northern Territory government entered into negotiations with because of its export potential, fell through. In the first instance, the heads of agreement with Daikin PNG was not honoured after that company was taken over by another and the new owners wished to take it in another direction. The second order, for 10 completely knockdown, 1-tonne ice-making machines, was not proceeded with after the company decided to carry out more market research. The third contract fell through when a Japanese company got in ahead of Hungerford and concluded an agreement. Those were commercial decisions taken by the companies concerned for their own individual reasons. They were nothing to do with me and nothing to do with the Northern Territory Traders Association. The deals fell through because of factors affecting the companies which had been talking to Hungerford Refrigeration.

The government's problem was that it relied on those deals not falling through. It relied on those deals coming to fulfilment for the future success of Hungerford Refrigeration in the Northern Territory. Because those deals fell through, because the government had not done its homework to ensure that they were deals and not simply discussion points, we have a company in a big mess in the Trade Development Zone at present. No one can escape from that.

In passing, Mr Speaker, I will give a perfect illustration of the Treasurer's inability to look beyond the advice that is given to him and ask pertinent questions. This morning, in response to a question that I asked, the Treasurer said that Hungerford Refrigeration ceased operations in Brisbane on 7 April and started operations in Darwin on 7 April. As the Deputy Leader of the Opposition has said, that is fast tracking indeed. Any minister worth his salt would have said: 'Hang on, wait a minute. That is impossible. How can a company that is located in Brisbane, that has all of its equipment in Brisbane, that has been paid to relocate its equipment in the Northern Territory, cease operations on the one day in Brisbane and then resume those operations on the same day in the Northern Territory?'

Members interjecting.

Mr SMITH: I do not understand that particular point. If you have any light to shine on it, I invite you to do so.

Mr Speaker, that is a small point. What the Treasurer did today on page 2 of his statement was outline an assessment of the company's strengths and weaknesses. The weaknesses are these: a lack of financial control, poor management and a lack of liquidity. In other words, 3 of the cardinal sins of basic business management have been committed by this particular organisation.

What I want to know is, if the TIO and the Trade Development Zone is out in the marketplace looking for industries to come into the Trade Development Zone, looking, as some people have said, for a flagship operator in the Trade Development Zone, why did they pick on a company whose operations exemplify the 3 cardinal management sins? It has a lack of financial control, it has a poor management record and it has a lack of liquidity. Can someone answer that for me, Mr Speaker? Why would they go out and find one of the worst possible operating companies in Brisbane and then say: 'That is just what we want in the Trade Development Zone to set a new standard. That is just what we want in the TDZ to encourage other people to get into the zone. We will go for it. It does not matter if we have to pour in \$1m to try to bring it up to par'? I would like someone to answer that question.

Let me stress those 3 points again: a lack of financial control, poor management and a lack of liquidity.

Mr Speaker, I thank the Treasurer for giving me a copy of a minute paper to himself from the Chairman of the TIO filed on 20 October 1987. It says: 'Working relationships between Rupert Hungerford and the general manager and financial controller became so strained that it was decided to appoint a managing director'. That is poor management and it also looks like a lack of financial control. That was 5 months after the Northern Territory government took over and the company still has exactly the same problems that had been identified by the organisations that TIO had examine the company.

Mr Speaker, let us look at what else it says: 'It has also been apparent that cash levels have been inadequate to support the full continuity of production'.

Mr Hatton: What are you saying is poor management? You have not described it.

Mr Coulter: Give him an easy one.

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

Mr SMITH: Mr Speaker, to reiterate that point again: 'It has also been apparent that cash levels have been inadequate to support full continuity of production'. That indicates a lack of liquidity. In other words, in October 1987, 5 months after the Northern Territory government, through the Territory Insurance Office, had taken over Hungerford Refrigeration, it had exactly the same problems that had been identified by the companies that the TIO selected to assess Hungerford in September 1986 or later. They were exactly the same problems that that company had had. Of course, Mr Speaker, if you look at the NT News of yesterday, you will see that it still has exactly the same problems. The news article of yesterday was still talking about liquidity problems which have caused difficulties for the company in the Northern Territory.

Let me take up one other point which was made both in this article and by the Treasurer in his statement. It says: '\$300 000 in debts against Mr Hungerford, which were not declared to the TIO when it decided to become a partner'. The Treasurer said: 'Mr Hungerford would have known about some of the debts, but had not revealed them to companies employed by the TIO to make credit checks'. Mr Speaker, if that is not one of the most naive statements I have heard from somebody supposedly operating in the commercial world, I do not know what is. You do not make credit checks and employ people to make credit checks by means of asking the company being checked on to reveal all, tell all. An independent assessment must be made of the state of credit of the particular company. Independent assessment of the state of the credit of that particular company was needed yet, from a reading of the NT News article of yesterday, quite clearly that was not obtained.

We have a situation where the problems that were identified by the group that assessed Hungerford Refrigeration for the government - and I will repeat them: lack of financial control, poor management and lack of liquidity - are still the problems that were facing that company in October and were still the problems that, on Friday of last week, forced that company into the hands of the receiver. The only thing that has changed in the 12 months since the TIO has been in charge is that we have spent \$1.5m of TIO money to obtain exactly the same situation as existed in the company 12 months ago. We have spent

\$150 000 of Trade Development Zone money, and we have spent money on a significant number of other concessions as well. That is the only thing that has changed.

In this whole exercise, it is necessary to look, first, at the role of the government and, secondly, the role of the Territory Insurance Office. There has been some discussion and debate in this House about the involvement of ministers in the decisions taken by the Territory Insurance Office to provide funds to Hungerford Refrigeration. In fact, it has become quite clear that the ministers opposite have decided that, if a scalp does have to be taken in this particular exercise, it will not be one of their scalps but the scalp of someone in the Territory Insurance Office.

However, what has become clear is that there is no doubt, from the correspondence tabled this morning by the Treasurer, that the money invested in Hungerford Refrigeration involved the provision of funds in areas that required the minister's approval. There is no doubt about that. In fact, the Treasurer kindly tabled the relevant document which indicated that, at all stages where money has been committed, the minister's approval has been necessary, has been sought and has been granted. Of course, the question that now arises is this - and it is a pity that the member for Flynn, the minister responsible at the time, is absent. The question it raises for him particularly, and for the government generally, is this: what checking did he do before he signed the piece of paper that was presented to him by TIO? Was he aware of the independent assessment made of the company? Was he aware that the major problems that had been identified by that independent assessment were, again, a lack of financial control, poor management and a lack of liquidity? Did he make himself aware of that or was he made aware of that in any way? And what did he do to assure himself that the proper credit checks had been done and that the investment was in the Territory's best interest? No evidence has been presented to us to indicate that that was done, and that is one of the key questions that requires answering in this debate. What checks did the minister responsible at the time make before he approved the expenditure of \$750 000 of policy holders' money in the TIO? No one is disputing that he had to approve the \$750 000. What we do not know is what checks he made. What checks did he make with the credit companies? Did he, for example, check with the TIO that checks had been made on the company's credit-worthiness?

Mr Speaker, let me take up a question concerning the credit-worthiness of the company. We have had considerable debate about the credit-worthiness of this particular company. We have heard the honourable minister say that 2 credit agencies had presented reports. I want to know what those credit agencies' reports said because ...

Mr Coulter: You just quoted from them: lack of financial control, poor management, lack of liquidity.

Mr SMITH: You really do not have an idea, do you? Every time you open your mouth, you reveal the depths of your ignorance about your own portfolio areas.

Because, Mr Speaker, I have seen a report commissioned by a Queensland company through a credit agency, one of the agencies mentioned this morning ...

Mr Coulter: Dated?

Mr SMITH: Dated 19 May 1987. It said that the credit company found it impossible to give Hungerford Refrigeration a credit rating at all.

Mr COULTER: A point of order, Mr Speaker! If the Leader of the Opposition is quoting from a document, could he provide that information to this House?

Mr SPEAKER: Order!

Mr SMITH: To respond to the point of order, Mr Speaker, I am not quoting from a document. When I find the sheet of paper, I will be quite happy to present that sheet to the Assembly. I have no problems with that.

Mr Speaker, what that ...

Mr Coulter: Wait for a ruling on it.

Mr SPEAKER: There is no point or order. The Leader of the Opposition is not required to table a document in the same way as a minister is. He can be requested by way of motion, but I understand that he has given an undertaking to table the document at the end of his speech.

Mr COULTER: Mr Speaker, if I could have an assurance from the Leader of the Opposition that he will table it at the end of his speech, I would be satisfied with that.

Mr SPEAKER: We already have that, I think.

Mr SMITH: Mr Speaker, I am happy to.

That document of 19 May 1987 indicated that that company was unable to provide a credit rating to Hungerford Refrigeration. That is very serious for any company. That information was gained by a company in Queensland and circulated to a number of people in the Northern Territory. It would have been irresponsible of me, when I became aware of that information, not to pass it on as I did at the time.

The second thing that is disturbing about this whole question of credit ratings is the attempt by the Minister for Industries and Development to suppress the information presented to him by the Northern Territory Traders Association. He sought actively to suppress the information supplied by that association. The Traders Association is the main credit agency set up by small businesses in the Northern Territory to provide them with information and checks and balances on the credit-worthiness of companies that they might want to deal with so that they are not caught as, unfortunately, people have been caught by Hungerford Refrigeration.

Mr Perron: How would I suppress it?

Mr SMITH: I will tell you how you attempted to suppress it. There was a meeting between yourself and the Chairman of the Trade Development Zone Authority. On that afternoon, those 2 people from the Northern Territory Traders Association were called in again. They had to confront McHenry, they had to confront Hawke, they had to confront Temple and they had to confront Hungerford and 4 of his people. They were told to apologise to Hungerford. That is the pressure that was applied by yourself and by public servants who are responsible to you. The fact that they did not do that says much for their guts and courage but does not say much for you and does not say much for

those other people who were involved in that exercise. They came to you with legitimate complaints and concerns about the credit-worthiness of Hungerford Refrigeration in Queensland - concerns that even members opposite now accept. They came to you 15 months ago with those concerns but you were so wrapped up in Hungerford, you had committed yourself so deeply without making those proper checks, that you told those Traders Association people to be very careful and you got those people to attempt to heavy them. That is one of the more despicable acts in this whole process.

Mr Speaker, because this is an appropriate stage, let me remind members opposite what the role of the opposition is in this community. The role of the opposition is not to involve itself in a cover-up of bad decisions made by the government. Its duty is to expose bad decisions that have been made. On this particular matter, we consistently had the facts right. We had them before the government had them. We attempted to tell the government that there were serious problems with Hungerford Refrigeration, but it would not listen. We attempted to tell the government in here, the appropriate place, but it did not listen.

Maybe I have not told honourable members opposite the story of how I first became involved in this particular deal, which was because the members of the Northern Territory ...

Mr Dale: There was a 'deal' with somebody, was there? Your words.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! Honourable members will address their remarks through the Chair.

Mr SMITH: The Northern Territory Traders Association came to me after getting that cavalier, if not rude, treatment from the minister and his minions and indicated that it had concerns about this new company coming to the Northern Territory. It did not take us long to discover that those concerns were genuine and legitimate. They were concerns that businesses in the Northern Territory had about the operations of this company. Let us not forget that some of the companies that were expressing the strongest concern were those companies that had been dealing with Hungerford in Brisbane. They did not want to have similar problems in the Northern Territory ...

Mr Perron: So, they just do not extend credit.

Mr SMITH: They did not extend credit, Mr Speaker. That is a legitimate business decision. Because they did not extend credit, because they did not put themselves out on a limb to help the TIO because it got itself into a bad investment, they are now having calumny heaped on their head by this government. Because they protected themselves and said, 'No credit until you prove yourselves', they were slammed by the Treasurer in his speech this morning. If that is the way to treat small business in the Northern Territory, I would be very surprised indeed.

Mr Perron: The company you are talking about is not a small business.

Mr SMITH: I am not talking about a company. I am talking about a number of companies. And I am talking about a number of companies which decided that they would trust the TIO because the backing of the TIO made it a gilt-edged investment for them. They felt that, if they put money into an organisation supported by the TIO, if they dealt with that organisation which was backed by the TIO, they would be paid reasonably quickly. Those people are out in the community now hanging on to the edge of their seats waiting to see whether they will get their \$30 000 back, their \$40 000 back, their \$11 000 back.

I am pleased that many business organisations in this town decided to play safe and deal with Hungerford Refrigeration on a cash basis or a limited-term basis because, quite clearly, they have avoided the hurt that a number of other firms are going through at the moment. The firms which decided that they would trust the Territory Insurance Office to protect their interests in a deal in which the Territory Insurance Office had 49% of the shares and, more importantly, a deal in which the Territory Insurance Office actually had management control of the company, have been let down. I feel sorry for them.

Mr Speaker, this whole sorry exercise has had no light thrown on it whatsoever by the minister's speech today. We come to the role of TIO which I have already talked about. However, I will ask a key question again: how did the Territory Insurance Office choose a company that had the 3 cardinal faults of company management - a lack of financial control, poor management and a lack of liquidity? No one denies the right of the TIO to invest in operations which will benefit the Northern Territory. That is a very useful role.

Mr Perron: Can it venture capital?

Mr SMITH: It can venture capital. However, the TIO has a greater obligation to ensure that it picks winners than a private company would have. When the TIO chooses a company with a lack of financial control, poor management and a lack of liquidity, one has to ask whether it was interested in picking winners or whether, because of political interference from members opposite ...

Mr COULTER: A point of order, Mr Speaker! The Leader of the Opposition has suggested that there was political interference in this particular exercise. He is casting aspersions. I have demonstrated quite clearly in the course of this debate that there was no such interference and I ask that you direct him to withdraw his remark.

Mr SMITH: Mr Speaker, to accuse someone of political interference is not unparliamentary.

Mr SPEAKER: There is no point of order. The honourable member's time has expired.

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

Motion agreed to.

Mr SMITH: Mr Speaker, there are other questions which the Territory Insurance Office has to answer in this matter. The TIO has had management control of this company since March 1986. In TIO's own words, the company had management and liquidity problems in October. As the Treasurer has stated, the TIO saw sales fall in the middle of last year to \$45 000 per month. That is a story which obviously needs to be pursued. The TIO had the oversight last week when the company was placed in the hands of a receiver. The TIO has questions to answer in terms of all those matters.

Mr Speaker, there are 10 key questions that must be answered in the Hungerford case. The Northern Territory government has been given every opportunity to answer them and has not done so. Until it gives answers, the cover-up will continue. The questions are as follows. (1) How did a debt-laden Queensland refrigeration manufacturer become a target for the Territory government? (2) Who made the first approach and why? (3) What were

the full terms agreed for the transfer of Hungerford to the Trade Development Zone Authority? (4) Where are the departmental evaluations of the company, its prospects, its projects and its products? (5) What involvement did Ministers Hanrahan, Coulter and Perron have throughout? (6) How is the \$1.4m advanced to the company by TIO secured? (7) Where is the list of secured export orders attributed to the company by the Treasurer? That question has been answered. There were no secured export orders. That leaves 9 questions outstanding. (8) Why were the policy holders and the public not informed of the decision to almost double the TIO's exposure to the company? (9) Who will accept responsibility for any losses incurred by local business encouraged to trade with the company? We have heard a partial answer to that. (10) What is the full extent of the public funding involvement in this case, including the cost of all concessions?

As I said yesterday, and as I will continue to say, there is a cloud hanging over the heads of the Territory Insurance Office, the Trade Development Zone and the zone authority on this particular matter. That cloud will not go away whilst this government continues to cover up and whilst this government refuses to provide relevant information to this parliament. That is to the detriment of the government - the government is beyond saving and that does not really matter - but it is particularly to the detriment of the ongoing operations of the Territory Insurance Office and the Trade Development Zone. The only way that this mess can be cleared up is by means of an inquiry. The Treasurer had his chance today, and he fluffed it because he would not provide any information to allow an independent assessment by ourselves and others on the state of affairs at Hungerford Refrigeration. He has fluffed it. The only alternative is an independent inquiry into the operations of Hungerford Refrigeration. Mr Speaker, I hope that someone on the government benches will have the courage to agree to do it.

Mr PERRON (Industries and Development): Mr Speaker, it leaves me with a bit of an empty feeling to rise after such a speech. I was here to note down the relevant points of the Leader of the Opposition's speech and provide a government counter argument to them. I have been in this Assembly for a long time now, and have listened to an enormous amount of waffle over the years, but I confess that really was one of the poorest performances that I have ever heard from the opposition. The reason why it was such a poor performance was because it was virtually devoid of any substance. We now know why the opposition did not take the approach it usually takes on matters where it feels it has the government on toast: propose an MPI or a censure motion. Both of those options were open to the opposition on the first day of these of sittings and considerable heat had been generated in the press in the days and weeks leading up to these sittings about this very matter. We were taken aback a little when, yesterday, the opposition proposed a motion in the Assembly to establish an inquiry into Hungerford Refrigeration.

Of course, now we know why it wanted to do that. It was because it did not have any evidence or information to support some of the preposterous allegations that have been made recently. All members opposite wanted was to refer the matter to an inquiry so that they could sit down for another 3 months and, hopefully, the inquiry would come up with something that they could cause a bit of trouble with. Clearly, if it had had anything concrete to say, we would have had a debate yesterday on an MPI or a censure motion. To confirm that there was no substance in the opposition's allegations, we had a shallow discussion on the subject today.

However, the Leader of the Opposition did give us an insight today of which we should make a mental note, and so should the public of the Northern

Territory. He said that he believed this Assembly to be the appropriate place for him to bring such matters to the attention of the government - such matters being the stories that he had received from various sources that Hungerford Refrigeration owed money in Queensland and was not a good credit risk. He believed that it was the role of the opposition to bring that to our attention and that this forum was the place to do it. I think it is a terrible shame that that is his attitude and, I guess, the attitude of his colleagues. It shows us that their perception of their role is simply to cause as much trouble as they can and to try to embarrass the government, irrespective of the damage done. That is what this issue is about: the damage that has been done to a company brought to the Northern Territory to employ Territorians and to help diversify the Territory's economic base, which we all acknowledge is a bit light on in manufacturing. We need to do all we can to build up a manufacturing base.

It is a shame that the opposition attempts to sensationalise every issue, irrespective of the damage it causes. It could adopt a different approach by bringing to the government's attention information which would be valuable to us in order that it might be acted on confidentially to the benefit of the Northern Territory. Perhaps, at a later stage, the opposition might quietly claim some credit for having done such a thing. This opposition, though, believes that the front page of the newspaper is the way to bring matters to the government's attention. There is no suggestion of sending a note to the minister or to the TIO to bring information to their attention.

The Leader of the Opposition has made a number of points most of which are not worth responding to. One related to what he saw as a prime example of poor management. He said that, some time after the company had begun operating in the Territory, a problem arose in terms of personalities and that the directors of Hungerford responded by appointing a new managing director to take charge. The Leader of the Opposition cited that as an example of poor management. I wonder what the directors were supposed to do in such a case. Should they have left the problem in the hope that it would go away? Would that be the appropriate way for a company trying to get on its commercial feet to handle an internal problem? I suppose the directors had the option of dismissing some of the people involved and I am sure they would have considered that option and, no doubt, dismissed it. In their opinion, the proper course was to appoint a managing director with relevant experience. That was an example of the opposition clutching at straws in an attempt to demonstrate poor management in Hungerford Refrigeration.

The Leader of the Opposition also got a little bit hot under the collar and did some play acting in implying that I attempted to cover up information that had come to me regarding an alleged series of outstanding debts or the poor credit rating of the company in Brisbane. It is true, as I mentioned in question time this morning, that 2 persons came to me representing an association in the Territory which some small businesses join in order to try to keep tabs on various people's credit rating and how quickly they pay their bills. Members of the association share such information with one another, which is all very well. I am not sure whether the Leader of the Opposition was implying that I should have made a public announcement on the matter. The association had the opportunity to pass information to its members, which I understand is its role. Members could take whatever course they saw fit in the light of that information.

I told the association's representatives that I thought their attitude was pretty poor. I thought that they might at least give the restructured company a chance to get on its feet in the Northern Territory, given that new people

had become involved through the TIO. There were new personnel and shareholders and, if the company were not given a fair go in the credit-rating stakes, it would probably be forced to deal with interstate suppliers. That, obviously, is something we want to avoid. One of the reasons we are trying to bring manufacturing industry into the Territory is to foster related business. The Leader of the Opposition stated that the association representatives subsequently met with Hungerford and the TIO. I think it only fair that they should meet with those people and express their concerns because their attitude was clearly not going to be helpful to the company. As I mentioned in question time this morning, however, I am not aware of the meeting. Certainly, to my recollection, I did not set it up. Neither, I guess, should I be bothered about what took place at such a meeting.

The Leader of the Opposition says that government agencies like TIO, when involving their funds with businesses, should pick only winners. It would be really nice if one could pick only winners. It would be like going to the racecourse and making a fortune by picking only winners. Every person who ever got caught with a bad debt because someone went into liquidation wishes that he could have picked a winner. I really look forward to hearing some advice from members of the opposition about how people in the commercial world can ensure that a company will succeed, no matter what. Apparently, it does not matter what happens to the company, the economy or the stock market - we should only pick winners. Maybe we should pass a law against companies going into liquidation. Would that be an answer? That would be a way of only picking winners. I understand that there are companies in Australia which search for companies which need injections of capital, which have high levels of debt but which have the potential to be put on their feet through better management. Such companies are targets to be incorporated into other company's empires or perhaps sold off once they are on their feet. To suggest that a wise investor would run a mile after seeing how Hungerford was operating in Brisbane is to ignore commercial reality. In fact, such companies are sometimes sought out by investors.

The Leader of the Opposition knows very well that politicising a company can do it an enormous amount of harm. He has done that pretty well. Ever since he started his attacks on Hungerford, it has been obvious that his target has been to see the company go down so that all would be justified. He had plenty of opportunity to bring his concerns to the attention of the government. Instead, he liked to pretend that his attacks on the company were in the public interest, the implication being that, if the company went down, he would be demonstrated to have been right all along whilst we would be somehow at fault for not taking any notice of him. He is naive if he believes that he can convince this Assembly that his role in attacking Hungerford over a period of 12 months has done anything other than harm to that company.

In his statement, the Treasurer referred to a comment made by the Leader of the Opposition in June last year to the effect that Hungerford Refrigeration was likely to go into liquidation and described that comment as 'the single most treacherous piece of commercial sabotage that we have seen'. It is interesting to see the Leader of the Opposition crying crocodile tears now, stating that he has an interest in ensuring that the receiver has every item of information necessary to get the company back on its feet. He said at 7 am on 8DN on 16 May that: 'We need at this stage to provide all the information that we can to the receiver so that he can, if at all possible, come up with a scheme of arrangement that will enable Hungerford Refrigeration to keep operating and, therefore, protect these jobs'.

The one thing that the Leader of the Opposition did not want to do over the past 12 months is to talk to the people in those jobs and ask them what they thought of his antics and whether they thought he was improving the company's prospects for survival and their chances to continue in their jobs. As the Treasurer pointed out, the Leader of the Opposition was invited to visit Hungerford personally on a number of occasions. In each instance, he declined. Last year, he was invited to speak to Rupert Hungerford, the founder of the company, when he was standing almost next to him at the Northern Territory Expo. He was invited to meet Mr Hungerford, perhaps for a talk about the company, and he declined that invitation. He also declined to attend the official trade launch of the company's products when more than 100 people attended at the factory in the Trade Development Zone. He declined to attend and speak with some of the employees of the company.

He went out to Hungerford just a couple of days ago, with 2 television crews in tow, of course, and now he wants to get into the company. Now he wants to talk to those people for the first time since the company's establishment in the Northern Territory. Thank goodness, he was refused admission, and rightly so. Crocodile tears - that is what we are seeing from the Leader of the Opposition now, for those people and those jobs and for this company. He has done nothing but try to pull it down since it arrived in the Northern Territory and now he claims to have its interests at heart. What a lot of hogwash. He has described Hungerford as the 'flagship of the TDZ'. If indeed it is a flagship, it is battle-scarred and bullet-holed and it has spent half its time trying to zigzag to avoid being torpedoed by the Leader of the Opposition who claims to be a supporter, not just of the TDZ, but of Hungerford itself.

Mr Leo interjecting.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The Minister for Industries and Development will be heard in silence.

Mr PERRON: Mr Speaker, if Hungerford does not survive, and I along with other honourable members here would certainly hope that the receiver will be able to rearrange the company so that it does survive, the Leader of the Opposition will be able to say proudly to himself that he was a contributor to that exercise. He will be able to sleep at night in the comfort of knowing that he has finally had an effect on the development of the Northern Territory, an adverse effect, but an effect anyway. I guess in his position he has to have just whatever effect he can, because he is seen as being pretty ineffectual.

The assistance provided by the Trade Development Zone to Hungerford is secure, as has been mentioned again by my honourable colleague. Suggestions have been made that heaps of the taxpayers' money may be lost in this exercise. The Leader of the Opposition himself indicated that a security has been lodged at the Companies Office by the Trade Development Zone which secures the funds that were provided to assist the company to come to the Northern Territory.

The troubles of Hungerford at present time do not mean, however, that the Trade Development Zone itself is in any way under a cloud. I mention this here because some comment has been made on a number of occasions suggesting that this matter may affect the future of the Trade Development Zone. Obviously, trade-zone status does not make a company immune in any way from commercial forces or, sadly, immune to some of the vicious and damaging attacks that are mounted, from time to time, by irresponsible politicians.

Neither the Trade Development Zone Authority or its staff are managers of companies inside the zone itself, and the authority cannot be held responsible for the performance of any company inside that zone, other than within the terms of the agreement between the Trade Development Zone Authority and each individual company with regard to performance, export targets and so on. Those are legal obligations and they are on the books. However, the trade zone and its staff are not managing companies in the zone and some will succeed and some will fail. I understand that experience in trade zones elsewhere is no different. Certainly, companies in trade zones are not immune to commercial forces or going broke on occasion. The biggest lead weight that the Trade Development Zone has to bear is the Leader of the Opposition and his deputy who, whilst claiming to support the zone, are doing their very best, and have done so all along, to undermine the zone's activities and, indeed, any development activity that may push forward the Northern Territory's economy and that might reflect a little credit on this government and its initiatives. Anything of that kind has to be attacked by the opposition and I cannot think of any exceptions to that. Opposition members have played their role right down the line.

Mr EDE (Stuart): Mr Speaker, I thought the Minister for Industries and Development was going to get right through that making only one small point that was pertinent to the debate, but he did get another one in right at the death knock.

The first point that he made was his admission that we did have information that the government did not. He admitted that. I thought it was rather incredible that we had information that the government did not have, with all the resources of the TIO and the resources of the government etc. Even with our small resources, we were able to obtain that information on the company which he was unable to do. Of course, we assumed that he had that information and was keeping it quiet for some reason or another. He is now saying that all the information that we introduced was quite new, that the government did not realise the status of the company's credit rating nor that it had such a poor record in collecting and so on.

Mr Perron: Read the minister's statement.

Mr EDE: That is what you said, not what the minister said. He was not quite so forthcoming in his admissions, but thanks for that. However, I will not dwell on that issue because we have his second point.

He spoke about the Trade Development Zone not being responsible for failures within the zone. Of course, on the face of it, that has a certain element of truth to it. However, we have some problems with the time-scale here. We have been told that this company closed down operations in Brisbane on 7 April and, miraculously, started up operations in the Trade Development Zone on the same day, 7 April.

Mr Speaker, I have been at a loss to work out the reasons for the collapse here. Why did this company go down? I have tried to get away from the rhetoric of the 2 ministers opposite and to dig down, and one of the points that came to me was this. This company was in Brisbane. The TIO decided to buy into it and get it into the Trade Development Zone. But I see that the May 1987 copy of 'TDZ', the zone's publication, stated that the new Hungerford factory of 1000 m² was to be finished by October. The company was moving in there in April and its actual factory was to be completed 6 months later. The publication says: 'Meanwhile, the company is using a factory which has been reserved for an overseas manufacturer who will start manufacturing in the zone

for export about the same time'. It says: 'We are scheduling construction so that Hungerfords will be out before the overseas company wants to take up residence'.

I hope that, at another time, the honourable minister will be able to explain to us how that could come about. On the face of it, this company was to move from Brisbane into temporary residence in one building at the Trade Development Zone, and to be relocated in another building in the zone when that building was completed. Perhaps the minister will be able to explain how that cannot have quite a substantial effect on the company's ability to operate and to be profitable. It is not a decision which a normal, well-managed business would make. It would not put itself in that situation. It would say that, if it were to move into the zone, the building for its factory should be put in place first. It would have continued to operate from Brisbane and would have moved in when the zone was operational. For a manufacturing company to move twice in the space of 6 months is patently ridiculous. It is just the sort of thing that destroys a company's ability to operate. It destroys scheduling of overseas orders.

Mr Speaker, let us look a little more closely at the so-called reason for the wind-up - the Tindal contract. That is quite an interesting one.

Mr Manzie interjecting.

Mr EDE: The Attorney-General is going to contribute. That is excellent. His contribution to these debates is generally delivered sotto voce and makes about the same level of sense.

I will quote from the statement that the minister made this morning: 'In January 1988, the company obtained major orders to supply the Tindal base with split-system air-conditioning units for defence personnel homes. In all, some 300 units were supplied'. In fact, my information is different from that. My information is that the contract for the supply of those 300 air-conditioners was let to an Adelaide firm. It completed some 200 of them and then went broke. Hungerford Refrigeration came in with a unit contract to supply the other 100. The minister is quite incorrect in his description of the circumstances. I hope that, in reply, he will explain why he is attempting once again to mislead us.

Thus, the company had a contract for 100 units. It had the specifications and it had considerable protection. It had its payroll tax holiday, its buildings were provided, it had loans from the government and water and sewerage concessions etc. It had its proximity to Katherine and was all tooled up for the job. When the tender was let for the 300 air-conditioning units, why was Hungerford Refrigeration in fact the second highest tenderer?

Mr Coulter: How do you know that?

Mr Perron: How do you know that? Even it has not been told that.

Mr EDE: That is what I have heard around the ridges and it seems to be fairly commonly known, Mr Speaker. My resources are slender - one electorate assistant - yet I am able to hear what is going on. If I am wrong, I will quite happily say so. I believe it was not within a bull's roar of being the lowest tenderer. In fact, my information is that it was the second highest tenderer. How was it that this company, which was tooled up for the job and had all the advantages, was unable to come within a bull's roar of the lowest tender price?

This company was set up to enter the export market. It turned back to the local market, against the philosophy of the TDZ, so that it would be able to obtain some cash. Even with all those advantages, it was still unable to compete. I do not think that we should feel sympathy for it because, if it was unable to compete under those circumstances, it is pretty hard to see under what circumstances it would be able to compete.

Mr Speaker, let us turn to the cash requirement that has been talked about. It is still not completely clear what the various amounts of money were. However, from an answer that the Treasurer gave yesterday, there was the initial purchase of stock and the loans. In May, because the government found that the working capital had been completely absorbed, the company needed an emergency injection of \$250 000. 'Following the move to Darwin which will not be completed for another 2 weeks' - it is quite interesting that, in May, it would not be completed for 2 weeks but it was already in full production in April - 'and following new overseas orders'. That is in line with the press release but not in line with the letter from the TIO on 14 May which says that, following the move, no new orders were being received. One says 'following new overseas orders' and the other says there are no overseas orders. However, another \$250 000 for temporary assistance was required.

The initial amount provided in March was \$750 000 and, by mid-May, it required another \$250 000. At that stage, in May 1987, the bells should have started ringing. \$750 000 had been provided to establish this company, to enable it to rectify certain problems and to get it on the road. A couple of months later, it was asking for another \$250 000.

Mr Coulter: It was the lead up to the federal election.

Mr EDE: You were too busy with the federal election, were you? If you were too busy with the federal election, you should have got out of the shower and gone back to work. You were sitting there with it all pouring down on top of you. You did not know what was going on.

Only a few months later, in September, a further request was made, for the very same reasons as money was required in the first place and the second place. For this third injection of money, it required \$0.5m. That really was throwing good money after bad. By that stage, all of the early promise had disappeared and it was no longer demonstrating any potential to be the dream project that the government thought it would be. Unfortunately, the government seemed to have itself so bound up with the company that it just could not get out.

All the minister has done is say that it is not the government's fault; it is the Leader of the Opposition's fault because he stopped all the overseas markets getting off the ground. The press release of 3 April talked about the fantastic overseas markets. That was the famous press release that stated that large orders had already been secured. We found out that nothing had been secured. There was the odd heads of agreement, but that was all.

The 3 April press release gave us a clue to a possibility. I am surprised that the government has not utilised this. It was the one thing about Hungerford that made me think that perhaps there was something there. It was the ice-sludge process. Do you remember that process, Mr Speaker? We were told it was a technological breakthrough. The new technology would allow temperatures to be dropped in the curing of cement in large projects. We were told that it had been done at Derby and that it would be exported throughout South-east Asia. The Treasurer's press release of 3 April talked about export

potential, what the technology could do in tropical climates in terms of enabling concrete to be poured faster and more efficiently, and its use at the Derby Airport. He said: 'The company has been exploring South-east Asian markets in conjunction with Nortrade and large orders have already been secured'. Of course, none of the orders that we have been able to find relate to the new technology for the ice-sludge mix.

It may have been something good but it is not a particularly hi-tech development. It is rather like providing a different type of air-conditioning unit and some extra ice to cool down the whiskies. It had some possibilities but Hungerford Refrigeration apparently could not capitalise on those. I would like the minister to explain why. I do not know whether it was because of the transfer from Brisbane or whether Hungerford had to move from one factory to another within the Trade Development Zone. In the Trade Development Zone publication of July 1987, there is no longer any mention of the ice-sludge manufacturing equipment. The publication mentions refrigeration, ice-making and air-conditioning. In a few short months, the company went from high technology to medium-to-low technology.

The whole thing is a very sorry tale. No aspect is worse than the misleading statements of the Treasurer. He argues that the whole project would have proceeded swimmingly except for the Leader of the Opposition. He supposedly stopped overseas sales single-handedly. Before that idea gains too much credence, I would like the minister to explain how people in Malaysia, Singapore, Brunei, Papua New Guinea, Indonesia, Sabah and Thailand are able to avidly read the proceedings of this House? Are they covered in detail by newspapers circulating in those countries? Does the Straits Times carry headlined stories saying: 'Watch out for Hungerford. The Opposition Leader in the Northern Territory has said that it is a shonk'. What a load of absolute rubbish, Mr Speaker! It is patent nonsense and should not be allowed to go unchallenged.

I would also like to know how Hungerford Refrigeration's credibility was damaged to the extent that it could no longer perform given that, when TIO bought into the company, it had already completed contracts with Concentrator Service Buildings in Panguna in the North Solomons, the Port Moresby Hospital, the Lae telephone exchange, IHT Lae, HMAS Lorengow on Marnis, the DCA offices in Conny Dovu, the Commonwealth Bank in Rabaul, ANQ Bank in Rabaul, a party in Popenetta and Coles Stores in Sydney and Brisbane. The company had the same sales manager when it obtained those contracts as it did after the TIO became involved. That makes me wonder to what extent its problems were due to the company being brought to Darwin when warehousing space was not available in the Trade Development Zone. To what extent were the problems due to incompetent advice provided by government ministers? On 2 occasions, the Treasurer has made grossly misleading statements. On the first occasion, on 3 April, he said that large orders had been secured. He stated that in a press release and we have now disproved it and shown that he misled the public.

Mr Coulter: I told you. That is how you disproved it.

Mr EDE: You have admitted that you misled the public?

Mr Coulter: I told you, right?

Mr EDE: You told us that you misled the public?

Mr Coulter: I told you.

Mr EDE: You did not tell us when we asked you previously. You mentioned today that you misled the public and you should apologise for that to the business community of the Northern Territory. You led it up the garden path.

The Treasurer led this House up the garden path on 30 April 1987 when he stated that a heads of agreement had been signed with a company in Papua New Guinea for a 500 000 kina contract. Today, he said that 100 000 kina was involved. He seems to feel that he can throw money around with such impunity that 400 000 kina is of no relevance. That in itself is a damning indictment of the Treasurer's ability to do his sums and once again shows the level of detail that he goes into before he acts. I hope that he will lift his game in the future.

Mr TUXWORTH (Barkly): Mr Speaker, I have made my position on the Hungerford Refrigeration matter and its impact on the credibility of the Trade Development Zone quite clear. I am not in the least bit shy about reiterating my remarks this afternoon and, in fact, expanding on them because, in my view, the need for an inquiry has increased dramatically since the Treasurer made his statement this morning.

In view of the Treasurer's remarks, I can see a great deal of advantage to the government in having an inquiry. It would prove its assertion that the Leader of the Opposition was the torpedo that finished off Hungerford Refrigeration by his continual attacks on its credibility. It would also give the government the opportunity to show that it and the TIO are above reproach. It would give an inquirer an opportunity to see if there were any other business organisations, such as banks or investment houses, that would regard the Hungerford Refrigeration proposal as a sound business investment to move into. It would be reasonable for an inquirer to look into how such a situation might be avoided in the future.

The Treasurer's performance this morning was theatrical and noisy, but his statement did not contain much substance. It did not say much that had not been said already and it raised more questions than it answered. I think the whole tenor of the statement can be summed up in a sentence which appears on its first page: 'Facts are things that are true'. On the surface, that appears to be a very reasonable statement. However, to demonstrate what nonsense it is, I could get 5 people to say tomorrow that it is a fact and it is true that Barry Coulter and Terry Smith are really handsome fellows and someone else could get another 10 or 5 people who would say that that is a great load of balderdash. Facts are not simply things that are true. There is no fixed connection between the two, and there is not much connection between the Treasurer's statement and the answers that need to be provided in this exercise.

It has already been said that the government's proposal to have Hungerford Refrigeration as the zone's flagship company was commendable. I concur with that. However, whilst it is very important for the company to succeed, not just for the company itself and the TIO but for the Trade Development Zone and what it is trying to achieve, the proposal contained some flaws from the start which seem to have escaped people's notice or have simply been ignored. I would like to touch on some of those matters now because they are very pertinent to today's discussion.

Refrigeration is one of the toughest and most competitive businesses in the world, not just in the Territory or in Australia. Anybody who has tried to deal in refrigeration - wholesale, manufacturing or retail - or who has been involved in purchasing refrigeration equipment, will know that it is the

most competitive industry imaginable. In addition, we could give consideration to the fact that, when Hungerford was looked at as the Treasurer admitted in his statement, it lacked financial control, had poor management and lacked liquidity. Those would not be exactly the ingredients that you, Mr Speaker, or I would go looking for in a company unless we had something special in mind, and what the something special might have been has not come to the surface.

Getting back to the business of refrigeration manufacture and sale, it is not unreasonable for anybody to ask about export market potential. Given the competitiveness in refrigeration right throughout the world - and that does not apply only Australia; it is tough everywhere with the largest companies in the world fighting in the marketplace every day - what really was our market potential for exporting refrigeration products from Darwin? Anybody in the trade would tell you that it was very poor, very tough and certainly not to be regarded optimistically. And what was the real debt position of Hungerford Refrigeration, given the admission that it lacked financial control, had poor management and was short on liquidity? If the headline in yesterday's paper was true, not enough homework was done on assessing the debt position of the company. But there was a way around that which was for the directors of the TIO to take out directors' guarantees in terms of an indemnity to ensure the new organisation would not be prejudiced in its operation by any recurring debts.

The reality is that a great many people in the Northern Territory business community were told, at a very early stage, towards the middle of last year, that many people who were owed money by Hungerford had written off the possibility of getting their money and were not going to pursue it. However, when they discovered that the TIO would be in the act, and that it was a semi-government agency, they all tuned in, decided to go for broke and try to recover their money because the TIO would have to pay. That was pretty common knowledge around the marketplace. Admittedly, when the Leader of the Opposition raised it in the Assembly, the government kicked his brains in and called him anti-Territorian. The regrettable part about that is that he can stand up and say that he told us so - and look where that has got us.

Another flaw in the proposal is the problem of the very skilled workforce required to operate manufacturing businesses such as that which the Hungerford company became involved in. I guess the acid test of whether you reckon a thing is okay to be involved in is to ask yourself whether you would put your money into it. That is a very simple test, and does not require any heartache. You just look at the deal as it has been put to you and say: 'How much of my own money would I put into that?'. If you would not be prepared to invest any of your own money, you should think twice about putting the taxpayers' money into it.

The venture was a pretty brave outing for the TIO by any standards. Both sides of the House have mentioned several times today that the TIO needs to be seen as a good investor or a 'winner', as it was referred to. That is true and any insurance company needs to maintain that image in the marketplace. It needs to be seen to be successful and to be going places. But it is not only that. In the Territory, where the TIO writes 55% or 65% of the business, it has very many Territorian policyholders who would like to know that their funds are in good hands. They are looking at this whole performance as interested observers to see how their funds are being handled by the managers of the insurance office. The big questions keep coming up. How did they get into it? How did it start? Who was involved in it? No one has really answered those questions and the answers are pretty important.

They might not seem important in here. In here, the matter might be something to smooth over, but certainly it is one that people in the community, business people, would like to know about. Who made the first contact? Did Mr Hungerford telephone Mr McHenry? Did a minister have lunch with Mr Hungerford? Did it happen in some other way? Did a broker introduce the 2 parties, tell them they had a common interest, and suggest they talk about getting into bed together? How was that original contact made because the whole integrity of the matter has become blurred now and there is a perception in the community that some sort of shonky deal has been done. The only way to lay that to rest is to stand up and say: 'I had lunch with him and he put a deal to the board and it went from there. The board agreed that it would be great to become involved in the TDZ'. Whatever the facts are, it would not hurt for the government to get up and say what they are.

Mr Coulter: I said it this morning. It is on page 1 of the statement.

Mr TUXWORTH: But you didn't say it this morning. You can show that to anybody you want to, but you will not allay people's fears. You do not have to yell at me. You do not have to convince me. I know the mess that we are in, and I am not cranky about it, Mr Speaker. I am trying to be objective about it.

One of the big questions that is asked, and might reasonably be asked by an inquirer, is which Northern Territory companies were approached to venture into a similar project in the zone. Were any approached? Under what conditions were they approached, did they turn the offer down or were they unsuitable for the proposal. On top of that, I do not think it would hurt at all to enunciate pretty clearly exactly what Hungerford Refrigeration's conditions were in the zone because the perception in the community is that the company had a pretty sweet deal. It moved into the trade zone with a range of concessions not available to anybody else in the business community and proceeded to compete with the local market and make life pretty difficult. It is not exactly the role of the trade zone to take in people who make our own businesses suffer.

I will just come back to the issue of the TIO and the downside for the TIO in ensuring that things were in order. It is only 2 or 3 years ago that the TIO sustained some pretty substantial losses in the reinsurance business because all things were not in order within its own organisation. That was a pretty bitter pill at the time, and a very costly one for everyone concerned. To its credit, the TIO has negotiated and traded its way out of most of its problems. But we have a similar problem again. We are now confronted with the possibility of the TIO suing the proprietors or co-directors in this organisation because Hungerford Refrigeration failed to disclose the extent of liabilities that might be brought against the firm. Again, I am highlighting ...

Mr Perron: To be considered in the overall investment.

Mr TUXWORTH: Oh, what tripe! Mr Speaker, is it any wonder we are in strife if that is the level of comment.

An inquirer should determine why that issue of security was not covered properly in the first stages and it would be reasonable also for an inquirer to look closely into the documents that purported to demonstrate the export potential of the company because they are crucial to deciding how we ever got into this.

Another interesting issue that has arisen is what it will cost to wind up the Hungerford organisation if it is the decision of the liquidator to so do. I can see considerable costs falling to somebody for the repatriation or relocation of many people in the trade zone who have come here to do a specialised job and now no longer have one. We cannot honestly throw them out on the footpath and pretend that they do not exist simply because the company has gone into liquidation. I was interested in the comment the Treasurer made this morning when he said that the TIO would look favourably on people who have been trading with Hungerford Refrigerator for some time. I am sure the liquidator would be very interested in a statement like that.

Mr Hatton: Receiver.

Mr TUXWORTH: Just one step in front at this stage. I will accept that correction by the Chief Minister. It is a receiver at this stage. I would not like to have any of my dough on whether the liquidator will emerge or not.

Let us come back to the other point that was raised this morning by the Treasurer when he said that no Territory government money is involved. He said it is all TIO money. That is a long way from the mark and is taking a little bit of licence with the truth. There is a \$20m investment in the Trade Development Zone, perhaps more. There is no way that one can say anybody in the zone is paying an economic rent, not even by a long shot. There is a cost to the government and a cost to the taxpayer. The government cannot shovel it under a carpet because that makes people think the whole deal is shonky. There is a cost to the taxpayer and the best thing to do is to say that the rent forgone, the establishment costs, the subsidised electricity or whatever cost \$x. The government cannot say there is no cost.

I would raise with the Treasurer a question that ought to be referred to an inquirer: what are the continuing liabilities? This will not stop. If we wish Hungerford Refrigeration to continue, there will be continuing liabilities. Somebody has to invest money to enable it to trade out of its problems. If it is to be wound up, there will also be a cost. There is no an easy way out.

This morning, the Treasurer commented that I had said that Hungerford Refrigeration was supplying the Australian market in contravention of the policies of the TDZ which are to supply export markets. Nonsense, Mr Speaker! My criticism was that, when it lost a local contract that it could not have really expected to win, it packed up its bags and said it would go into receivership. If it were truly focusing on an export market, a local contract like that would be money in the bag. It is not fair to say that a business that has set up in a trade zone as an export business can reasonably shut its doors because it has lost a local contract. It makes a joke of the whole thing. That was my point.

I will touch on the contract, and I said this to the Treasurer. Let us imagine that the Tindal contract had been won by Hungerford Refrigeration. What would the difference be? 300 air-conditioning units would cost \$1200 to \$1500 each or \$450 000 with a 20% mark-up of profit at the end of the day. The company would be lucky to bring home \$80 000 after it had won a contract like that with a work force of 30 to 40 people. If that is the sort of operation that we are involved in, it probably would not be such a bad idea to rethink the whole matter anyway. It has barely set up its manufacturing facilities, it has no marketing structure, it has no markets, it has no service backup and it is looking to a 300-unit contract at Tindal to survive.

Mr Speaker, I had a deputation from some employees of the Department of Transport and Works just before Christmas last year. They wanted to whinge about the fact that they were being made to use this Hungerford stuff - I will not use the exact words - in all the government repair and maintenance jobs. They wanted to know why they should not be able to use whatever was best for the job or available at the best price in the market.

Mr Coulter: Who were these people?

Mr TUXWORTH: They were employees of the Department of Transport and Works.

Mr Coulter: In the Northern Territory?

Mr TUXWORTH: In the Northern Territory.

Mr Coulter: They were made to ...?

Mr TUXWORTH: They said that they were made to approach their jobs with the purpose of solely using Hungerford Refrigeration equipment.

Mr Finch: What jobs?

Mr TUXWORTH: I just said it. If you had been listening, you would know.

Mr Speaker, that sort of thing rings alarm bells all over the country because information like that circulates in the trade very quickly. All that does is stiffen the competition in the trade which makes Hungerford Refrigeration's job even more difficult.

Much was made of the Leader of the Opposition's attack. Perhaps the Leader of the Opposition did not do it well and perhaps he caused the company considerable damage. An inquiry would show that. One thing was certain: the Leader of the Opposition was repeating what the business community of the Territory was saying, whether the government was listening to it or not.

Last year, the minister did not hesitate to set up an inquiry to examine what happened at the Channel Island Power Station when the gas turbines failed. I think there is good reason to have another inquiry now to see what has gone wrong here. We need to establish that the original contracts between the company and the government were not political arrangements and that the TIO took proper commercial actions to protect itself and its policyholders. We ought to ensure that there will not be a recurrence. If there is to be any further assistance to Hungerford by way of a TIO contribution or a government contribution, that matter ought to be assessed and it could properly be assessed by somebody who is competent to inquire into the entire performance.

Mr BELL (MacDonnell): Mr Speaker, I rise to my feet with some degree of surprise that there have been 3 speakers from this side of the House this afternoon, none of which have been answered by government speakers. The most vociferous interjector, the bullfrog from Leanyer ...

Mr SPEAKER: Order!

Mr BELL: I apologise. I withdraw unreservedly, Mr Speaker. The member for Leanyer has been interjecting so vociferously that I would have thought that he might have been able to contribute something sensible.

Mr Coulter: He will be contributing to this debate. Why don't you try?

Mr BELL: He is going to have a fair bit of trouble contributing to this debate. That is why I waited in my seat for some time. The Deputy Leader of the Opposition and the member for Barkly have both risen from this side of the House to make fairly pertinent comments about the debacle that this government has involved the Territory Insurance Office in and we cannot find anybody on the frontbench or the backbench opposite to defend the outrageous actions of this government. It really surprises me.

Mr Coulter: Those are the seating arrangements of the House.

Mr BELL: The Treasurer is always very good at interjecting and always very good at playing the man. In fact, he has behaved appallingly in this matter. He has made one contradictory statement after another over the last 18 months in relation to this affair. The best he can come up with is a vituperative personal attack on the Leader of the Opposition who has been consistently, dutifully and articulately carrying out his job of bringing to book the ever-changing array of people on the government frontbench. It is no wonder that they cannot keep track of what is going on. How many Ministers for Industries and Development ...

Mr COULTER: A point of order, Mr Speaker! I refer to standing order 67. The member for MacDonnell has been on his feet for some 4 minutes. He has not addressed the motion before this House. He has discussed the seating arrangements of the House and a range of other issues. We are discussing the subject of Hungerford Refrigeration.

Mr SPEAKER: I ask the member to relate his comments to the motion.

Mr BELL: I will do that, Mr Speaker.

For the benefit of the Treasurer, who obviously has a great deal of trouble in following the debate, if he does not believe that people in the community are concerned about the capacity of this government to take sensible decisions because of the ever-changing array on its own frontbench, I suggest he wander down the Mall or have a yarn to a few people out there.

Members interjecting.

Mr BELL: For the benefit of honourable government members who keep interjecting, if they believe that a company such as this, that has been brought to the Trade Development Zone at an expense of \$1.5m and that has exposed policyholders in the Territory Insurance Office in this particular way, is not a matter of concern in the community, I suggest that they stop interjecting and listen. The only argument that the Treasurer brought forward was a non-objective attack on the Leader of the Opposition this morning. That non-objective attack indicated the sort of lack of understanding of parliamentary procedures and processes of government that I thought had left the government frontbench a considerable time ago.

We have these crocodile tears from the government, which says that Hungerford Refrigeration would never have gone to the wall if it had not been for the Leader of the Opposition raising questions about the amount of government money that was going to the company and if he had not suggested that there were problems with the company when, in fact, the Treasurer himself has given patent evidence that those problems existed. Does he really expect a shadow treasurer to sit by and ignore the sort of public statements that the

Treasurer has been making about this matter over 12 months? I will remind the Treasurer of a comment made by him in this Assembly in question time of 30 April 1987.

Yes, I am sure this is a yawn. I presume that the Minister for Health and Community Services, who is not prepared to get up and debate this matter and is not a policyholder in the Territory Insurance Office as I am, would say that these matters do not really affect him. But I suggest that there are a few people in the community who are premium payers, who are policyholders with the Territory Insurance Office, and it does matter to them. The sort of childish performance that we saw from the Treasurer and that we are seeing from frontbenchers today does the government no credit and threatens the existence of many investments made by the Territory Insurance Office. It is a matter of concern to me, and I am surprised to see the Treasurer raising points of order and the Minister for Health and Community Services yawning in that fashion.

I remind the Treasurer of comments he made in this Assembly on 30 April 1987 in response to a question from the Leader of the Opposition who, as I say, has been quite appropriately pursuing this matter. I dare say a large number of policyholders in the Territory Insurance Office will be thankful that these sorts of exercise are to be given far greater consideration in the future. I am not suggesting, nor is the Leader of the Opposition suggesting, that this will spell the demise of the Territory Insurance Office. I understand as well as does the Minister for Industries and Development that, in any investment portfolio, there must be balances. I suggest that the government should be thankful, as I am sure policyholders will be thankful, that we have a shadow treasurer who is prepared to do his homework and to present the facts in the way that the Treasurer this morning conspicuously failed to do. He is like a character caught with his hand in the cookie jar who says: 'Ooh, sorry sir, sorry sir. No, it was him. It was him'. That is the best argument that he can come up with.

I will remind the Treasurer of the words he said on 30 April. He said that there were no problems with Hungerford Refrigeration. He said, and I quote:

The decision to invest in Hungerford was made on the best of economic advice, provided by a firm of chartered accountants and also on the best academic advice provided by a professor of an Australian university who investigated the Hungerford product and gave it a clean bill of health.

The only difference between that comment and the Treasurer's reference to that today was that, this morning, he left out the bit about the clean bill of health. I will give it to the Treasurer that he can leap out with the occasional phrase that hits you between the eyes, but he is very selective about the way he uses that talent. He was quite happy to talk 12 months ago about Hungerford Refrigeration's clean bill of health, but we did not hear anything about a clean bill of health today.

There were few lacunae in the statement made by the Treasurer today. Let me point out another one. It was not his customary articulate offering, but he provided it to us in question time later that particular day. All pious this was, Mr Speaker, even if the syntax was a little jangled. He said:

The export orders that Hungerford has, and indeed the proposed orders that it has from places like China, Vanuatu and Papua New Guinea, are excellent and they have been extremely profitable.

Mr Speaker, that is a very interesting past perfect tense: 'they have been extremely profitable'. I presume that the Treasurer will not be taking up prophecy because he has proved that he is demonstrably incompetent in that regard. In fact, I think that a prima facie case can be made for saying that, in answer to that particular question, the Treasurer misled this House. Have you got your Hansard over there? Check it out - on 30 April 1987. I am quoting: 'the proposed orders that it has ...'. Those were the Treasurer's words. And what happened to them? Nothing.

As the member for Barkly has said so clearly, Hungerford Refrigeration was never going to be saved by any contract at Tindal. It would never have been saved in that way. The plain fact of the matter is that the Treasurer has misled this House. By attempting to defend these unwise investment decisions, the Treasurer has given the impression that the Northern Territory is run by a bunch of cowboys. Mr Speaker, I regret to report to you and to other honourable members of this Assembly that I am coming rapidly to the conclusion that that perception, that the Northern Territory is run by a bunch of cowboys, is 100% correct.

The contribution of the Minister for Industries and Development really was a brave effort. I will give the Minister for Industries and Development a big thumbs up for this; it really was a brave effort. He pursued the racetrack metaphor. You will recall it, Mr Speaker. He said: 'Look, we are out there in the marketplace and, as is the case at the racetrack, you can't back winners every time'. That, of course, is correct. When you are at the racetrack, you cannot always back winners, you cannot always even get a place. My view is that the Northern Territory government should have known that the nag it was backing had weights in its saddlebags, but it did not bother to investigate it.

Mr Dale: All horses that race now have weights in the saddlebags.

Mr Finch: It was the kick in the groin that did the damage.

Mr BELL: I am quite interested to pursue the racetrack metaphor, and to pick up the interjection from the Minister for Health and Community Services. I remind him that the Northern Territory government did not bother to do its homework and work out which weights were where. That is why we are in the present predicament in respect of Hungerford Refrigeration.

Mr Dale: Why don't you get the whip out and get to the finish?

Mr BELL: Mr Speaker, I remember a few years ago, and this is relevant ...

Mr Leo: Long boots and a whip! I can see you, Daryl! Fish-net stockings! It's bizarre, Daryl.

Mr BELL: What a horrendous vision the member for Nhulunbuy has raised. I would hate to see it but I would like to think that, even if the Attorney-General were there with a horsewhip and fish-net stockings, at least he would check the weights in the saddlebag before he went off.

But I remember a debate a few years ago when we were talking about ...

Mr MANZIE: A point of order, Mr Speaker! I find those comments by the member for MacDonnell extremely offensive and unparliamentary, and I would ask you to rule on whether it is appropriate that such comments should be made in this Assembly.

Mr BELL: Mr Speaker, may I speak? I am quite happy. Can I just seek clarification from the Attorney-General? Does he take exception to the whip or the fish-net stockings - or both?

Mr SPEAKER: Because of the objection raised by the Attorney-General, is the honourable member prepared to withdraw the remark?

Mr BELL: Mr Speaker, I am most happy to withdraw that from the mind of myself and anybody else who may have been polluted by my vision of the Attorney-General with fish-net stockings and a whip. I trust this is satisfactory.

As I was saying, I remember a debate a few years ago, Mr Speaker, and you will recall it yourself. I do not think too many members on the government frontbench today were here at the time when the then shadow treasurer was referring to problems experienced by companies which were beneficiaries of loans from the Northern Territory Development Corporation. I am sure the member for Fannie Bay will recall how the then Chief Minister said: 'Oh, you have to remember that the Northern Territory Development Corporation loans to the wobblies'. There was probably a superficial justification for that. One can accept that an appropriate investment policy involves lending to companies with good prospects. However, I suggest to the government that the Territory Insurance Office should have done its homework a little bit better because putting money into this wobbly did not have quite the same justification.

The final point I want to make in relation to the minister's statement concerns comments made at page 3. I want to raise a serious matter in respect of a complex web of relationships between organisations. It is a difficult web for the opposition to unravel with the information available to it. We know that the Territory Insurance Office is involved and that the Treasurer is responsible for it. We also have the Trade Development Zone, now the responsibility of the Minister for Industries and Development and previously the responsibility of the then Minister for Business, Technology and Communications, who is now languishing or relaxing on the backbench, depending on whom you listen to. And then there is Hungerford Refrigeration itself and its principals.

There is a spectre which this raises. I want to be satisfied that the approaches and the relationship between the directors of Hungerford Refrigeration and the ministers of this government were not coloured by any political connection. I raise this as a possibility, Mr Speaker. The possibility is that Hungerford Refrigeration has a close connection with the Country Liberal Party and that principals of Hungerford Refrigeration have been donors to the Country Liberal Party. I raise the spectre that, in return for services rendered, pressure was placed on one or both of the ministers involved and that, as I believe to be the case, the then Minister for Business, Technology and Communications issued a written directive that the Territory Insurance Office was to invest in Hungerford Refrigeration.

Mr Speaker, until we have a clear understanding of the operations of organisations like Carpentaria Pty Ltd, those many people in the community who are policyholders ...

Mr Setter: I think you are becoming confused with woodchip companies.

Mr BELL: I am talking about the Northern Territory equivalent of woodchip companies. That is dead right, for the benefit of the member for Jingili, and

I suggest to him that the fallout from those woodchip companies might very well spell the demise of members opposite.

Mr COULTER: A point of order, Mr Speaker! I refer to standing order 121. The honourable member is casting critical aspersions on persons whose conduct may be challenged only by means of a substantive motion. If the member for MacDonnell wants to make that sort of allegation about members, he should place it in writing.

Mr BELL: Speaking to the point of order, Mr Speaker, I am raising a hypothetical scenario. My point is that that hypothetical scenario is unable to be assessed, which is the problem with electoral legislation in the Northern Territory.

Mr SPEAKER: There is no point of order under standing order 121. There is, however, a point of order under standing order 62. The honourable member has been casting aspersions on members opposite by innuendo, and I ask him to withdraw his comment.

Mr BELL: Can I ask the Treasurer to clarify which comment he wishes me to withdraw?

Mr SPEAKER: My understanding is that it was the reference to political motivation interfering with the administration of government operations.

Mr BELL: Mr Speaker, I withdraw any inference that the honourable ...

Mr Firmin: Your time is up.

Mr BELL: Do you want to move closure like you usually do, Colin?

Mr SPEAKER: Order!

Mr BELL: I can go on, can I Col?

Mr SPEAKER: I have asked the honourable member to withdraw and withdrawal is required without further delay.

Mr BELL: Mr Speaker, I was just pointing out that the government Whip is interjecting whilst I am attempting to do so and that that is making it a little difficult. Mr Speaker, I unreservedly withdraw any inference that there may have been a connection between the minister, the company and the CLP.

Mr FINCH (Transport and Works): Mr Speaker, like all other members on this side of the House, I am appalled by the raucous manner in which members of the opposition, particularly the member for MacDonnell, have treated this very serious subject. It shows their total lack of genuine interest in the well-being of the 30-odd workers at Hungerford Refrigeration as well as the many suppliers who are wondering at this very moment what sort of representation they have on the opposition benches.

If there is one message that I have for members of the opposition and the National Party member for Barkly, it relates to the difference between receivership and expressions such as 'liquidation', 'going to the wall' and 'bankruptcy', which they continue to use. Under normal circumstances, receivership provides a company and its creditors with the opportunity to trade their way out of difficulty, to restructure, to refinance or, at the

very least, to minimise the impact of the overall financial situation. I say 'under normal circumstances' because, each year, many Australian companies go into receiver-managership and are able to trade their way out of difficulty or, if nothing else, to provide a reasonable return to creditors. To my knowledge, however, none of those companies is put under the public microscope as Hungerford Refrigeration has been both at the hands of the opposition and, to my absolute amazement, at the hands of that so-called champion of business, the National Party representative, the member for Barkly. I find that absolutely amazing.

The first principle of business is confidence. If you cannot gain the confidence of your clients, creditors and suppliers, you may as well not get started at all. When that confidence is lost, it is amazing just how quickly things get out of hand. Not so long ago, there was a salmonella problem at a salami factory in Victoria. The business managed to survive, but only just. That was because there was a problem with a single product sample, probably representing about 0.01% of its total output. The episode was distorted out of all perspective. The business name was plastered across the front page of the newspapers and the company's reputation was damaged almost beyond repair. Another example is the meat industry. I do not believe that industry has yet recovered from the kangaroo meat episode. These episodes relate to business confidence and reputation.

I have no qualms about the Hungerford Refrigeration product or technology. I have not heard one word from the Leader of the Opposition regarding the product. Is he concerned about the quality of Hungerford Refrigeration's product? Does the company have something to sell? Of course it does! Any company establishing in a new location and a new marketplace needs time to get equipment in place, to train workers and to start selling its product. It not only needs time for that; more importantly, it needs to be able to gain the confidence of potential clients. However, at the very start of the emergence of Hungerford Refrigeration's product, we saw a deliberate and irresponsible denigration of the company by the Leader of the Opposition. He is responsible for the circumstances of those 30-odd workers, the company's creditors and the small suppliers around town and, if the situation cannot be retrieved, we will ensure that they are well aware that that is where the responsibility substantially lies.

The facts of business life evade members of the opposition and, it would seem, the member for Barkly. The basic fact of business life is that there is risk in any enterprise. To have that risk increased by media coverage of irresponsible opposition comment is certainly not the norm. Business investment, particularly by insurance companies, involves risk. If CML or AMP were to take no risks and simply invest all of their subscribers' funds in interest-bearing deposits, premiums would rise and returns to investors would be minimised. The investments would be risk-free but that is not what the game is about. It is about a balance of risk - some high, some secure. The Victorian government took a risk when it did not take the trouble to hedge the investments of its insurance office. It lost \$1000m in the recent stock exchange crash. Government insurance offices do take risks, but not risks that lead to irreparable damage. Whilst the impact of the Hungerford Refrigeration situation will not be noticed terribly by the TIO, it certainly will be noticed by Hungerford and, more pertinently, by those people whom our so-called opposition is claiming to protect.

It is clear to me that members of the opposition also do not understand that a critical component of business success is not the margins, as the member for Barkly suggested in talking about the profitability of a \$400 000

contract in Tindal. That is absolute nonsense. What is far more critical at this stage of the company's development is the cash flow which that job would have provided to keep it going into a growth period which would lead to healthy profitability. How will Hungerford now be able to sell its products around the streets? With debts coming in as well, that will be almost impossible.

We heard claims about local business whingeing to the National Party representative. It is time that we said also that, for far too long, local businesses have relied on the comfort of government contracts, government underwriting and government support. It is time for businesses to realise that they live in Australia and in the real world. Businesses need to make their own assessments and to take their own risks as well, mix their clientele and so forth. It is appropriate that that should occur in the Territory now. We need a shift away from the big-brother mentality which has existed for far too long in some sectors - and I emphasise 'some sectors' - of the business community. Fortunately, during the last 12 months, many local businesses have adopted a very aggressive, free-enterprise attitude and have moved away from reliance on government contracts and so on. That is much to their credit and to the benefit of the Territory.

Mr Speaker, we waited with bated breath for a positive contribution from the opposition. We heard from the Treasurer, who gave quite a clear picture of the Hungerford Refrigeration situation. The opposition product, however, contained absolutely no substance.

Mr Ede: Should we be encouraging you to keep involving yourself in enterprises like Hungerford Refrigeration?

Mr FINCH: Mr Speaker, I despair. The lack of business acumen on the opposition benches is quite evident.

What needs to happen, although it is possibly too late, is for people to pitch in and try to give Hungerford Refrigeration some chance of survival.

Mr Ede: Give it another \$500 000, mate.

Mr FINCH: You have already trodden on the company. You have already kicked it in the groin. Give it half a chance. Use the influence that you may have with the federal government in regard to the Tindal projects. Use your common sense and try to give it some chance of survival even if it is only to give a reasonable return to some of its creditors.

Mr Speaker, I recall an advertisement which appeared in a local newspaper last year. Somebody from the National Party wanted to kick the CLP by making a statement that a business which had done very well for 8 years had now dropped to zero because of the CLP government and that the operators were leaving town. It reflected the mentality of people who want to throw mud just for the sake of doing that. It displayed the lack of business intelligence which we have come to expect from members opposite and from the National Party representative.

Mr Speaker, let us give Hungerford Refrigeration final chance, a last breath of air.

Mr Ede: Give it another \$500 000, Fred. It needs it.

Mr FINCH: To take up the member for Stuart's interjection, it is not an injection of money but an injection of confidence which is required. I understood that the member for Stuart was a business adviser to Aboriginal communities. I have absolutely no doubt about why he is in this House now - they probably kicked him out. The sort of advice he offers is what sends people down the drain.

Mr Ede: What sort of an engineer were you?

Mr FINCH: Extremely successful.

What is needed to give Hungerford Refrigeration some chance of survival is an injection of confidence and that is what I plead for from members opposite. If they cannot give that, they should shut up.

Mr LEO (Nhulunbuy): Mr Speaker, I do not know why, after 7 years in this House, I continue to despair at this government's capacity for self-delusion. I should be inured to it by now. After so many years of shell shock, I should not be amazed at the total incompetence that members opposite continue to display. Why I should be affected in any way by their capacity for self-delusion is beyond me. However, for the sake of the Northern Territory, these people must in some way come to grips with their capacity for self-delusion and attempt to address this extremely serious matter. The Northern Territory faces a crisis of confidence. If a government does not enjoy the confidence of the public and if it is not perceived as credible by those who deal with it, that government is in for a very sad and sorry fate. It is inevitable.

On 3 April last year, the Treasurer said that there were no problems with the TIO involvement with Hungerford and that investors could be confident because Hungerford Refrigeration had secured export orders. Can the Treasurer or somebody else on the government benches tell me of any single item manufactured by Hungerford Refrigeration in Darwin which has been sold overseas? I assume that that is what export means: selling overseas.

Mr Finch: Why didn't you listen to the Treasurer?

Mr LEO: I listened to the Treasurer, long and hard. He went through a litany of excuses about what would be, could be, may be and probably might have been if something else had not happened. He did not give a single example of a secured export order. How can a person be so deluded as to stand up and repeat in this House something which was clearly incorrect 12 months ago? There is not much that the Treasurer can do to save his bacon in this exercise. He could admit the government has made a blue which it is trying to redress. He could attempt to reassure the people of the Northern Territory that, in the future, the government will not insist that instrumentalities like the TIO pour policyholders' dollars down drains. He could do that. But no, he does not do that. He says instead: 'It is not my fault. It is the Leader of the Opposition's fault. It is not my fault. It is the fault of some small businessman who has had his fingers burnt'. It is never the Treasurer's fault. It is never the Chief Minister's fault. Wasting public money is never this government's fault. It is everybody else's fault.

I do not know why members opposite bother to sit on the Treasury benches. They clearly have no control over any of the public moneys in the Northern Territory. It is everybody's responsibility bar theirs. They are, of course, deluded. I could understand it if they were simply trying to con the public. I could understand that. But they have conned themselves. They have actually

conned themselves and they believe their own nonsense. They are actually convinced that their total delusion is a representation of reality.

The Northern Territory has a future that matches their fantasy in the northern suburbs of Darwin. It is a complete waste of time. It is a waste of time when the Treasurer in the Northern Territory can say: 'It is not my fault. It is not my money. It is the Leader of the Opposition's fault because he runs the Northern Territory budget. It is not my fault. It is the fault of the poor little businessmen in the northern suburbs because they run the Northern Territory budget and the TIO. It is not my fault. I just got here for doing nothing'. This entire debate has demonstrated that it is a complete waste of time. The Treasurer cannot do his job or will not do his job and members of the Northern Territory government may as well not have their jobs because they refuse to accept responsibility for anything and, therefore, they are irresponsible about everything.

Mr COULTER (Treasurer): Mr Speaker, that was incredible; it really was. This morning, the member for Nhulunbuy spoke for some 20 or 30 minutes about nothing. When he has the opportunity to make a worthwhile commitment to this debate, he rises to his feet and speaks for 5 minutes. He spent 300 seconds of his time on speaking on this statement which is so important that the Leader of the Opposition believes that it is one of the most critical issues that could be discussed during this Assembly. What did we get? We got 300 seconds from the member for Nhulunbuy on this particular issue. He has to be joking, Mr Speaker. He had nothing to say. It must have been fun on the buses. I wonder how far you could go in Nhulunbuy in 5 minutes? If you caught the No 10 bus, I think some of the stories you heard would be really hilarious. No wonder he was voted into the Assembly; it was to get him out of Nhulunbuy for a while.

It is more serious than that. Today, we have seen members of the opposition filibuster. They sought to fill time so they would not have to address this Assembly on the issue of Hungerford Refrigeration. We listened to their speakers and we listened to what they had to say. Full marks go to the member for Nhulunbuy because he has said in 300 seconds what the rest of the oppositions has taken some 2 hours to say. The truth is that they had nothing to say. As the last speaker for the opposition, the member for Nhulunbuy, true to his word and commitment not to waste the time of this Assembly, condensed his contribution into 5 minutes, and I congratulate him for his efforts on that.

Let me put this debate into perspective. The Leader of the Opposition has been seeking today and, indeed, ever since he learnt about the existence of Hungerford Refrigeration, to turn the affairs of the company into a political blood-letting exercise. He has no real or genuine interest in the investment management of the Territory Insurance Office. He has no real or genuine interest in small business in the Northern Territory. He has no real or genuine interest in the performance of the Trade Development Zone. His only interest is in trying to collect a political scalp or 2, primarily to save his own at a time when his own performance is, to put it kindly, under scrutiny.

The inference of his whole attack on Hungerford Refrigeration was that the company was established in the Territory through direct political interference by the Minister for Industries and Development, the member for Flynn or myself. He has heard today, from this side of the House, the circumstances of Hungerford Refrigeration's relocation to the Territory. He knows that those circumstances did not involve personally any of the government members and that Hungerford Refrigeration was identified by 1 government agency as a

potential investment for another government agency. He may not choose to admit that he knows it, but he does know it. He believes otherwise. He certainly missed his chance to prove his point today, and missed it by several kilometres.

The Leader of the Opposition has failed in the essential point of his self-appointed task to spill some political blood. Without evidence of political interference, his attack is limp, pathetic and ineffectual. He has shot his bolt. He has nothing to offer except comments about the wisdom of the TIO Board in choosing to invest in Hungerford Refrigeration. And let us look at the performance of the TIO Board and the economic and collective corporate wisdom of the opposition benches.

In 1982-83, the TIO had a loss in its general insurance of \$2.2m and, in the MACA scheme, it had a loss of \$3m. In 1983-84, those losses were \$5.5m and \$7.4m. In 1984-85, there was a profit of \$0.4m on general insurance and the loss on the MACA scheme was \$2.4m. In 1985-86, it had a profit of \$1.5m in general insurance and \$5.7m in the MACA scheme. In 1986-87, it had a profit of \$2.4m in general insurance and \$4.1m in the MACA scheme. In other words, the board has turned around from a loss in the MACA scheme of \$3m in 1982-83 to a profit of \$4.1m in 1986-87. It has a small, cumulative loss in the area of general insurance of \$2.8m, and that will be paid out this year.

What we are hearing about is a board that is capable of a \$14m turnaround in 4 years. The Board of the Territory Insurance Office has the results on the board. It has demonstrated quite clearly its competence in handling an investment portfolio in excess of \$120m. We still have problems with the member for Nhulunbuy's understanding of this, but it is not taxpayers' money. It is policyholders' money. The TIO started off with a small loan which it repaid after several months, and it has been on its own ever since. It holds assets now in a range of over \$100m from a starting point of nothing.

Honourable members, does that sound like a board that does not know what it is doing? Of course not. Its performance has been demonstrated and if the board had been functioning in public corporation activity, its members would have been hailed as the board of the future that could turn around \$14m in less than 4 years. This is the board that has come under scrutiny from people on the crossbenches and people on the opposition benches who have not contributed a single thing to development in the Northern Territory. The hypocrisy of the crossbenchers and the members of the opposition, with some exceptions, in the way that they have attacked us here today is unbelievable. The staff in the Trade Development Zone has numbered around 30 to 35. Their local purchases have involved \$700 000 and the wages paid over \$0.5m. They have done a fantastic job.

In terms of losses, it is true that it is risk area. I spoke about that this morning. Risks are involved, but let us have a look at some other insurance offices throughout Australia, some of the risks that they have entertained in recent times and some of the losses they have suffered. Mr Speaker, I may have to come back to that. My filing system here is not working particularly well. However, honourable members would be aware of that great Labor bastion, the State Government Insurance Office in Western Australia. I understand that, as a direct result of its investments on the stock exchange and the losses that it endured in October last year, its loss on its investments was something like \$300m. Unbelievable!

On the whole business of the Tindal tender, I believe there is more to come yet. The tenders closed on 14 April 1988 and we were told that the decision would be made by 2 May 1988. I am reliably informed - and this was faxed to my office - that, an hour ago, the federal minister responsible - you would not believe it - issued a press release about who has the contract at Tindal. What does that say to honourable members? We are not thick on this side either.

Mr Ede: You look it.

Mr COULTER: The Deputy Leader of the Opposition says that we look it.

Mr Ede: And you sound it too.

Mr COULTER: Less than an hour ago, the honourable minister responsible issued a press release. Let us say that we were aware of the pecking order of the tenderers from the mouth of the Deputy Leader of the Opposition who told us, in his contribution to this debate, that Hungerford was second ...

Mr Ede: Second last.

Mr COULTER: The Trade Development Zone and, in particular ...

Mr Smith: Second last.

Mr COULTER: That is not what you said.

Mr Ede: Yes, it is.

Mr COULTER: Hansard will point that out to you very clearly in the morning. The Deputy Leader of the Opposition was aware of it, Hungerford Refrigeration was not notified, but there was some communication and that was confirmed by the Leader of the Opposition in his interjection of 'second last'. They were aware of it some time ago. The press release came into the hands of the ABC within the last hour, but the Leader of the Opposition and the Deputy Leader of the Opposition were aware of the order of the tenders. I will not go any further on that. I will not develop an argument that there was collusion between the opposition and the federal government, but coincidences are coincidences. This seems to be too much of a coincidence for even me to believe. We were told the order of the tenders in the debate and, later on, a press release was issued. It does not sound very nice to me.

Mr Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition and his deputy had nothing to offer except comments about the wisdom of the TIO Board. Are we to doubt the corporate ability of the Territory Insurance Office which started off with nothing and has developed that magnificent organisation in the Northern Territory today with in excess of \$125m of investments? It began with a loan that it repaid within a few months. Is this an organisation that should be under scrutiny, that has not performed? Mr Speaker, I think not.

The Leader of the Opposition is welcome to his opinions, but the fact is that the Board of the TIO has independent authority to choose the nature of its investment. If the responsible minister were to restrict the TIO Board in such activities, he would be guilty of just the sort of political interference the Leader of the Opposition likes to talk about. My concern is that the TIO should receive an overall profitable return on its investments. It has done exactly that, and with remarkable success. As in all investment, you win some and you lose some. The point to note is that the TIO is in receipt of

investment profits in the current financial year of \$2.5m. The Leader of the Opposition's attacks here today have been shown to be without substance. He has played a major role in causing the current difficulties of Hungerford Refrigeration. The liability to the Territory is not Hungerford Refrigeration; it is the Leader of the Opposition himself.

Mr Speaker, the famous 10 commandments, the 10 questions that he put forward today, have been answered. How did a debt-laden Queensland refrigeration manufacturer become a target of the Territory government? The technology suited the Northern Territory and South-east Asian market potential and the company was never a target for the Northern Territory government. All speakers from the opposition benches talked about page 2 of my statement where I mentioned the problems of the company: the lack of financial control, poor management and lack of liquidity. Did the opposition expect this company to go on the market if it was a roaring success? The opportunity was available for somebody to get in there with some equity. On page 3 - but nobody turned the page - I indicated that resolution of these problems was seen to be achievable through a financial restructuring of the company, including an injection of equity and loan funds, the appointment of an experienced managing director and the appointment of a financial controller. The answer to the first question is that it was not a problem.

Who made the first approach and why? This arose in September 1986. The Leader of the Opposition had the date over there, Mr Speaker, if he wanted to check it. I gave him the date when he spoke about the member for Flynn not making the decision. The letter which he was given had the date in it. It was 13 March 1987. The credit checks by the accountants were carried out well in advance of the member for Flynn signing that particular document. That information was available to the member for Flynn. The Leader of the Opposition has a problem in that he cannot read a calendar. If he had been able to read a calendar, he would have known that the reports were available to the member for Flynn to be able to make those decisions after they were provided to him. The answer to that question is: 'No problem at all'.

Mr Ede: Table the report then.

Mr COULTER: Mr Speaker, I have told the opposition that we will not table the report. We will not provide the affairs of a public company to the Leader of the Opposition or anybody else in this Assembly.

What were the full terms agreed for the transfer of Hungerford Refrigeration to the TDZ? We have already explained in the debate, and the documents have been tabled, that the TIO Board had made the decisions and that the ministers approved those decisions on the basis of the information that was provided to them.

Where are the departmental evaluations of the company, its prospects, its projects and its products? As I said, we do not propose to table those. They have been covered adequately in this debate. If the Leader of the Opposition, the Deputy Leader of the Opposition, the member for Nhulunbuy, the member for MacDonnell or the member for Barkly had anything else to add to this debate, they had the opportunity to add to it today. What skulduggery, what contributions have they been able to bring to this debate? Honourable members know the answer to that: absolutely nothing! They quoted my press release. The bulk of the evidence that they have been able to provide to this debate came from me. They quoted me to add substance to their argument. They have not been able to produce one scrap of information other than what has been provided to them today.

What involvement did Ministers Hanrahan, Coulter and Perron have throughout? The tabled documents which I have made available to the Leader of the Opposition put that question to rest. We are not doing too badly: 5 out of 5 so far. The answers have been provided.

How is the \$1.4m provided to the company by the TIO secured? \$62 750 was secured as a first floating charge and the \$500 000 was an unsecured loan as a balance of equity. That is well known and has been spoken about before. It is not a problem.

Where is the list of secured export orders attributed to the company by the Treasurer? The export activity projections were tabled today, along with my press release that opposition members were so insistent about. What are the circumstances surrounding that? It was still dealing with export orders of the nature announced by the Minister for Industries and Development just 14 days ago.

Why were policyholders and the public not informed of the decision to almost double the TIO's exposure in the company? It was a commercial decision and the policyholders of the TIO must be some of the proudest and happiest policyholders in Australia today. If I can ever find the figures of the losses that have been sustained by some of the other insurance offices around Australia, I will demonstrate that once and for all. As I said, the policyholders of the TIO started off with nothing and now they have assets in excess of \$100m.

Who will accept responsibility for any losses incurred by local companies encouraged to trade with the company? Yesterday, here and on the front page of the NT News, I provided the answer to that question quite adequately. I addressed that in debate yesterday and again today.

Mr Smith: What is the answer?

Mr COULTER: Read the front page of the newspaper or get someone to read it out for you, because it was well said at the bottom of the column that, wherever possible, the Territory Insurance Office will look after those people that stood behind it. That is more than the Leader of the Opposition has done. As I have said, there has never been a case of corporate sabotage in the Northern Territory of the ilk that the Territory Leader of the Opposition embarked on in this particular case.

With regard to the contribution by the Deputy Leader of the Opposition in respect of the South Australian company and Hungerford Refrigeration in relation to the supply of the split units, it is my understanding that the South Australian company went broke. That is true. I understand that it supplied 100 units or maybe up to 200 units. The Hungerford units have been operating far better than the South Australian units and I understand that of the 328 or so units that have been supplied, only 1 has been replaced.

There are many other matters I could speak on in this debate but really it is pointless. The answers have been delivered to the opposition benches and the crossbenches. I am proud of the Territory Insurance Office and its officers' performance and the corporate responsibility that they have demonstrated. There has been no coercion from the ministers on this side of the House and the whole issue brings shame on the members of the opposition because they did not have the intestinal fortitude to debate this. We had a filibuster from the member for Nhulunbuy and members opposite were not prepared to rise to their feet and face the music.

Motion agreed to; statement noted.

DISCUSSION OF MATTER OF PUBLIC IMPORTANCE
Yulara Community

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

Dear Mr Speaker,

Pursuant to standing order 94, I propose for discussion as a definite matter of public importance the following: the refusal of the Northern Territory government to respond to the pressing needs of the Yulara community which include particularly an appropriate system of industrial relations and a greater degree of certainty in relation to that community's health services.

Yours sincerely,
Brian Ede,
Deputy Leader of the Opposition.

Is the proposed discussion supported? It is supported.

Mr EDE (Stuart): Mr Speaker, there are serious problems at Yulara and they can be summed up simply as attitude and law. The source of the attitude is the Yulara Development Corporation and the law of this Assembly. It has carried through from the inception of Yulara and it has been embodied in law and the structure of Yulara's management. At all levels, the problem of attitude is demonstrated by the lack of human resource management and is supported by the structure of Yulara and the laws relating to it.

An enormous amount of planning and consideration went into protecting and preserving the physical environment of Uluru and Yulara, but how much consideration has gone into the human elements necessary to the success of the Yulara resort? The answer is none. Very simply, Yulara suffers from a total lack of consideration for the people who work and live there. It is a resort which is there to attract tourists and the tourist dollars, and that is fair enough. The primary objective of a commercial enterprise is to make money, and YDC is no exception. However, most commercial enterprises achieve that by, among other things, looking after, developing and encouraging their employees, not abusing them. The Yulara Development Company is a commercial enterprise in a unique position of power. It is not only the controller of the workplace and matters relating to employment, as any other business would be, but also the controller of all aspects of the individual's life in Yulara. It has been given this unique position of power by the Northern Territory government through the Yulara Tourist Village Management Act. Nowhere in the planning, development and subsequent running of Yulara has consideration been given to the people who work for and live in Yulara. In fact, in the company's quest for a buck, the people can, unfortunately, go hang.

The purpose of the YDC was to effect, arrange and participate in the management of Yulara Tourist Village. It has failed to manage the human resources involved and to consider that, without people, there would be no resort. With stressed, unhappy, oppressed and resentful people, there is no resort, no hospitality industry, no tourists and no tourist dollar, and that is what this debate is about. We will demonstrate how the failure of the Northern Territory government to take on board the issues of the Yulara Tourist Village Development has allowed the place to develop into a

quasi-concentration camp where people have their individual liberty suppressed and live in situations which are akin to those nowhere else in Australia.

Under part II of the Yulara Tourist Village Management Act, the government, through the minister, is responsible for Yulara. The management company can only carry out those functions for which it has the approval of the minister. Under part I, the minister may direct the management company on the performance of its functions. The Yulara Corporation is the management company and the subsidiary of YDC. The purpose of the Yulara Corporation is the control of the day-to-day running of the resort.

Despite the fact that Yulara has been gazetted as a town, it has no local government council or community government council. In fact, there is no wholly-independent elected representative of the residents of Yulara and, despite the fact that the YDC may manage the Yulara Tourist Village by itself or in partnership with any other person or persons, it does not choose to do so with any representative of the people who live and work there.

Mr Speaker, what do the YDC and YC control? They build and supply the amount, form and content of accommodation available to the operators to allocate to staff. The amount of accommodation allocated to each operator is determined by the Yulara Corporation and only the large operators have an allocation. The distribution of that allocation amongst staff is done by the operator. The problem stems from the increased numbers of tourists there and an increasing need for staff. At a time when Yulara is entering its busy season and the demand is growing, the corporation removed an entire source of staff accommodation. With those maisonettes being turned into tourist accommodation, 30 staff beds were lost to the Sheraton. Unfortunately, the building and opening of new units at Yulara has in no way compensated for the loss of those maisonettes, let alone allowed for increased needs as the season develops. Obviously, without accommodation to house staff, employment applicants must remain unemployed or live in-house with others or in the camping ground. As a result, the Sheraton is understaffed. Staff are overworked. The Sheraton has 8 staff members living in tents until accommodation becomes available.

The current accommodation consists of 1-bed units with a partitioned lounge room. The lounge rooms have been partitioned to create 2 bedrooms. There are flatettes which are bedsits. They comprise 1 room of 12 ft by 20 ft. They contain a kitchenette, a table, a wardrobe and 2 single beds or 1 double bed. The operators, with reduced accommodation, have been persuading staff to share and, as a result, total strangers are forced to share those 20 ft by 12 ft rooms. At various times, there have been 3 to 4 people living in 1 flatette. In fact, at one stage, 5 people were living in a 1-bedroom unit.

The opening of the maisonettes meant that staff were required there, and they needed accommodation. Further pressure was placed on the operation. The Yulara Corporation gave vacant accommodation to maisonette staff which further reduced allocations to other major operators. A 17-year-old maisonette room attendant was put into a maisonette that had no electricity and she was told that she was not to tell anyone. When finally she plucked up the courage to break the property manager's embargo, she was given an unfurnished unit. From no electricity, she went to a unit that had no bed, no table and no chairs.

Once you obtain a place to live, you have to sign a lease. Because accommodation is tied to employment, under the terms of the lease, you must vacate the premises in 24 hours if you lose or leave your job. Once signed,

the document is legal and enforceable and that clause exists even though much of the accommodation belongs to the Housing Commission which entitles you to 14 days in which to move.

Mr Speaker, look at the explicit control by the Yulara Corporation. It builds and supplies all the outlets used by the operators. It determines who the operators are and the rate and type of growth of facilities and outlets. All spending by the operators, both the type and the amount, must be approved by the Yulara Corporation. Under part III of the Yulara Tourist Village Management Act, the Yulara Corporation may make by-laws. Let us have a look at these by-laws, Mr Speaker. 'The corporation may prohibit the entry of any person or class of persons or remove or cause the same to be removed from Yulara'. Another one says that, without a permit or licence, you cannot put up posters, bills or other papers, give out, distribute or place a handbill.

Mr Manzie: That is fair enough.

Mr EDE: It is fair enough that you cannot give out handbills? Great stuff!

Without a permit, you cannot publicly offer or expose an article for sale. Except with a permit from the Yulara Corporation, you 'cannot organise or assist in the conduct of a fete or public entertainment or public worship or a meeting'. You cannot even have a meeting in that town without having to go to the Yulara Corporation for a permit.

'A warden may require a person whom he believes, on reasonable grounds, to have contravened or failed to comply with a by-law, or to be about to do so, to leave the area of Yulara'. If somebody is about to contravene a by-law, he can tell him to get out of town.

Mr Dale: Prevention.

Mr EDE: Prevention? Great stuff! How would you like to live in that situation?

Mr Dale: They do not have to.

Mr EDE: Great stuff! You do not have to live in Darwin. You do not have to live in the Northern Territory. That is the attitude of the Northern Territory government: 'If you don't like the way we run the place, get up and go'.

Mr Speaker, listen to this one: 'A warden who requires a person to leave Yulara may remove or cause that person to remove if the person refuses or fails to leave'. Another: 'A warden may remove from Yulara any person guilty of disorderly conduct, indecent language or who threatens or is likely to create a breach of the peace'. 'Employees of the corporation may enter into and upon any land or building within Yulara for the purpose of making an inspection'. You have 24 hours notice if those premises are occupied. For other premises, including private land, no notice whatsoever is required for Yulara Corporation people to go in and inspect.

Those are specific examples of the extent of its power to control. It determines the place you live, what you say, where you say it, if you can say it and even if you can be in Yulara. If you are to receive the right to defend yourself from charges and allegations made, the facilities and outlets available to you are all controlled by the Yulara Corporation.

Not only does it already have these areas of control, it is trying to control the medical centre and the provision of health services. The member for MacDonnell will speak about that. There are other means of exercising control over people; there are intangible means. There are instances of harassment and intimidation which people are afraid to stand up and talk about. We have had cases of harassment and intimidation in the workplace, the case of the doctor, the maisonette room attendant we talked about etc.

In respect of industrial relations, the instances described relate, in the main, to the Yulara Corporation, the instigator of the accommodation crisis. However, the operators are playing as big a role in the Yulara Corporation exercise of explicit and tangible control. I wish to draw particular attention to the Sheraton here. I will exclude from my remarks the Four Seasons which, in latter days, has been cooperating far more closely with the unions.

The field of control there is much closer to home. Unfortunately, from the Yulara Corporation down through most of the operators, the dominant understanding is that the only way to run a business is to ignore, suppress, confuse and harass or intimidate the employees - and not just in working hours, but unfortunately, also in their private lives. With the Sheraton, there are no industrial relations at all. There is no human resource management and no personnel functions as any other business would understand them. There have been instances of control, harassment and fear. There was an incident where a waitress at the Sheraton was having a few drinks in her own time in the local tavern. Apparently, she laughed too loudly or something like that and was approached by the supervisor who told her that, if she continued to behave in that way outside work, she would suffer at work. That is what happens outside the workplace at a place where control and intimidation have become the order of the day.

Part of the freedom of choice, let alone the normal relationship between employer and employee, is the presence of the union. It is your right to know of the existence of a union, to choose to belong to a union or not and to be informed of your employment conditions. At the Sheraton, no one is informed of the existence of the union. There were no awards available to staff and insufficient or misleading information was given to people when they commenced their employment. By themselves, those amount to breaches of the award.

I will give a couple of examples. The first relates to finishing times and no payment for overtime. Room attendants are allocated a number of rooms to clean per day. Despite the fact that they are employed for an 8-hour day, they are told that they must complete their allocation of rooms in their own time. Many people who are unable to finish their allocation within the 8-hour day and work 15 to 45 minutes of their own time are not paid for it and are told they have to sign off at the normal finishing time so that no record exists of the overtime. The cashier at the Desert Rose was told that she had to start half an hour before her starting time to set up her till. Even though the setting up of the till is part of the function of the job, she was told that she had to do that before commencing work, and there was no payment for it.

Overtime has to be approved in writing before it can be paid. The forms have to be completed and approval received. That is fair enough. However, in the waitressing and housekeeping section, overtime was being worked without any payment whatsoever because staff were not informed that approval had to be obtained and no forms were available on which to apply. People engaged for employment at a distance of 80 km radius away from Yulara are entitled to

payment for their travel time to Yulara up to a maximum of 16 hours. Until 3 weeks ago, no one had ever been paid that allowance. Since then, 3 people have been.

There is no labelling of chemicals used by cleaners and room attendants except a name. Until a week ago, there was no information as to the content and usage of chemicals and no basic safety information in case of accident. Rosters are made and changed without consultation and no notice is given to staff.

Those are the things that occur when there is no union to assist people. Fortunately, the relevant union has been out there recently and has held some meetings. About 50 Sheraton employees have joined the union but there is continual harassment. The Sheraton management has been making it as difficult as possible for the union to maintain a presence and for the people to feel free to join. That is achieved through disparagement of the union and its officials, disparagement of delegates and disparagement of the people who become members. Since the union has been present, some minor progress has been made in rectifying breaches of the award. However, without greater membership, the power of the union is limited.

Mr Hatton: What has that got to do with the government?

Mr EDE: The government has a minister who says he is responsible for labour. We know that he is incapable, incompetent and incomplete, but he has to get to work and get stuck ...

Mr SPEAKER: The honourable member will withdraw that remark.

Mr EDE: He is not incomplete, Mr Speaker.

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

Mr EDE: Which remark, Mr Speaker?

Mr SPEAKER: The honourable member is now skating on thin ice. He knows quite well what the remark was. I referred to it a few moments ago.

Mr EDE: I withdraw it, Mr Speaker.

Greater membership is hard to achieve, given the high rate of staff turnover. Many employees plan to stay at Yulara. They would like to stay there for quite a considerable time. However, the average period of employment among staff at Yulara is an indication of just how bad the situation is. That average period has gone down to 85 days, less than 3 months.

Mr Coulter: From what?

Mr Bell: From what it was 12 months ago.

Mr EDE: Yes, it is abysmal. If conditions are not improved, that situation will continue. Unhappy staff means unhappy tourists and, unless this government can get that into its head and start to look at staff conditions, the resort will have problems.

Mr Speaker, I would like to raise a number of issues in order to show members opposite that they have an obligation in this regard. The government

is responsible for Yulara and the way people live there. Every member opposite should ask himself whether he would be prepared to live and work under the conditions which exist at Yulara. They should ask themselves why the things which occur there were permitted in the beginning and why they are allowed to continue. We would like to know why this government is prepared to let the corporation operate in the name of the government, to profit at the expense of residents, and why the government has allowed that to continue over the years without taking any notice.

People at Yulara are asking when this government will take notice. When will this government start to redress the imbalance? When will it move on the situation? Will it wait until the resort starts to lose money or will it provide a number of basic rights? There must be an independent, elected representative body at Yulara which is able to act rather than merely advise. The management of the YDC must be made accountable to the people who live and work in Yulara. Infringements of freedoms and rights must stop. People must be able to gather and to express and publish freely. There must be an end to isolation. Communications must be improved and human resource management and good industrial relations introduced or, in the long term and in the short term, the Yulara Corporation is doomed to failure.

Mr COULTER (Treasurer): Mr Deputy Speaker, I rise as the minister responsible for the Yulara Development Corporation. The final words of the member for Stuart are his most telling ones: 'The Yulara Corporation is doomed to failure'.

Mr Ede: Unless you fix up the industrial relations and human resource management.

Mr COULTER: Mr Deputy Speaker, how many times have we heard the opposition tell us that Yulara is doomed to failure? Remember contingent liabilities? Remember how the previous Leader of the Opposition said that Yulara was a failure, a white elephant, something that had been built and would never succeed, that people would never go there, that the government had overcommitted itself, that the financing deal was all wrong and the people ...

Mr EDE: A point of order, Mr Deputy Speaker! The subject of the MPI is quite clear. It concerns industrial relations or the lack thereof at Yulara. It has nothing at all to do with contingent liabilities.

Mr Bell: We are pleased to hear that Yulara is succeeding economically.

Mr COULTER: That is not what the member for Stuart said.

Mr EDE: Mr Deputy Speaker, in speaking to the point of order, I will repeat, for the benefit of the minister, what I said in my final analysis of the situation. I stated that there must be an independent, elected representative body at Yulara which is able to act rather than merely advise. The management of the YDC should be made accountable to the people who live and work in Yulara. Infringements of freedoms and rights must stop. People have to be able to gather and to express and publish freely. There must be an end to isolation. Communications must be improved and better human resource management and good industrial relations introduced or, in the long term and in the short term, the Yulara experiment is doomed to failure.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: I would ask the minister to relate his remarks to the matter of public importance under discussion.

Mr COULTER: Mr Deputy Speaker, the alleged matter of public importance before us today is yet another example of the opposition's poor perception of how time might be used effectively in this Assembly. Whilst I do not for a moment suggest that the needs of the Yulara residents are unimportant to me or to the Northern Territory government, I feel that, in bringing this matter before the House today, the opposition is more concerned with political point-scoring than with any true desire to advance the well-being of people living at Yulara. If the opposition wished genuinely to promote that cause, it would recognise that neither the Northern Territory government, under the Northern Territory (Self-Government) Act, nor the federal government had the power to investigate matters of industrial relations. They are the province of the Conciliation and Arbitration Commission. The opposition knows that. If workers at Yulara are aggrieved, they know what the rules are and so does the opposition. It is nonsense for the opposition to bring on a matter of public importance relating to industrial matters when it knows full well that, under the Northern Territory (Self-Government) Act, we have no power to act in such matters.

Mr Ede: Whose act is the Yulara Tourist Village Management Act? Is it our act?

Mr COULTER: Don't embarrass yourself. I'll let you off, okay.

Mr Ede: Is it our act?

Mr COULTER: Mr Deputy Speaker, I have let the Deputy Leader of the Opposition off. He needs a break. The Leader of the Opposition has failed dismally today in his performance and I am trying to give his deputy a break. However, if he pushes me too far, even he might not be the leader before the night is out, because members opposite are obviously going out to plot and plunder in a few moments.

The Minister for Health and Community Services is more than able to deal with the matters of concern covered by his portfolio. We can do something about any alleged problems in that area. I have a number of press cuttings which I will use to substantiate my arguments in this debate and the Minister for Health and Community Services will cover the health issues which the member for MacDonnell will undoubtedly have something to say about when I sit down. I think that is the way the opposition has decided to divide up the issues today. I believe that members of the opposition know that we have no responsibility for the industrial matters that they have brought before us which are the prerogative of the Conciliation and Arbitration Commission.

Mr Ede: I quoted sections from and by-laws to your act.

Mr COULTER: Mr Deputy Speaker, let us consider the by-laws referred to by the member for Stuart. The Shire of Litchfield has just created a by-law which says that, in the forthcoming election campaign, no political or campaign posters can be hung up anywhere, on any tree or stalk of spear grass. Recently, the ALP itself acted in contravention of by-laws of the Darwin City Council by handing out pamphlets in the Darwin Mall. How would it be if there were posters on every corner at Yulara? Some action has to be taken to protect the integrity of the development at Yulara.

Mr Ede: What about handbills?

Mr COULTER: Handbills? They are illegal even in the Darwin Mall. It is not legal even to hang a poster on a stalk of spear grass at the back of Bees Creek in the Shire of Litchfield.

I have come to the end of my remarks on industrial relations issues. Before detailing the actual and factual situation which exists at Yulara, I must draw honourable members' attention to the flawed wording of the MPI which we are now addressing. It is erroneously worded. It assumes that the corporation is a major employer of staff at Yulara and this, of course, is not so. In fact, 31 people are employed by the corporation and 33 people are employed by the Northern Territory government. That is 64 people out of a total of 458.

The MPI refers to the 'refusal of the Northern Territory government to respond to the pressing needs of the Yulara community which includes, particularly, an appropriate system of industrial relations and a greater degree of certainty in relation to that community's health services'. Mr Deputy Speaker, just 64 people out of 458 are employed either by the Northern Territory government or the Yulara Development Corporation.

Mr Ede: They all come under the by-laws, whether they work for the company, the corporation or whomever.

Mr COULTER: The government is not the major employer at Yulara. Mr Deputy Speaker, for the information of honourable members, I table a schedule of employers at Yulara which clearly indicates the number of employees associated with each. It should be obvious, even to the member for Stuart, that each of these employers has a responsibility to employees according to awards and terms of employment.

Mr Ede: He is not debating the issue. He is just reading a prepared speech.

Mr COULTER: I am not getting through to the member for Stuart so I will repeat myself.

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

Mr COULTER: Mr Deputy Speaker, this table indicates quite clearly the number of employees associated with each employer. As I said, it should be obvious, even to the Deputy Leader of the Opposition, that each employer has a responsibility to its employees according to the awards and terms of employment.

Notwithstanding media hype from time to time, initiated by vested and sometimes selfish interests, the Yulara complex has an excellent industrial relations record. Indeed, in the 5 years since construction began, only 1 day of strike action has occurred. Honourable members will be riveted to learn that this dispute arose during construction in 1983. The employees were obviously people of my own ilk because the dispute concerned the price of beer at the canteen. That is the only industrial dispute or strike action which has occurred at Yulara in 5 years. Is that a record of great industrial unrest? One strike! What a nonsense the opposition has brought before this Assembly. I do not like the Deputy Leader of the Opposition's chances of becoming leader before nightfall.

Mr Ede: How do you explain a 400% staff turnover?

Mr COULTER: The Yulara Corporation holds regular meetings of all operators and encourages them in the use of sound and uniform staff management practices. There is no need for the government to become involved directly in these commercial affairs.

Housing is provided to the corporation by the Housing Commission as industrial housing assistance. By agreement, the corporation is responsible for its allocation and maintenance. The corporation works with operators, on a daily basis, to balance their competing staff accommodation needs. It would reject any assertion that the housing allocation is not handled in a sensitive manner or in the best commercial interests of the resort.

Notwithstanding the responsibilities of individual employers, the corporation also provides general community assistance as follows. It makes a grant of \$5000 per annum and equipment to the Yulara Community Recreation and Leisure Association and maintains the community hall and its utility services at a cost of up to \$100 000 per annum, and it produces the free, weekly newsletter, 'Read It', at a cost of \$20 000 per year. It has set up a child-minding centre at a cost of \$8000. It runs the company premises and the payroll system. It subsidises the community library and it pays the ambulance ancillary costs. It makes tents and barbecues available free of charge for community charity fun days.

Mr Ede: What about people living in tents?

Mr COULTER: I will come to the tent story in a minute. You got that wrong too. How many people live in tents in Saudi Arabia, by the way?

It provides regular visits by the government counselling service, free accommodation for visiting representatives of religious denominations and emergency radio services. It runs 2 cable TV channels to most staff accommodation and has paid for the links into ABC, Imparja Television and into the ABC and commercial radio - in all, the best communication services in the Centre.

It is also interesting to note that the average length of service of Yulara Corporation employees is 2 years - a record for employment in the Northern Territory. We heard about 80 days and 125 days. The vast majority of people working in Yulara appreciate the environment we have created for their lifestyle. They earn good wages and are able to save substantial sums. Compared with other isolated resorts, the quality of accommodation is absolutely top rank and improving all the time as our new program progresses. A minority is being stirred up by dissemination of half-truths and innuendo with issues evaporating as they are closely examined.

The corporation respects the elected Town Advisory Board as a proper forum for the expression of advice to it. It is not functioning properly because of the preoccupation of some members with trumped-up issues designed to denigrate the corporation and show that it would be incapable of taking a place in health services administration. What can be seen from all this is that, whilst the government does not have the role attributed to it by the wording of the MPI, the Yulara Corporation has certainly established an excellent track record in terms of looking after the community there.

As alluded to earlier, many of the alleged serious complaints evaporate under close scrutiny. Let us look at the alleged serious complaints. An example was that 5 people were forced to share accommodation in 1 unit. The fact is that some sharing is necessary, but is achieved on a cooperative basis. The case raised involved a staff member who returned from Adelaide with friends in tow looking for work. 'Sheraton staff are forced to live in their tents'. Several young people living in the camping ground in their own tents accepted work offered by the Sheraton. As soon as vacancies occurred, those people were allocated accommodation.

'There should be a complete revision of housing policy to take account of such matters as demographic factors and the right to terminate when unemployed'. Accommodation policy must continue to be geared to the staffing needs of the resort for it to operate. Standards are improving all the time and the balance between the respective employers of staff is continually achieved in consultation with them. The 24-hour right is there but it is reserved for only the most extreme circumstances.

The average length of stay of staff has fallen from 142 days to 84 days.

Mr Ede: See!

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

Mr COULTER: The fact is that that is false - a 142-day figure was calculated as an average for all employees. A more recent study divided the staff into occupational groups. The 84-day figure refers only to the category at the lowest stage - that is, waitresses, porters etc. The overall average has not declined. In fact, qualified staff are staying longer. I will read Hansard tomorrow because, if the interjection of the member for MacDonnell is there, I believe he said 120-odd days.

Mr Bell: 140 days.

Mr COULTER: We look forward with interest to tomorrow because the member for Stuart is now saying that 142 is correct. It is another example of the fact that they cannot add up.

There are many other such issues. The board of the corporation has reviewed them: Despite their very convincing presentation and terrible implications of insensitivity, it found in each case that they were not supported by fact. The corporation will expose the facts to the community as the opportunity arises and will continue to recognise the Town Advisory Board as the representative forum for community advice.

I am advised further that Dr Cotton was instrumental in attracting the MWU into Yulara and that he has also sought to discredit Yulara to the Trade Practices Commission. He has even approached the federal government seeking to diminish funds availability for Yulara development activity. I am advised that the MWU has now gained some 100 members at Yulara which represents about 20% of the work force. Given the nature of the employment population of Yulara, however, I would see turnovers diminish this percentage substantially in the near future.

Whilst there are always possibilities of industrial action, we have contingency plans in place to see that the facilities at Yulara remain open. In the meantime, given the nature of some of the personalities involved, it seems inevitable that we will be subjected to a continuing stream of misrepresentation which will be seized on by those who neither care about nor chose to seek out the facts.

In closing and in summary, it should be evident to all and sundry that the government and the Yulara Corporation have a high commitment to the well-being of Yulara residents and to the orderly development of the resort complex. We shall not be swayed by the negative and self-seeking activities of members opposite or of those persons who maliciously feed them. It will be interesting to hear that great stalwart of industrial relations and unionism

in the Northern Territory when he rises to his feet in a minute with the full support of the unions throughout the Territory that are now behind him in his push to become the new Leader of the Opposition. What does he believe in terms of industrial relations? Should it be the prerogative of the Northern Territory government? Should it be the prerogative of the Yulara Development Corporation? Should it be the prerogative of the federal government? I will listen with interest to the member for MacDonnell and see where he places the Conciliation and Arbitration Commission in this matter. What we have had brought before us today is an MPI that is of no concern to us in this Assembly. It has been frivolous in the extreme.

Mr BELL (MacDonnell): Mr Deputy Speaker, it is difficult to know where to commence after a diatribe like that. I think the best place to commence is with one of the very few substantial points raised by the Treasurer: the question of jurisdiction for industrial relations matters. The Treasurer commented about the responsibility of the Conciliation and Arbitration Commission and responsibility for the arrangements under certain awards. I would point out that, in fact, the Northern Territory government is the employer at Yulara, through its Yulara Corporation, which is a company over which the Northern Territory government has very direct control. I remind honourable members that a former Assistant Under-Treasurer, Otto Alder, is the executive officer and that the Yulara Corporation is answerable to the Northern Territory government with respect to its decisions.

I point out that the Northern Territory government has considerable authority with respect to industrial relations in the Northern Territory. I suggest that the Northern Territory government, if it were of a mind, would be encouraging the Federated Miscellaneous Workers Union, or whichever unions were appropriate, to ensure that award conditions applied.

Mr HATTON: A point of order, Mr Deputy Speaker! The honourable member has asserted that the Northern Territory government, through the Yulara Corporation, is the employer at Yulara. That is an error in fact. I believe that should be corrected otherwise the honourable member is misleading this Assembly.

Mr BELL: That is not a point of order! Sit down, Steve.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: There is no point of order.

Mr BELL: Mr Deputy Speaker, I will reiterate that, if the Northern Territory government believes that award conditions ought to apply and that employees at Yulara should not be allowed to lose their jobs for quixotic reasons, it has considerable power to effect exactly those circumstances. In case government members are in any doubt about the extent to which some employees feel constrained and feel that they are likely to lose their jobs if they do not toe the line, if some government members were not listening to what the Deputy Leader of the Opposition said earlier nor paid attention to a petition that was tabled in this Assembly in September last year from citizens of Yulara, I will read the text of that petition once again.

It was tabled by myself on 16 September 1987 and the text included the expression of a desire on the part of citizens of Yulara 'to freely express opinion on community issues'. That particular petition was signed by 266 people at Yulara. If 266 people, half of the population at Yulara, were prepared to sign that petition almost 12 months ago because they were afraid that their right to free speech was not being recognised or that they were in danger of having their right to speak freely constrained because they might

lose their jobs, I suggest that the Northern Territory government has a job to do in that regard.

There are various issues I could raise in the context of the discussion of this matter of public importance. I think that the central issue that I must raise in the time permitted to me relates to the health services. Before I do that, however, I will cover a little bit of history. When that petition was tabled last year, it caused relatively little comment. I take considerable pride in having encouraged elected members to be on the Yulara Town Advisory Board as well as nominated members, and that was non-contentious. The former Minister for Conservation and I were of one mind in that regard, and that was good. The only problem is that the water that has flowed under the bridge since then has been rather unfortunate.

I suggest that the genesis of the present difficulties, at least in part, stemmed from the sacking of Mr Errol Mattig in December or January. Again, this is an industrial relations matter. I suggest that, had the Yulara Corporation taken my advice at that stage, had it either reinstated Mr Madding within the corporation or had it been able to find other employment for him - and honourable members should bear in mind that Mr Mattig had a wife who was employed at Yulara, and 2 or 3 kids who were attending the local school - these difficulties might not have occurred. Basically, because of the inactivity of key people in the Yulara Corporation, he and his wife both lost their jobs because there was a refusal on the part of the organisation to find further employment for him.

People will be unaware of this and it is the first time that I have mentioned this publicly. It bears on the approach of the Minister for Health and Community Services and therefore I will take a few minutes to explain it. I suggested that some of the personality difficulties that the Treasurer referred to could have been solved by finding a job for Mr Mattig at Yulara, on the one hand and, on the other hand, by finding an appropriate relationship between the town manager and the Town Advisory Board, which did not exist. I believe that the rejection of that compromise by the Yulara Corporation caused problems. I will not mention individuals. Although I could, it is not my practice to vilify publicly public servants who are unable to respond. Suffice it to say that I put considerable time and effort into exploring that compromise and I was most dissatisfied that it was not taken up. I suggest that many of the difficulties that have subsequently occurred have been a result of that particular decision.

Honourable members who have followed this issue closely will recall that when I put forward that compromise, I was accused by the town manager - I am assured that it was misreported rather than a straight quote from him - of failing to contact him or the corporation. The fact is that I put many telephone calls and a day or so into consultations with the town manager and with members of the Town Advisory Board to try to nut out some suitable compromise. That was rejected.

When we get back to the health services and to the involvement of this character over here - I withdraw that, Mr Deputy Speaker - when we get back to the involvement of the Minister for Health and Community Services in this little imbroglio, we find his approach significantly aggravating the situation, and let me explain why. Mr Deputy Speaker, you may or may not recall that the CLP promised a new ambulance for Yulara before the last election. You may recall that I have raised this issue on a number of occasions. As the mills of God grind slowly, so do the deliberations of the Minister for Health and Community Services. I just hope that they do not

grind so slowly that somebody pays the ultimate penalty for their tardiness in this regard. When the honourable clodhopper, the Minister for Health and Community Services, went down there, he decided to sniff around and he found that Bell was a bit on the nose with the Yulara Corporation. He decided to ignore the Yulara Town Advisory Board altogether, despite the fact that the Chairman of the Town Advisory Board happens to be the Chairman of the CLP Branch at Yulara and the local medical practitioner. He ignored them altogether and talked to the Yulara Corporation and said: 'Right, this is the way we will fix it. We will get rid of Cotton'.

I might say that all of us who took an interest in Yulara were very surprised to see an advertisement for the medical practitioner's position appear in the Weekend Australian in March, more than 2 months ago. Mr Deputy Speaker, you will be relieved to hear that the medical practitioner, Dr Cotton, is still on deck. You will also be pleased to know that tomorrow I will present a petition signed by 237 residents of Yulara. I will read what the petition says. In case the Treasurer, the Chief Minister and the Minister for Health and Community Services think this is of marginal concern to people there, I remind them that 237 people is about half the population of Yulara and probably a greater percentage of the adult population. The petition reads:

We, the undersigned citizens of Yulara, express our deep concern at the Northern Territory government's decision to give the Yulara Development Corporation responsibility for the management of health services at Yulara and the Yulara Development Corporation's decision to replace Dr Paul Cotton. Your petitioners request that the members of the Legislative Assembly take all the action necessary to ensure that the Department of Health and Community Services retains responsibility for health care at Yulara and that the services of Dr Paul Cotton be retained by the Department of Health and Community Services until such time as he may determine.

Is Dr Paul Cotton a red ragger? He is not. The fact of the matter is that I am getting a little tired of having to go in to bat for estranged members of the CLP. The plain fact of the matter is that Paul Cotton was the Chairman of the CLP Branch at Yulara. Certainly, he is not a fellow traveller of the Labor Party. That must raise a few questions even in the thick skull of the Minister for Health and Community Services.

Mr Deputy Speaker, the minister went down with a draft heads of agreement. Actually, he should have a word with the Treasurer who suggests he should talk to the Yulara Town Advisory Board. The minister did not bother to talk to the board. He went down with a draft heads of agreement, found that Bell was on the nose with the corporation and therefore decided he would back the corporation. He did not bother to seek the views of the Town Advisory Board about the draft heads of agreement.

Even on the election promise, he was particularly lukewarm. I will quote from the draft heads of agreement. This is a doozey, Mr Deputy Speaker: 'In recent years, there have been problems with funding and management of health and ambulance services'. The fact is that the CLP promised a new ambulance more than 12 months ago. If the young man from Giles Weather Station had not been involved in a fatal accident, he would have died en route to hospital because the existing ambulance carked it afterwards. It is a further fact that they are still having starting problems with the ambulance down there. An elderly patient with respiratory problems might have been in difficulty because of the actions of the Minister for Health and Community Services.

What the minister can do about the health services there is talk to everybody at Yulara. What the Treasurer can do is read carefully the copy of this letter from the Federated Miscellaneous Workers Union and use his best offices to make sure a decent system of industrial relations applies in the town.

Mr DALE (Health and Community Services): Mr Deputy Speaker, it is wonderful that the member for MacDonnell, who is the shadow spokesman on health matters, did give us some 6 minutes of the 15 minutes available to him to tell us what was wrong with the health services provided at Yulara.

Mr Bell: If you want to give me more time, Don, I will go on for an hour.

Mr DALE: You always go on, Neil, but not with any common sense or facts.

The fact is that the honourable member has been one of the contributors to a great deal of misinformation that has been coming out of the Yulara area regarding the health services there. Some 230 people have signed a petition relating to the health services that are provided there. If I had been a person at Yulara at the time of the petition, it would not have taken a great deal for me to add my signature because people are totally confused by the information that is being fed to them regarding the provision of the health services. The member for MacDonnell is certainly one of the great contributors to that misinformation.

Mr Deputy Speaker, let us look at the background to the health services provided at Yulara. First of all, let me make it quite clear that Dr Cotton is a private practitioner. He is not employed by the Northern Territory government nor the Yulara Corporation. Dr Cotton has received a subsidy in free rent and use of staff which exceeds \$100 000 per annum. The health services will be maintained at the highest possible level notwithstanding some of the immature attitudes that have been displayed in the Yulara area. I will go into that later.

Prior to 1986, the health and medical services at Yulara were provided by 1½ community health nurses - she wasn't short; she worked half days - and a private practitioner visited the area 1 afternoon a week. Ironically, one Dr Cotton was the Assistant Director of Rural Health until he resigned and took up the position as a private practitioner at Yulara in January of 1986. Since that time, Dr Cotton has paid no rent for his surgery in the health centre. He has paid no wages for the staff that have assisted him and he has complete access to a Department of Health vehicle. I concede that Dr Cotton has not been paid for any community health work which he has carried out and, I am advised, carried out very competently.

Mr Deputy Speaker, let me talk about the ambulance. Allegations about the vehicle's unreliability fly any time Dr Cotton wants some publicity. St John Ambulance ceased its service in February 1985 because of very low utilisation and, of course, insufficient volunteers there. On 2 May 1985, a Toyota Troop Carrier was supplied and the medical experts considered that it was suitable but the Yulara Corporation did not. Therefore, a decommissioned St John Ambulance vehicle was provided to Yulara Corporation on 29 August 1985. The maintenance costs were to be borne by the department. A series of breakdowns and accusations of unreliability occurred whenever a request for more funds was turned down by the department. Whilst I was in Yulara recently talking to Dr Cotton, he advised me that one of the breakdowns was caused because a driver slipped it into reverse while it was doing 40 km per hour in a forward direction.

As I said, in order to apply more pressure, a series of breakdowns and accusations of unreliability occurred each time that they wanted some funds. A lack of confidence in the ambulance led to a promise of a new ambulance. It is true that the Chief Minister and the then Deputy Chief Minister, the member for Flynn, went there and promised that they would supply a new ambulance to the Yulara Corporation and I think any reasonable person would read into that 'if it is required'. To that end, I called for a detailed report which I received in late March 1987 recommending a major upgrade.

In October 1987, I ordered a complete review of the health services at Yulara. I sent down to Yulara, at different times, the Secretary of the Department of Health and Community Services, the Regional Director of Alice Springs and Barkly Region and the Director of the Rural Health and Regional Nursing Officer. They all went down to Yulara during the course of the review. The review report recognised the special difficulties at Yulara. I decided on a particular option which was put to me and which had already been discussed with the corporation and the private doctor. On 10 March 1988, I went down to Yulara myself and I spoke with a representative of the Yulara Corporation and Dr Cotton, the private practitioner - the 2 people whom I believed were responsible for overseeing the provision of the health services on the ground at Yulara.

I want to read the heads of agreement that were discussed at that meeting and agreed to by both parties. The first point is that the current, ill-defined responsibilities for management of health services are divisive. That is a fact of life. As I said before, the misinformation that was coming through about the provision of health services could do nothing but confuse everybody. 'It is proposed that the YDC assume responsibility for local management of services as an agent for the department and the department with YDC to establish an initial and ongoing budget for these services'. In fact, that would mean that the Yulara Corporation would be putting funds towards the provision of health services at Yulara.

The second point is that a 'local management team be set up in Yulara comprising the private medical practitioner, the Town Manager and the Regional Director of Health and Community Services'. This team was to meet every 3 or 4 weeks to manage the services.

The third point reads: 'The YDC to purchase, through a departmental grant, a new ambulance at modest cost, the ambulance to be suitable for most work in the area and the department to lease the ambulance for work outside the resort area with a prescribed radius of operations'. When that point was discussed, Dr Cotton said firstly that there was absolutely no need to replace the existing ambulance. Mr McCrae, the Town Manager, agreed with that proposition. I was staggered when they put that proposition to me and I immediately arranged for an inspection of the ambulance the following morning, with both those people present. That inspection was carried out in due course and, based on the professional advice of Dr Cotton, I agreed that we would not waste taxpayers' money on buying an ambulance which simply was not needed.

I will not detail the remainder of the proposals as they are not wholly relevant to this debate. Suffice it to say that appropriate measures were to be put in place in relation to how we would pay for the ambulance service and so on. All the information is in this document, which I now table.

The Town Manager left after the meeting whilst I stayed on with the assistant regional director, a member of my personal staff and Dr Cotton. He congratulated me on putting together a wonderful deal with the Yulara

Corporation. In fact, he said that I had caught it out and tricked it into being involved in a deal which would really cost it some dough. He was pretty happy about that proposition, I must admit. However, I was shocked and amazed at 8 o'clock the next morning when I was getting myself organised to inspect the community health centre and the ambulance. I met a trembling Dr Cotton in the foyer of the Sheraton Hotel. He wanted to talk to me. He said: 'The deal is not going to suit me. You have to withdraw it. It is not what I thought it was; it is not on'. And on and on he went.

I must now return to the conversation of the night before. Dr Cotton gave me to understand that he was very shortly going to leave the Yulara area. Apparently, he has a couple of businesses down there - a taxi service and a hire bus service or something relevant to the resort - and he had to wind those up before he could actually go to a position that he was interested in with an emergency helicopter service somewhere in Queensland. He said that he intended taking up that position in April or May of this year and, on the basis of that conversation, I thought that Dr Cotton would not be at Yulara now. Of course, that has all changed, just as his thoughts on the heads of agreement changed the morning after he agreed to them.

Mr Deputy Speaker, the current situation is that I have authorised negotiations with the Royal Flying Doctor Service and the Yulara Corporation, along the lines set out in the heads of agreement. Under this proposal, the Royal Flying Doctor Service would provide full-time medical services cover which would complement the other health and community services. There would be some contribution from the Yulara Corporation along the lines which I mentioned a moment ago.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I have talked about misinformation. I do not like denigrating any person. Apparently, the doctor at Yulara is extremely competent and a professional person who has great skills. He also has a legitimate interest in providing community health services. However, Dr Cotton has not cooperated with the department or the Yulara Corporation and that is a fact of life. It must be remembered that, during his time at Yulara, Dr Cotton has never negotiated any sort of a deal with either of the major hotels to supplement his income. There are 500 to 600 permanent residents at Yulara and I am told that several thousand people visit the resort every week.

Mr Bell: There are 250 000 visitors per year.

Mr DALE: The number is certainly large enough for a private practitioner to put in place some sort of a deal under which he could provide services to hotel clientele. That has never happened.

Mr Bell: He works 7 days a week.

Mr DALE: He has a little more spare time on his hands these days. His services at Mutitjulu and Docker River have been dispensed with because he was too expensive for them. There is no doubt in my mind that the good doctor will not be happy until he has set himself up in a tent in the desert. I suppose he sees himself as John the Baptist, the sandal-footed healer in the desert. He has this need for martyrdom, which is unfortunate. Unfortunately, the services provided at Yulara are suffering because of it.

For over 12 months, I have tried to put in place a reliable and competent community health service at Yulara. I have met with nothing more than frustration in trying to come to some sort of a negotiated arrangement with

the people there. I am sure that the needs of the people will be satisfied when I am able to finalise a deal with the Royal Flying Doctor Service and the Yulara Corporation.

ADJOURNMENT

Mr HATTON (Chief Minister): Mr Speaker, I move that the Assembly do now adjourn.

Mr EDE (Stuart): There are a couple of points that I wish to make in tonight's adjournment. Firstly, I want to congratulate everybody who was involved in the very successful May Day celebrations held in Darwin recently. I know people who happened to be in town on other business and who attended the celebrations. They said that they believed that it was probably the best May Day celebration anywhere in Australia. It had everything: colour, motion, drama and pathos.

The build-up to the celebrations was excellent. The Northern Standard appeared as a community newspaper. It contained some very interesting articles, with contributions from people who had never been involved in such a venture before. Many of those were people who had always wanted to become involved. They became involved with the group employed by the Trades and Labor Council and put out a newspaper whose demise I was sorry to see. I would like to have seen it continue, possibly as a monthly paper.

I would like to thank His Honour the Administrator for taking part in the re-enactment of events leading to the Gilruth sacking that was staged outside Government House. The sacking of Gilruth could almost be seen as the start of the Labor Party in the Northern Territory because one of the major people involved was our first Labor member of the House of Representatives. That reminds me what a mob of Johnny-come-latelies the members of the CLP are. The Labor Party in the Northern Territory has a long and glorious tradition with people like both the Nelsons and D.D. Smith who, as you would know Mr Speaker, was the first member for the seat of Stuart, which you and I have both had the honour to represent and which is the only seat in the Northern Territory to have retained its name through all the changes that have occurred. Dick Smith was a good Labor man and an excellent representative.

The May Day celebration was a really historic occasion for members on this side of the House and for all workers. The way workers turned out in massive force for that march really did my heart proud. It was a great feeling to march down the street with thousands of people and to realise that it was not many years since the degree of oppression here and the lack of strength in the workers' movement meant that one could count participants in May Day marches only in hundreds. It was a wonderful feeling to walk proudly down the street with thousands of other people, with banners and all the other paraphernalia which make a successful march. The drum band was particularly moving and really gave some spirit to the occasion. The puppets were great, although my heart went out to the people who were carrying them. It was so hot that you could just about see the perspiration running off their ankles. They gave wonderful support to the re-enactment of the Gilruth confrontation down at Government House. All in all, it was a great day.

There has been some discussion about the lack of financial support from various governments in comparison with the support given to Droving Australia. I must say that it threw me to hear the Treasurer say yesterday that the cost of Droving Australia was \$2.5m. I had not realised that the expenditure had reached such mammoth proportions.

Unfortunately, the other point I wish to discuss does not appear to attract as much bipartisan support as did the May Day celebrations. I am sure that honourable members opposite gave the celebrations their full support, knowing what a vital role the Gilruth incident played in our history. I believe that it was the only successful revolution in Australia's history, short-lived as it may have been. I want now to talk, however, about the 3% 1986 national wage case claim for public-sector superannuation. The agreement was that the 3% would be paid in the form of superannuation. It became part of the public service dispute last year. It was agreed in the Conciliation Arbitration Tribunal that it would be paid as 1.5% from 1 July 1988 and 1.5% from 1 January 1989. Unfortunately, it would appear that that agreement has something of a problem at the moment. At the time of the dispute, the government costed that 3% out as representing \$3.3m a year. It stated that it could effect \$3.3m in savings if it did not have to go ahead with that superannuation scheme.

It is quite clear from the fact that, at the time, the government talked about a cash saving of \$3.3m in that year, that it was talking about a funded scheme. As you would realise, Mr Speaker, an unfunded scheme requires no annual input until the payout comes later on. Clearly, the government was talking about a funded scheme because it referred to the actual cash amount that would be required from it to continue with the scheme.

Fortunately, the Trades and Labor Council has been told that now the government is talking about an unfunded scheme. It really staggered me when I heard that because I know the view that some of the members opposite have expressed to me regarding unfunded superannuation schemes, and the way that we are building up our liability within our total superannuation schemes at the rate of something like \$50m per year. I was quite floored by the fact that the government was now turning around and talking about running this as an unfunded scheme. Given the fact that the government had assessed it as representing \$3.3m in savings, I would have thought that it would already have taken that \$3.3m into account and that it would run it as a funded scheme.

It is true that some of the states are taking it as an unfunded scheme but I do not believe that that is any reason for us forever to follow down that line. I have heard a rumour that the Commonwealth is reassessing its position and is talking about going back to a funded scheme because it is starting to realise how serious a debt we are building up for the future in these superannuation schemes. It has been estimated that, in Queensland, if you want to get out of the public service you had better get out before the turn of the century because, after that, the annual cost will be something like the total budget of the state of Queensland in payouts.

I hope that the government will reassess its position and rethink it. It should recognise that we have this other unfunded scheme that we have to attack in some way, but let us not compound the problem by setting up more unfunded schemes. There is also a moral argument that can be raised on that for the workers in the Northern Territory. We have the figures for August 1986 to August 1987 which show that, in wage rises, our workers in the Northern Territory were in the worst position in the western world, with a wage rise of 1.5%. During that period, they fell way behind inflation and took the most savage cut in wages of anywhere in Australia and one of the worst cuts anywhere in the western world. They deserve some consideration in consequence, and one of the ways that this government can do it with a marginal effect to itself at this time and, in fact, to its own financial benefit, is to contribute to a funded rather than an unfunded scheme.

Another point that has been drawn to my attention is the gazettal of public holidays. This could prove to be a problem before too much longer. Members will remember that the 'extra day' for 1988 was brought forward to prolong the Australia Day weekend. Apparently, there are indications, because the gazettals often go through ahead of time, that this will be used as a 2-card or 3-card trick or whatever to eliminate that 'extra day'. I would ask the Minister for Labour, Administrative Services and Local Government to clarify that and say whether that is something which he is going to buy a fight about. If so, I hope that he will give his reasons here so that we can debate it fully in this Assembly before it goes further.

There are a couple of other points and one concerns the Australian Traineeship Scheme. The Commonwealth and Northern Territory governments have funded one person, Michael Parker, to work with the Trades and Labor Council on the development of this scheme. I believe Sue Murray is doing an equivalent job with the Confederation of Industry and Commerce as a Traineeship Liaison Officer. As I said, these positions are funded jointly by the Commonwealth and Northern Territory governments and I have been advised that, at this stage, the funding has been proposed through to March 1989. I understand that Commonwealth funding being extended beyond that date is not at issue, but that the Northern Territory contribution beyond 1989 is.

The ATS, Australian Traineeship Scheme, is one of the really excellent moves made by the federal government. It has received considerable cooperation from this government and from others around Australia as a means of developing traineeships. We should assure people that that funding will be extended so that they can know that they have security to continue in those jobs and can continue to develop them. It would be criminal if we reached the end of this year and there was a breakdown because people were unsure whether funding would be continued or whatever, and those 2 people had to find alternative employment because they were not sure if their present employment would continue.

I come to the final point that I would like the honourable minister's office to consider. I know that the government feels that somehow it is the champion of the New Right through the position it has taken on this, but I would ask that, as a very significant move in developing good relations with the union movement, it restore payroll deductibility for APSA, ACOA and NTTF membership.

We are in contravention of an ILO convention in that regard. I think it would demonstrate to workers in the Northern Territory, that the government had their interests at heart and that it believed negotiation to be a basis for the resolution of industrial disputes and accepted that the unions had a place in that system. It has nothing at all to do with the people's decision to join a union or not to join. It is a decision that the government will cooperate, through its system, by making those deductions from people's wages. As I said, it is in line with an ILO convention. The government can continue to thwart it, but it will thwart it at its peril because the government is denying the very real role that the unions have in the industrial relations system and, through negotiations, with government.

A good union structure, which is able to employ highly-competent and skilled staff through the subscription deductions that they receive, is a boon to any government because I can imagine nothing worse than negotiating with people who are not skilled in that regard. The best way to ensure negotiations are conducted by skilled people is by having payroll deductions for membership reinstated.

Mr SMITH (Opposition Leader): A temporary and unholy alliance arrived at between myself and the honourable Speaker ...

Mr SPEAKER: I do not regard it as unholy at all.

Mr SMITH: I congratulate you on your perspicacity, Mr Speaker.

Hopefully, I will not keep the House for my full quota of time, but I would like to join with the member for Stuart in congratulating the organisers of the May Day celebrations in Darwin. Certainly, it was a very significant occasion indeed.

Mr Padgham-Purich: You would have been better off at Newcastle Waters.

Mr SMITH: I would be prepared to argue with you on that because that weekend turned out to be a major celebration of the achievements of the labour movement in the Northern Territory. No matter which side of politics you are on, I think you have to accept that the labour movement in the Northern Territory does have a significant and proud record of achievement stretching over a number of years.

The focus of that weekend was the achievement of the labour movement in 1918 through the so-called Gilruth march. There is no doubt that, at that time, conditions for people in Darwin were very poor indeed. As a result of the action taken by the labour movement at that time, there was a significant improvement in conditions for people in Darwin. Equally significant was the attainment of award wages for Aboriginal stockmen and other Aboriginal people working on pastoral properties. That certainly was an achievement that could be sheeted directly home as a responsibility of the labour movement in the Northern Territory and is something that will be remembered long after all of us in here are gone.

A particular expression of thanks from me needs to go to 3 people: Alderman Jamie Robertson, who was the pushing light in the Trades and Labor Council over the last 2 or 3 years to get those celebrations going, and to the 2 people employed by the May Day Committee, Rick McCracken and Margaret Robertson, who were very professional in their approach to and outlook on the whole matter and who ensured that the whole celebration was successful.

Mr Speaker, the other matter that I want to bring to the House's attention is the amazing hypocrisy of the Treasurer.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The honourable member will withdraw that reference to the Treasurer.

Mr SMITH: I thought I could get away with that. Mr Speaker, I withdraw. Perhaps I can substitute an alternative expression that appears in the press release I am about to read: 'The amazing fanciful thoughts of the Treasurer'. In this House an hour ago, the Treasurer had the gall to say that a minister in the federal parliament had just issued a press release which stated for the first time who had been awarded the air-conditioning contract at Tindal that has been a matter of some dispute in this House over the last 2 days. What he did not say was that the press release issued by the Minister for Administrative Services was, in fact, a response to allegations made by the Treasurer, both inside and outside this House over the last few days, of political interference by the federal minister in determining that contract.

Mr Speaker, for the record, I want to read out what this press release says because it is significant and it puts into context what has been occurring at the federal level. It may put an end to the lie that has been circulating that members on this side have been attempting to undermine Hungerford's bid for that air-conditioning contract. The press release is headed: 'Allegations from Coulter Fanciful'. I would have used a stronger word. 'The federal Minister for Administrative Services, Stewart West, today described as "fanciful" suggestions from NT Treasurer, Barry Coulter, that he had interfered in the awarding of a contract at Tindal RAAF Base. "Mr Coulter has attempted to smear me in an obvious attempt to deflect political embarrassment ...

Mr SPEAKER: Order! I remind the honourable member that he must not allude to a debate previously raised in the House today. That is that topic.

Mr SMITH: Mr Speaker, there is nothing in this press release that would indicate that the alleged smear of the honourable member was committed in this House. I cannot see how your point of order is relevant. I do not know where the federal Minister for Administrative Services got his information. All I am doing is reading into Hansard a press release which I received from the Minister for Administrative Services today.

Mr SPEAKER: Provided there is absolutely no reference to the debate that occurred in the House today, you may continue.

Mr SMITH: Mr Speaker, I am sure that the second paragraph will make it clear where the Minister for Administrative Services obtained his information:

'Mr Coulter has attempted to smear me in an obvious attempt to deflect political embarrassment from his own ineptitude', Mr West said. 'I utterly deny his shallow allegations'. Mr West was referring to remarks Mr Coulter made when questioned by the media over the failure of Hungerford Pty Ltd and its role in the Trade Development Zone. 'It is standard procedure in my department that regional offices evaluate and award all contracts', he said. 'I play no role in this practice', said the minister.

Mr West said that Hungerford was awarded a number of contracts by the South Australian/Northern Territory construction group of its department early in 1988 to manufacture 329 condensing units for air-conditioners at Tindal. Worth a total of \$685 000, these contracts were awarded solely to Hungerford on a single selected basis because of time constraints and financial difficulties encountered by a previous company. Subsequently, a need for a further 300 condensing units was identified and, because of no immediate time constraints, public tenders were called on March 23 to close on April 14.

'Tenders were evaluated and awarded by the South Australian/Northern Territory construction group on the basis of price, ability to deliver on time and whether the equipment met the required specifications', Mr West said. 'This contract, which is worth \$580 000, has been awarded to Lasala Pty Ltd in Moorabbin Victoria. The Hungerford bid for this work was not competitive; simply, their price was too high. I have had no involvement in this contract whatsoever, and suggestions by Mr Coulter to the contrary are a smokescreen designed to deflect political heat from himself'.

Mr TUXWORTH (Barkly): Mr Speaker, I rise to discuss this evening a matter which arose in question time this morning. I would like to pursue it because I think it is of great importance. In question time this morning, I asked the Chief Minister, with a subsequent question to the Minister for Industries and Development, whether the government would review its present policy of not assisting rural communities to establish groundstations for relaying the Imparja commercial television signal in their respective communities. I was delighted to hear from the minister and the Chief Minister that the government will review the policy that it presently holds. That policy does not have any logic attached to it other than that it means the government does not have to spend money.

I would like to put that into the context that many of us, on both sides of this House, have worked for a long time to ensure that the satellite went up and that, when it was up, the signals from it provided to people in remote areas the sort of communication network that Australians elsewhere in the country take as a matter of course. Eventually, the government came to the party and supported Imparja with a financial grant which was important to its success.

I think that the government would have to admit - as I certainly do even though I was a great sceptic about Imparja in the early days - that Imparja Television is doing a very good job. It is very hard to find anyone in the community who will say that he thinks that Imparja is not doing a good job. I cannot find anybody who says that. However, the people in the remote areas who are really benefiting from Imparja at the moment are those who can buy a dish for \$2000, put it in their yards and hook their televisions straight on to it. The rest of the communities - and not all communities are as large even as Borroloola, Elliott, Pine Creek and Ti Tree because there are many average-size communities with 50 and 60 people - cannot afford the \$10 000 or \$20 000 that is involved in establishing a groundstation and a relay for that community. It would seem to me that it is a contradiction in terms for us to say that we want the satellite and we will put money into the satellite, but we will not have anything to do with helping the smaller communities to obtain groundstation facilities that make the satellite worth while.

I am aware that, in my electorate, the Elliott Community Council and the Borroloola local government group have written to the government asking for help through a loan, a grant or some sort of financial assistance to help them obtain the groundstation equipment. The government has written back to say that it does not have a policy of doing this and that these communities will have to whip the hat around or do something amongst themselves to get the money.

I think that any reasonable Territorian would admit that asking people in places like Elliott, Borroloola, Ti Tree, Pine Creek, Hooker Creek or Lajamanu and so on to whip around and raise \$20 000 within their community does not make sense. It is not reasonable to believe it is possible because they do not have that kind of money. It does not make sense for us to have this technology available and yet not make available a scheme of some sort. I am not saying that it has to be through a grant to the community; a loan to local government or something along the lines of a dollar-for-dollar contribution might be perfectly reasonable. But not to have some sort of financing arrangement that allows the communities to obtain those groundstations to transmit the signal within their own community is really a waste of all the other things that we have fought for and achieved over many years.

As the Chief Minister said this morning, in Alice and Tennant Creek and the other larger communities, we are all receiving Imparja and probably we are getting the best programming of any community in the country, because Imparja is going around the networks and picking the eyes out of the best programs. In any capital city, you would be hard put to get the sort of networking that we are receiving at the moment, and it is greatly appreciated. But to have probably one-third of the people in the bush who still have no opportunity to receive that signal is a great disadvantage.

I will place this matter in another context and that is that, ultimately, we all expect Imparja to play an important role in the education of people in remote areas. With the help of the government in the development of programs through the Department of Education and other of its agencies, like the health workers, ultimately we will be providing, through the television network, education programs that are provided now in another way. That is a terrific development of the technology, but that will not mean anything if the people on the ground in the smaller communities do not have the ability to receive the signal and transmit it into their community.

I say that it is an ideal time for the government to review its attitude on the funding of remote area installations. The minister said this morning that he would look at Imparja's responsibilities. Imparja does have responsibilities, but one is not to install the groundstations and be responsible for their maintenance or the cost of installation. I have checked that. Imparja has other responsibilities regarding the standard of the equipment it uses and the sort of services that it is expected to make available to the receivers that have been installed. Somewhere along the line, as a community, we have to develop a formula that enables the smaller places to receive the satellite signal and transmit it to the 50 or 60 or 200 people that live in that community. If we do not do that, if we are too shortsighted to do that, we will do ourselves a great disservice and, ultimately, we will prevent many people in those communities from receiving an education.

I would like to raise another instance of how this could be important. Education by satellite will be some time away, and I have been talking to the Minister for Education about what to do at Nicholson River. Nicholson River has to be one of the most remote and awkward exercises in providing education that the department and the government are likely to contend with. However, probably it presents an ideal opportunity to experiment with the delivery of education by satellite in that particular community alone. If it works out as a prototype then perhaps we could spread the system to other communities. The cost of putting formal everyday education facilities into the Nicholson River area will be quite extensive, and I can understand why the government cringes at the thought of having to do it. Maybe it is time we said that we will give it a go. We have the satellite so let's get into it.

In the event that we make a decision like that, we still need a formula to receive the signal in that community and relay it to the people in that community, because you cannot say to a community of 100 Aborigines, who are really making their living by rounding up Mickey balls and doing a bit of BTEC work on neighbouring stations, that they must find that kind of money. The government will have to fork out \$10 000 or \$20 000 for the facility because that is just not on, and we all know it.

The last thing that I would like to do tonight is pay a tribute to the passing of one James Maloney who died in Tennant Creek about 10 days ago at the age of 83. Jerry Maloney came to Tennant Creek when it was first

established in 1935-36. He came from Wyndham where he had worked at the meatworks. His wife had died in Western Australia of cancer and he came to Tennant Creek. His father was the bookmaker and the JP in Tennant Creek, an interesting combination that seemed to work well in those days.

Jerry Maloney worked in the mining industry, in the cattle industry and around the town as a general engineering type, because he was an expert tradesman. He was part of the Tennant Creek fabric for many years. He was a very interesting gentleman. He was a diehard Labor man and would drive 100 or 300 miles to be able to cast a vote on election day, but he would not go to a party meeting and he would not go to a rally. He held strong Labor principles until the day he died. He never changed his course. He was an expert snooker player and played rugby for the Dollypot Cup, that is so famous in Tennant Creek, in the pre-war rugby competition that never re-established itself after the war. The Dollypot Cup was donated by the Weavers from the Rising Sun and it contained several ounces of gold. It is a very valuable cup which was treasured by the rugby people before the war and is treasured by the Baseball League who play for it these days.

Jerry Maloney would have played as important a role in the development and the pioneering days of Tennant Creek as any other man you could name, but his later years were very lonely. He became deaf and found it very hard to maintain social contact in the community. He had a very small group of friends and, for the last 2 years of his life, was virtually bedridden. He died in the nursing home in Tennant Creek. Tonight, I pay tribute to a gentleman and a fine Territorian who really did play an enormous role in the development of our Territory.

Mr FIRMIN (Ludmilla): Mr Speaker, I would like to pay tribute in tonight's adjournment debate to a couple of people who have played a part in the bicentennial events which have been occurring in the Territory since the beginning of this year. I want to speak firstly about the Macassan prau, the Hati Marege, which sailed here from Sulawesi. I was reminded of it only last night when I picked up a copy of an international cruising magazine and read a very fine article by a Jeffrey Mellefont. He says that the prau voyage was the real first fleet re-enactment. At the end of my speech this evening, I will table the copy of the story for those members who may be interested. It refers to several members in this House and the parts they played in the re-enactment.

The arrival of the prau in Gove preceded the arrival in Botany Bay of Dr King's first fleet re-enactment by more than a week. The article states that, whilst the fleet which travelled from Portsmouth to Australia was comprised of vessels that were supposedly replicas of the first fleet vessels, in fact each of them had a diesel engine. Many of the vessels were actually rigged fore and aft, which is most unusual, with reefing headsails and big stainless steel Barlow winches. Obviously, they did not replicate the designs of the vessels which left England some 200-odd years ago. I had an opportunity to sail on vessels similar to those myself when I spent some time in the south earlier this year. I was lucky enough to be on a vessel which was completely winch-free and was an authentic tall ship. That was quite an experience and I think I have spoken about it at another time in this House.

The Hati Marege, however, was a true replica. Not only was it built from the old designs, but it was built using the traditional methods that the Indonesians in Sulawesi used in those days. For many years, the person who built the vessel, the old skipper who came out with it, had been practising his craft in the traditional way. He did not even use metal nails. He used

hand-made timber nails. The sails were made from woven straw material and, when the vessel arrived, I was interested to learn that many suits of sails were used in the voyage from Macassar to Gove. Not only were some sails blown out during the re-enactment voyage but some rotted away in the salt atmosphere. Apparently, that happened quite frequently in the olden days. One presumes that, when the crews finished their trepanning here, they collected materials locally and made new sails for the return voyages at the end of the wet season when the south-easterly trade winds began to blow.

I was also fortunate enough to be back in Darwin when the vessel finally arrived after visiting several of the coastal Aboriginal settlements. I was extremely enamoured of the beauty of the vessel. I suppose that, to some people she looked very much like an old pirate ship but, to those of us who are interested in old sailing ships - and there are several members of this Assembly who are - she was a thing of beauty, an absolutely lovely piece of craftsmanship.

I understood from Peter Spillett, who was the driving force behind this re-enactment and who worked on the project for several years, that the replication of the original vessels included even the bilge pump. It was of the traditional design, a centre-cored bamboo pipe with a wooden stick as a plunger. When the plunger was lifted and pushed back down through a valve system created with different-sized holes in the bamboo, water was lifted and pumped out of the bilges. It was quite a feat to reproduce equipment with the olden-day methods.

It was a shame that the voyage undertaken by Peter Spillett, the Indonesian sailors and Dr Jack-Hinton was somewhat overshadowed by the arrival of the tall ships and the first fleet re-enactment. It received very little coverage down south but it was a voyage which probably will be remembered, in years to come, in the same way as Thor Heyerdahl's voyages across the Pacific in the Kon Tiki and the porous vessel called the Ra. It will probably be compared with voyages like those of Tim Severin, who built the Sinbad and sailed it from Oman to China, or the leather boat journey from Northern Ireland through Alaska to America. Those voyages were significant in retracing history, and are well-known around the world today. They have become events of significance. I think that, in the future, the journey of the Macassan prau will be seen as a very significant event, will stand as a very important part of our bicentennial celebrations and one that will become known to all Australians.

The other bicentennial event which, I believe, will come to have considerable significance for all Australians is Droving Australia. I have said before, not only in this House but in other places, that it does not take much to find a country person. Most members of this Assembly would have roots in the country in the last generation or two. I would guess that everybody in this Chamber today would have been raised in the country or have lived in the country at some stage or, if not, would have parents who lived in the country.

Mr Bell: Some of us are still lucky enough to do so.

Mr FIRMIN: Absolutely. Some of us were also lucky enough to have attended country schools and, like myself, continue to have an affinity with the country.

Mr Bell: So you are a country bumpkin.

Mr FIRMIN: Yes, I am a country bumpkin from the wilds of Mullewa in Western Australia, a place which would be known to some members.

It gave me a great deal of pleasure, Mr Speaker, to be able to go to Newcastle Waters, not only because I was interested in the droving event but because I was a member of the Bicentennial Authority. Instead of flying down for my brief visit, I took the opportunity to drive both ways. As I drove down the track, it was brought home to me forcefully that things had changed. In conversation with my wife, I wondered how long it was since I had driven south of Katherine. It appeared to be 5 or 6 years, much to my shame. I will not let such a long period go by in future without making a few trips down the track to keep myself aware of what is occurring along the Stuart Highway. It was a delightful trip and I met an enormous number of people whom I had not met for a considerable number of years. I attended the stock camp at the bore for a couple of days, met many of the pastoralists present and took part in some of the re-enactment events over that weekend.

Many tributes have been paid to people involved in Droving Australia, but I would like to record a tribute to the men of the defence forces who provided all the backup services for the Droving Australia team, particularly the members of the RAAF. Their tireless work was quite unbelievable. They were up at 4 am to prepare food. They also did garbage runs and cleaned out latrines. They set the place up completely and had to stay for several days afterwards to pack everything away and get all the gear back to Darwin. Their attention to detail was incredible, as was their staying power, given the heat, the dust and so forth.

It was terrific to see all those people together at Newcastle Waters. It was terrific to see so many children present at an event which, like others I have mentioned, will probably take its place in Australian history together with the voyage of the *Hati Marege*. To see all the kids involved in the droving camps and to watch all the children from current pastoral properties taking part in other events during that weekend was grand. It was great to see the camaraderie between the droving camp people and the people who were involved in the camp draft and to meet some of the older residents whom I had not had an opportunity to meet before. The station people whom I knew introduced me to many other people whom I knew only by name and reputation. I had never had an opportunity to meet some of them before because they had left the Territory and others because they were further off the beaten tract than I had been.

It was quite an experience to discuss with them their ways of life in the Territory and to exchange stories of different types of activities that several of us had participated in over the last 20 or 25 years in isolation from each other. I had been involved with the launching of Tom Coles' book. I spent some considerable time in his company and he introduced me to an enormous number of old buffalo hunters who had been working the wetlands area around Marrakai, Annaburroo, Wildman and across to the East Alligator. When I first came to Darwin, those were areas where I used to do some crocodile and buffalo shooting myself. It was interesting to describe the different areas where we used to work. In fact, in some cases, our paths could have crossed but, because of various seasonal changes or whatever, we must have missed each other only by some 20 or 30 miles in the different areas in which we were working. It was interesting to exchange those stories and I have made some very firm friendships as a result of the Newcastle Waters bicentennial re-enactment. Once again, I would like to pay tribute to the RAAF fellows who helped make it all possible.

Mr SETTER (Jingili): Mr Speaker, I believe that it is essential that preschools be progressively air-conditioned. There is no doubt about the need for that because, at present, many preschools are nothing better than sweatboxes. What is happening, particularly in the Top End where there is high humidity - and I hope the minister is listening to my comments through the PA system - is that we are sending little kids along to spend 3 or 4 hours a day in what are nothing better than sauna baths. This is particularly the case during those hot months of the year from October through until about March.

I have inspected several preschools in my electorate recently, and let me tell you about a few of the problems that I have noticed. They are poorly designed. Most of those in the older suburbs were built in the 1960s or the very early 1970s. The design is unsuitable for a hot tropical climate. For example, the window sills are about 1 m high. Whilst they have louvres above, which allow breezes to enter from time to time, the little children are only about 0.5 m high. They are locked into that area where the air is still and it is as hot as hades in there. Those poor little kids have to spend the best part of 2 or 3 hours there. They do spend some time outside, but the majority of the time is spent in that hot box.

There are a number - and I include those in my electorate - that are badly sited on their blocks because the original concept was that they be sited to take advantage of the prevailing breezes. As most members would know, during the dry season, Darwin has a south-easterly breeze and, during the wet season, we have a north-westerly breeze. If a preschool is sited across the path of the prevailing wind, it is logical that a breeze will pass through it one way or the other, depending on the season. Believe it or not, the preschools in my electorate are sited in the opposite direction - in other words, the end walls face the prevailing breezes. That was done, not to take advantage of the airflow, but because the building looked a little better or fitted better on the block. Very little thought was given to the design and siting of these preschools.

What I am saying to the minister is that this creates a very unhealthy environment for our small children. It is unacceptable to me and it is unacceptable to a whole range of parents in my electorate. Recently, I have been approached by parents, and that is what brought this matter to my attention. I would like to quote from some of the letters received from parents in relation to this matter. Some have come from outside my electorate. I will quote selectively from a couple of them. This one was addressed to the President of the Wagaman Pre-school Committee. It is from a parent:

I wish to express my support for the proposal of air-conditioning the preschool. I have been helping at the preschool 1 morning per week since my son commenced preschool in June 1987. I feel I should point out the following, not only as a mother's observation but also as an experienced occupational therapist with skills in child development and pediatrics. At the end of 1987, it was apparent that many of the children became tired, cranky or apathetic by the middle of the morning session. This was not so during the dry season. My son was noted to be having problems at this stage, and I am sure the lethargy from the heat and humidity did not help.

I have a letter from the parents of children at the Moulden Park Preschool at Palmerston. This is addressed to me:

Our preschool, as you aptly described in the Sunday Territorian of 10 April 1988, is nothing better than a sweatbox. Even though the preschool is relatively new, it has been poorly designed with no cross-ventilation at the children's level. The building has been sited so that we do not receive the maximum benefit from the prevailing winds. In fact, the preschool was originally designed for air-conditioning, but none was installed.

We wish you success in your endeavour to persuade your colleagues and the Education Department to recognise the necessity to air-condition preschools so that staff and students can enjoy comfortable working conditions already existing in most primary and secondary schools.

There is a great deal of support for the proposal that I have put forward. As you are aware, Mr Speaker, I have presented several petitions relating to this matter. Those petitions were signed by over 200 parents from within my electorate. That indicates the support and the strength behind the move to air-condition preschools. Several weeks ago, I issued a press release on this matter. Following that, I received numerous phone calls and personal approaches from parents and other people offering me their support, and that was reflected in those petitions.

I wrote to the minister on 30 March and he responded the next day to acknowledge receipt of my letter but, since then, there has been silence and nothing further has transpired. Perhaps the minister and the department are pondering this matter. I certainly hope that they are and I hope that, as a result of my comments this evening, the minister will respond further and indicate what the policy of his department will be.

Already, a number of preschools in the Northern Territory are air-conditioned. I am familiar only with those in Darwin and adjacent areas. Let me nominate some of these for you, Mr Speaker. There may well be others, but these have come to my attention: Anula, Leanyer, Malak, Nightcliff, Sanderson, Stuart Park and, I understand, Jabiru. I feel very confident that, within a reasonable space of time, we will be able to add Jingili, Moil and Wagaman to that list.

It is very interesting to note that the preschool at the Gray Primary School is not air-conditioned although that particular preschool is part of the primary school building. They are accommodated within the one building. I have seen it. I have been there. The air-conditioning for the primary school flows by way of a duct and terminates at the room directly adjacent to the preschool. What the powers-that-be have indicated is that air-conditioning is needed on one side of the wall because that is in the primary school area. However, on the other side of the wall, there are preschool kids who do not make much noise and therefore air-conditioning is not needed. That is absolutely ridiculous. If the children on the primary school side suffer from heat discomfort, then the kids on the other side will certainly suffer exactly the same conditions. That is where the policy has gone wrong. It is true that the majority of primary and secondary schools, certainly in the major centres in the Northern Territory, are air-conditioned. Yet, for some reason, the preschools which, I understand, are all located within the grounds of the relevant primary schools, are not air-conditioned. I do not understand the logic behind that.

This morning in question time, I asked the minister to comment on his department's policy and what action he intends to take to accede to the requests made in those petitions. He made a couple of interesting points. I

will quote from what he said: 'Some professionals believe that air-conditioning is detrimental to the good health and welfare of children attending preschools'. Is it detrimental to the health of all those primary and secondary school children, and the teachers who work in air-conditioning and all the thousands of people throughout the commercial area who work in air-conditioning? If it is not detrimental to them, why is it detrimental to preschool children?'

He went on to say that the government has a policy of installing air-conditioning in the withdrawal areas - and I know that that is true - and said that he was seeking professional advice regarding whether or not it would be detrimental to health if a preschool were air-conditioned. I would like to see a copy of that report when that comes to hand because I think the minister will be quite surprised at the result. I can tell the minister that the Work Health Authority has been out to Wagaman Preschool already and done some research there. I will quote from its report. It might help the minister if he could go to the Work Health Authority and ask it for assistance. An occupational hygienist employed by the Work Health Authority had this to say on 10 May 1988:

Officers from the Department of Transport and Works recorded temperature and humidity using a chart recorder over a continuous period from 12 November 1987 to 19 November 1987 in the Wagaman Preschool. The humidity was over 80% all day for most of the test days, and the temperature fluctuated between 30°C and 35°C.

He also said:

The results of my measurements at Wagaman Preschool are nearly identical to those obtained at Malak Preschool carried out on 21 October 1987. The Department of Transport and Works results indicate extreme indoor thermal comfort conditions and demonstrate the inadequacy of the existing building features to provide any moderating effect on the indoor temperature and humidity levels during the hotter months of the year.

Based on the same reasoning as detailed in my Malak Preschool report dated 17 November 1987, I would conclude that the Wagaman Preschool environment is too hot and that additional cooling in the form of full air-conditioning is required.

The same gentleman wrote on 12 May 1988:

My reports substantiate the thermal conditions in preschools are well above all standards for thermal comfort. Any argument for additional cooling should be on the grounds of thermal comfort only and not because there is a serious physiological risk. My recommendation of air-conditioning to alleviate the thermal comfort problem is based on the fact that in preschools there is already an extensive system of fans to circulate air and that options to bring in large volumes of outside air, such as louvres or forced ventilation, are costly and provide little relief. This is because, during the hours of occupancy, the outside air is almost always the same temperature as the ambient indoor temperature and, for half of the year, the air has high humidity.

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH (Koolpinyah): Mr Deputy Speaker, it was very interesting to hear an answer given by the Chief Minister this morning in

response to a Dorothy Dixier requesting information on what his government is doing on its route to equal rights in all regards for women in the Northern Territory with special regard to the Northern Territory Women's Scholarship Award.

The Chief Minister obviously thought he gave a pretty good answer, otherwise he would not have given it. It would have been pretty good if the listener were a young female who was trendy and a flatterer, and had a 'poor bugger me, I can't get advancement only because I am a woman, and all men are great, ignorant, Neanderthals because look what they are doing to us poor weak women' attitude. All these displays by feminists are fact and are really a display of women's conception that they tend to believe they are not equal to men. Nearly every time they claim inequality in status, it is because they confuse inequality with genetic difference.

The Chief Minister showed that CLP talk is cheap. His government makes a grand gesture of offering scholarships comprising hundreds of thousands of dollars, but the facts do not bear out the sincerity of its statements because, in its heart, the CLP found it completely unacceptable to renominate a middle-aged woman to stand for that party at the last election despite previous and increasing electoral success. Why? Because those people believe, as demonstrated by their actions, that there is no place for middle-aged women in politics. Events have proved them wrong.

Mr Deputy Speaker, the CLP gives proof through its actions. Forget all the flowery phrases of the Chief Minister. The CLP demonstrates quite clearly that it believes middle-aged women should be at home cooking, cleaning, gardening, nursing grandchildren, baby-sitting, learning to paint ...

Mr Hatton: Who said this?

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH: By implication. They should be learning to paint, pot, spin or weave, or working in an office somewhere. They should be anywhere but nominating for politics in the CLP.

To take a personal angle, I was not the only woman who nominated for CLP preselection at the last election. None of the women who nominated was successful. They were very good, competent, professional women who had political experience in other places. Hasn't the CLP been encouraging women to put themselves forward? Hasn't the CLP been encouraging women to run for public office? Isn't the CLP aware that the population, even in the Northern Territory, is maturing, greying and getting older? Hasn't the CLP been encouraging women to use their professional skills and talents? Hasn't the CLP been encouraging women to take leadership roles in the community? The answer to all those questions is yes. The CLP has been doing all of these things but, when it comes down to putting its money where its mouth is, it falls flat on its face. It puts up a facade of encouraging women. It says: 'If you are a female come forward - but not if you are a middle-aged female who is not acquiescent or prepared to flatter men for no good reason. If you are a female, run for public life - but not if you are a middle-aged female. If you are a female, take a leadership role in the community - but not if you are a middle-aged female'.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I will enlarge on this. The other women who stood for preselection were perhaps a little younger than myself but they were not really young birds. The Chief Minister's real stance on women's affairs is the same as the CLP's real stance on women's affairs. They say that they believe in women's rights, equality and so forth but only if women are seen

and not heard, never question anything, throw independent thought out the window and are not middle-aged.

This brings me to the general subject of age in the CLP. You do not grow old in the CLP. They expel you or engineer your resignation, as was demonstrated by the recent resignation of the former CLP President, Mr Grant Heaslip. The CLP does not realise that his resignation took the 'Country' out of the Country Liberal Party. It is now only a Liberal Party. Along with Mr Heaslip went any semblance of interest in the country or country development. I am not particularly friendly with Mr Heaslip and he does not know that I am saying this. I have no reason for backing him up or not backing him up. I am stating facts. I would be feeling quite uncomfortable, Mr Deputy Speaker, if I were the Minister for Education, the Minister for Mines and Energy or the Minister for Industries and Development. Those are the 3 right-wing CLP ministers and they are well and truly outnumbered. Their liberal-minded party colleagues will decrease their influence until it is minimal - more is the pity.

Mr Perron: What makes me liberal-minded?

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH: You are not liberal-minded.

The CLP's affiliation with the National and Liberal Parties in Canberra will have to be revised and reviewed because, with the removal of Mr Grant Heaslip from the position of president, the CLP has lost a strong bargaining point for affiliation with both parties. There are interesting times ahead which will keep the CLP's favourite reporter - the one who is the flavour of the month at the moment - in copy for some time.

I come now to another subject which I may not be able to finish speaking about tonight but, given the opportunity, will finish at a later date. I refer to the land claim on a park owned by the Darwin City Council. Some weeks ago, I was present at 2 well-attended public meetings. Members might ask what was I doing at public meetings in Darwin which is out of my bailiwick. I believe very strongly that a principle is involved and there comes a time when principles must come before money. That is the reason why I attended those meetings. What I hope does not happen, but what looks like happening in that park in Darwin, could happen anywhere in the Northern Territory.

A private company has made a land claim on a park. I spoke to a minister about that, asking in a deprecatory way whether, if it were good enough to give away one park for development, would it be okay elsewhere in Darwin if somebody proposed to invest money in another development. He said to me: 'Yes, that would be okay, provided that enough money were provided for the particular development'. Mr Deputy Speaker, if there really were not a skerrick of land available anywhere in Darwin, I would say that perhaps park land could be used for the development of a hotel. However, in the case I am discussing, the developer owns a block of land right next to the park land that he wants. There is another area of land ...

Mr Perron: It was going to be part of the project.

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH: Not the new project. I would not call the car park part of it.

There is another block of land which also overlooks the park. Unfortunately for the developer, that would have to be paid for in hard cash.

The whole matter is very strange when one considers the case of the Atrium Hotel which was built recently in Darwin. It was built on privately-purchased land. No public expense was involved and no public land was used. I was fortunate enough to attend the opening of that hotel and one of the directors said that he was very pleased that the hotel had been built in a short time without government help. That is very significant.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I would like now to give a brief historical resume for the benefit of honourable members who do not know the background to this land claim on the park in Darwin. In August 1987, an initial approach was made by Pinnacle Developments with a proposal to construct a hotel on the Darwin market site, which is in Smith Street backing on to Dashwood Crescent. Coupled with this approach was a proposal to close Dashwood Crescent, annex part of the gully in the park and upgrade the public golf course. There was a further exchange of information which led to a decision by the Darwin City Council, in September 1987, to defer the matter until the council had obtained freehold title to the land. Pinnacle was advised that, due to existing agreements with the operators of the golf course, the council could not continue negotiations but would advise it of any future developments. A further approach by the Chief Minister and acting Minister for Lands and Housing was made in January 1988, with a new proposal for a resort hotel and an 18-hole golf course of international standard, but no details were supplied.

On 12 February 1988, detailed plans were received from Pinnacle Developments which showed an hotel located in the gully and included the closure of Dashwood Crescent, a car park on the Darwin market site and a clubhouse detached from the hotel. At the end of February 1988, the clubhouse was relocated on the Gardens Hill side of the gully with public access from the Hood Terrace area. The upgraded golf course was reduced to 9 holes again. From February 1988, public opinions for and against the proposal were received by the council. On 23 February 1988, the Darwin City Council opposed the excision of public park land for commercial development where no substantial benefit accrued to the community. However, it did support the principle of upgrading the golf course.

Mr Perron: What a lot of drivel.

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH: In response to that interjection from the minister, nobody at the 2 public meetings had any objection to the hotel development taking place anywhere but on the park land. People had no objection to the hotel ...

Mr Perron: The area has been a rubbish dump for years.

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH: Wait a minute, I am coming to that. I am still replying to your first interjection. Nobody had any objection to the hotel being built. It would have provided the same amount of employment on Pinnacle Developments' own site in Smith Street as it would in the park.

The Chief Minister made an offer of a land exchange on 16 March 1988. The golf course land was to be freeholded and to include the present area of Gardens Oval No 3 and the land between the casino and Myilly Point. Gardens Oval No 3 was to be replaced within the vicinity of the site and to be given to the council. On 28 March 1988, there was an offer of the land near Myilly Point. This was contradicted by the Minister of Lands and Housing on the grounds that it was linked to the 18-hole golf course proposal. He said that the Darwin City Council could apply for that land in the normal manner and

that the existing policy on foreshore land would apply; that is, freehold land be given to the Darwin City Council. On 28 March 1988, the Darwin City Council held a special general meeting on the site. In March 1988, the council requested a clarification from the government on numerous points relating to the land exchange.

On 13 April 1988, the Minister for Lands and Housing stated in a letter: 'At no time has the government offered the Darwin City Council the foreshore area in exchange, nor will it seek to make such an offer. The minister is prepared to consider utilisation by the Darwin City Council for acceptable purposes, but no freehold'. Already, there was confusion. Neither the Chief Minister nor the Minister for Lands and Housing knew what the other was doing. It was a case of the right hand not knowing what the left was doing.

On 14 April 1988, Pinnacle Developments withdrew its offer to upgrade the golf course but advised that it would continue to seek to obtain part of the golf course for development. On 14 April 1988, an application was made for rezoning of the subject land from O2 to B5. That was received by the council for comment.

I now move on to the subject of the land itself. The Chief Minister was reported in the NT News on 2 March 1988 as saying: 'The piece of land in question is unusable as park land. It is overgrown with coffee bush and offers no aesthetic appeal whatever'. That is a very subjective view because some people like bush that is a bit tangled; all of us do not necessarily like manicured front lawns. In a letter to the council on 16 March 1988, the Chief Minister said: 'It is currently vacant scrub land which has been used in the past for the illegal dumping of garbage'. Pinnacle Developments said in an information sheet: 'Dense coffee bush and scrub covers the gully'. In the Sunday Territorian of 27 March 1988, the CLP's favourite reporter wrote: 'It is little better than an unsightly rubbish dump. Not so long ago, a couple of teenagers almost lost their lives after their car went over the side'. What that has to do with the price of eggs, I do not know.

The fact is that never before had a piece of land been so reviled, yet so patently coveted. Pinnacle Developments' land claim covers 10 000 m². Half of it is open grassland whilst the remaining 5000 m² is wooded. Black wattle, cheeky plum, pandanus, river red gums, milkwoods and a dozen other species of native trees can be found there, along with frangipanni and other introduced species.

Mr Perron: It sounds like a botanical walking trail.

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH: They are all there. I have seen them.

Mr Perron: What about the coffee bush?

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH: What is wrong with coffee bush? It is good feed for goats. Far from being disused and unusable land, Pinnacle Developments' proposal includes the existing third green and an area being developed for a further green and tee. On 16 March 1988, an NT News editorial said: 'Nevertheless, it is a prime piece of real estate overlooking, as it does, the Botanic Gardens, the golf course and Mindil Beach'.

We come to an interesting part which I may not have time to finish. Sales of land adjoining and in the gully indicate that, if it were zoned R4 flats, each of 750 m², at the Valuer-General's rate they would be worth \$75 000, a

total of \$1m. As an amalgamated block, it would be worth probably twice that much - \$2m. If zoned B2, latest sales indicate, on the same basis as above, that the land would be worth \$3m. To build a hotel-casino, the land would have to be zoned B4 which attracts a higher price than R4 or B2. The gully that Pinnacle Developments wants is probably worth \$3m to \$5m. I will continue this at a later date, Mr Deputy Speaker.

Mr BELL (MacDonnell): Mr Deputy Speaker, my contribution to this evening's adjournment flows from a question I asked of the Minister for Lands and Housing this evening on the continuing litany of CLP land deals and the scandals that have arisen as a result of them. In spite of the calumny that has been heaped on my head by the Minister for Lands and Housing, suffice it to say that there continue to be a large number of issues involved in this convoluted story that none of the successive Ministers for Lands and Housing seem to have been able to nut out.

In this morning's question time, the Minister for Lands and Housing made the point that these special purposes leases were only freeholded in circumstances where a cost had been paid. He was very careful not to say 'where market value had been paid for them'. I am thankful to the Minister for Lands and Housing and I am sure the directors of 8HA will be equally thankful that they will be able to convert their lease to freehold without paying any extra money. I would like to point out, in this context, exactly what that means. What the minister is saying is that, provided people have paid something since the lease was taken out, they will be able to obtain freehold. This has given rise to extraordinary inequity.

Let me demonstrate what an extraordinary inequity this is. Let us look at the case of 8HA which had special purposes lease No 247. Under special purposes lease No 247, for an area that is 19 acres 2 roods and 20 perches, from 1971 until this year, it was required to pay the amount of \$5 a year. This means that, over 17 years at \$5 a year, 8HA paid \$85 for a freehold block of land.

Let us contrast the circumstances of Mr George Brown of Codan Communications. It is a long and convoluted story but I will go through it in detail because it is highly instructive. I see the member for Fannie Bay is fixing me with his beady eyes because there is a little bit of correspondence that bears his cheerful signature here. I will go to the end rather than start at the beginning. In 1984, Mr George Brown paid \$35 000 for a special purposes lease comparable to that owned by 8HA. Given that we have had 1 government in power for the last 10 years, why has this sort of iniquitous situation been allowed to occur? In one case, we have a leaseholder obtaining freehold for \$85 and, a drop kick down the road, we have another leaseholder being forced to pay \$35 000 to freehold his block of land. Why, Mr Speaker? Because he was mug enough to do it 4 years ago and not wait till 1987 or 1988. That is outrageous.

Mr George Brown is a canny Scot and he will be known to some other members of the Assembly. He has been a businessman in Alice Springs for many years. I intend tabling all this correspondence. There are 14 sheets that I wish to table. It is an interesting chronicle. On 6 February 1980, Mr Brown wrote to the then Minister for Lands and Housing saying that it would assist him in loan-raising if he were able to obtain a more secure leasing arrangement than the 10-year lease period that he had then. He received a reply on 29 July 1980 saying that consideration was progressing. That went on for about 12 months.

The next correspondence was in July 1981, when he was offered freehold title to the block of land for \$15 400. Mr Brown was a little bit surprised at this. He had further correspondence asking whether he wanted to pursue this offer. He had 2 further letters from the Acting Director of the Land Allocation Branch saying that the July 1981 offer could not remain forever. He wrote back in September 1981. He had heard that the Special Purposes Leases Act was under review and he said that he would rather wait until the act had been reviewed when he might be able to obtain a better deal. It is a shame that he did not wait for another 7 years and he would have got it for nought.

The next correspondence was from the late but unlamented Paul Everingham as Minister for Lands, Industrial Development and Tourism in response to a letter from Mr Brown of March 1983 in which he sought conversion to freehold. Paul Everingham told him that the government was freeholding only leases that were used for roadhouses and caravan parks, not all commercial leases at that stage. The letter said that Mr Brown's lease did not fall into that particular category. However, he said that consideration could be given to conversion of the lease at a premium based on current market value.

Thus, he received a letter from the Department of Lands in October 1983 saying that it had set a value. Over the couple of years, the price had risen from \$15 000 to \$35 000 and, not surprisingly, Mr Brown said: 'Hang on, I was told in 1981 that the price would be \$15 000'. Once again, the late but unlamented Paul Everingham wrote to him and said - and this is interesting: 'Look, we cannot accept market values back in 1981 in 1983. We have to accept current market values and current market value is \$35 000'. Get this, Mr Deputy Speaker. You will love this. He said: 'If we were to give you 1981 values, everyone else could and will ask for the same treatment. Your only alternatives are to retain your present tenure or pay current market value for conversion to freehold'. What everyone is asking now is that Mr Brown be treated in the same terms as everybody else is being treated in 1987 and 1988. The minister is deliberately trying to confuse the public debate, and he is patently wrong.

The story went on and Mr Brown paid on 31 January 1984. He paid the \$35 000. I have a copy of the Department of Lands' receipt for \$35 000, which I will table, and a letter from the member for Fannie Bay, who had then become Minister for Lands. It is quite peculiar. It is dated March 1984 whereas the receipt was dated February 1984. The then Minister for Lands must have been a bit behind the times and I am sure he can be blamed for that.

There you have it, Mr Deputy Speaker. What a sad litany of changed policies and changed circumstances that have cost Mr Brown \$35 000, as against the \$85 that 8HA had to pay. I wonder if anybody could possibly regard that as fair. I certainly do not.

Mr Deputy Speaker, for the benefit of honourable members, I seek leave to table this correspondence.

Leave granted.

Mr BELL: There are 2 further pieces of correspondence on the end of that which are GR12A and 12B, which is a gazettal notice of 12 November 1986 where a comparable special purposes lease was freeholded at no cost, and I draw the attention of the honourable minister to that. I would like to know, as Mr Brown would like to know, why Lot 5125 in Kurrajong Drive, Alice Springs, was able to be freeholded at nil cost. Presumably, that was because the

holder of Lot 5125 had been paying a peppercorn rental in the same way as 8HA had been.

A further piece of correspondence is a quite absurd letter from the Minister for Lands, then Ray Hanrahan, as he signs himself here. George Brown made representations to Mr Hanrahan pointing out to him that there was some change in this regard. Mr Hanrahan wrote back that the policy was expanded to allow for a greater number of categories of special purposes leases to be converted to freehold. Part of this policy allowed for conversion at no cost. There is a contradiction between what Mr Hanrahan, as Minister for Lands, was saying and what Mr Manzie is saying, and it is about time he came clean.

I put the minister on notice and tell him that I will ask this question of him tomorrow: if 8HA was able to freehold its special purposes lease for \$85, and Mr Brown, with a similar lease, was forced to pay \$35 000 to do so, will the latter be compensated?

Mr COLLINS (Sadadeen): Mr Deputy Speaker, at some time or another, most members of this Assembly have discussed the topic of defence. Living here in the north, we are very aware of the possibility that this country could be attacked at some stage.

I would bring to the attention of honourable members an article in The Bulletin of a month or so ago which discussed, and made good comparisons between, the Australian defence system and the Swiss defence system. It was very instructional to read the comparisons. The number of people permanently in the Swiss armed forces is very low compared to ours but, through what is basically a national service system, the Swiss government has many hundreds of thousands of Swiss people whom it can call to arms at very short notice. In fact, one of the things that really struck me was a little comment right at the end of the article that every person who had gone through the Swiss system and through the army training there was compelled by law to keep a high-powered rifle at his home, which meant that the whole country could be mobilised to arms in a very short time indeed. It reminds me of an experience I had in Israel. The young people, both men and women, have to spend 3 years in the army and they take their rifles everywhere they go. If they lose their weapons, they receive virtually a mandatory sentence to spend a couple of years in jail. They have to carry their rifles at all times.

Having read some of Professor Blainey's comments and the fears that he expressed that this country could suffer a humiliating defeat within 25 years from any number of sources, because he felt that we were unprepared, one could take the Swiss situation and look at it very seriously indeed. Huge amounts of Switzerland's defence budget are not devoted to the wages of personnel each year. In fact, it spends a far higher proportion of its money on capital items, something which this country seems to have great difficulty in obtaining. Australia does not have an aircraft carrier any longer. We do not have Orion-type aircraft for long-range reconnaissance and so forth, because so much of our defence budget is used to pay the salaries of the armed forces personnel and there is very little left over for upgrading. I really believe that the Swiss system has much that we could benefit from.

With regard to the matter of keeping high-powered rifles in the home, which would mean that virtually every home in Switzerland would have a high-powered rifle, comment was made that, when a comparison was made between numbers of crimes committed which involved high-powered rifles in Switzerland and Australia, it was less than 50%. We could ban all high-powered rifles, and I do not think that very many people in this country have them, but that

would drive them underground and I really do not think that would solve the problem of some people going around the bend and using these in a horrific manner.

In the same vein, I am reminded of a story I heard from 2 or 3 different sources of a particular town in the United States which decreed that every household should have a weapon with which to defend itself. The interesting outcome was that the crime rate - robberies, sex attacks etc - dropped off dramatically. Sometimes we have dramatic calls for the banning of all weapons and the end result may be far different from what we expect. Often, the very opposite does the job far better.

Last Sunday night, I attended the Alice Springs Youth Centre to farewell a grand lady of Alice Springs, Mrs Joan Higgins. Mrs Higgins first came to Alice Springs in about 1942 as a nurse in the army. She returned in 1946 with her husband, John, and began an involvement with the youth centre as a voluntary instructor. That youth centre had been established several years earlier by Mrs Agnes East. It is sad to reflect that Mrs East died last Thursday. That was mentioned at this meeting and Mrs Higgins gave due credit to the initiatives and foresight of Mrs East in establishing the youth centre.

As a voluntary instructor, Joan Higgins, with her husband John, put a great deal of work into the youth centre. In 1966, she took on the job of director of that centre. She retired in March this year and Sunday night's event was a grand send-off for her. It was organised by the youth centre committee. A couple of hundred people attended a very good dinner and had a very enjoyable time. It was a very sentimental time for Mrs Higgins. The address was given by Mrs Aileen Kilgariff, who did a grand job of describing the history of Mrs Higgins' involvement with the youth centre. She likened Joan's job to keeping a wheelbarrow full of frogs. That might seem an odd expression but it appealed to me because that youth centre, which would be one of the oldest youth centres anywhere in Australia, has been run to a great extent by dedicated, unpaid volunteers. Volunteers can never be treated in the same way as are paid employees and it is a great credit to Mrs Higgins that she was able to gain the cooperation of so many people in her period as director of the youth centre from 1966 until March this year. Over the years, hundreds of people must have worked as volunteers at the centre which, to a degree, she ruled with a rod of iron. She is affectionately known as the Dragon, particularly by one of her sons-in-law, and the name has caught on.

The important thing about Joan Higgins was that she cared for children. She was not a person who threw her arms in the air and said: 'They are impossible. I cannot do anything for them'. She was prepared to bring an element of discipline to the youth centre and to the behaviour of the kids. That was greatly appreciated in the town. When they sent their kids to the youth centre, people felt that they were being well cared for and would not be getting into too much trouble. Of course, Mrs Higgins and her helpers did not have eyes in the backs of their heads and I dare say there are those who would say that the children got away with a few things whilst at the youth centre - but not too many. Joan made a grand contribution to the town of Alice Springs and the send-off on Sunday night was a fitting tribute to a lady who became the first Centralian of the Year and has been awarded the Order of Australia. She really earned those awards and I am sure that everybody who knows Mrs Higgins, including many people from outside the Alice Springs area, would wish her a very long, happy retirement and continuation of her very useful life.

Motion agreed to; the Assembly adjourned.

Mr Speaker Vale took the Chair at 10 am.

PETITION
Health Services at Yulara

Mr BELL (MacDonnell): Mr Speaker, I present a petition from 104 citizens of Yulara requesting the Assembly to ensure that the Department of Health and Community Services retains responsibility for health care at Yulara and that the services of Dr Cotton be retained. The petition bears the Clerk's certificate that it conforms with the requirements of standing orders. Mr Speaker, a further 133 signatures were attached to this petition. Unfortunately, they were on pages which did not bear the prayer of the petition and so they could not be counted as being signatures to the petition. Mr Speaker, I move that the petition be read.

Motion agreed to; petition read:

To the Speaker and members of the Legislative Assembly, we the undersigned citizens of Yulara express our deep concern at (a) the Northern Territory government's decision to give the Yulara Development Corporation responsibility for the management of health services at Yulara and (b) the Yulara Development Corporation's decision to replace Dr Paul Cotton. Your petitioners require that the members of the Legislative Assembly take all the action necessary to ensure that the Department of Health and Community Services retains responsibility for health care at Yulara and that the services of Dr Paul Cotton be retained by the Department of Health and Community Services until such time as he may determine. Your humble petitioners, as in duty bound, will ever pray.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

Mr EDE (Stuart): Mr Speaker, the Treasurer misrepresented me in debate yesterday. What I said has been borne out by Hansard and on radio this morning. The Treasurer stated that I said Hungerford was the second-lowest tenderer for the Tindal contract. He said that we could check the Hansard and find out. I refer him to page 35 of the Daily Hansard where, on 2 separate occasions, I said that Hungerford was the second-highest tenderer and was not within a bull's roar of being the lowest tenderer. Mr Speaker, I have been misrepresented on 2 occasions by the Treasurer.

Mr Coulter: Tell us how you knew.

Mr EDE: That is for me to know and you to find out.

Mr Coulter: That is lovely, Mr Speaker.

TABLED PAPER
Document relating to Hungerford Refrigeration Pty Ltd

Mr SMITH (Opposition Leader)(by leave): I table a paper from which I quoted yesterday. I must correct the date. I think I said yesterday that the paper was dated 17 May 1987. It is in fact dated 5 May 1987.

TABLED PAPER
Subordinate Legislation and Tabled Papers Committee
Fifth Report

Mr SETTER (Jingili): Mr Speaker, I lay on the Table the Fifth Report of the Subordinate Legislation and Tabled Papers Committee.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT
Northern Territory Participation
in World Expo 1988

Mr PERRON (Industries and Development): Mr Speaker, I wish to make a statement on the Northern Territory's participation at World Expo 1988 and its implications for business in the Northern Territory. As no doubt honourable members will have noticed in the ample coverage by the local media, the Northern Territory exhibit is attracting more than its share of interest at the World Fair in Brisbane. The exhibit creates the mood of the Territory featuring an impressive replica of the Devil's Marbles which is the talking point of the pavilion, an outback homestead in which children are receiving lessons from the School of the Air, costume characters of a crocodile and a frill-necked lizard and a well-attended theatrette presenting a high-impact audiovisual display about the Northern Territory.

Already more people have visited our stand than the population of the whole of the Northern Territory and we can reasonably expect upwards of 1.5 million visitors through the stall over the next 5½ months.

However, we have received more than just local coverage. The Northern Territory exhibit has been presented on a Japanese network of 23 television stations and also nationally on ABC radio, on Brisbane television news and throughout the daily and regional Queensland newspapers. The Territory attendants and costume characters even feature several times daily on Brisbane television's corporate identification advertising. Perhaps the greatest flattery came about through the South Australian media's adverse coverage of that state's rather ordinary display, a coverage which cited the Northern Territory as an example of how it should be done.

Not only does this confirm that the decision to participate at World Expo 1988 was the right one but it spells opportunity for business in the Northern Territory. Our Northern Territory Government Tourist Bureau is operational on site at the Territory exhibit. It is doing a good trade and booking an increasing number of tours as well as providing information for future visits. If an enthusiastic response is any indication, I am sure that we will see those visitors in the coming months.

Our shop, which is selling a selection of Northern Territory products from Aboriginal jewellery to Darwin stubbies, is doing a steady trade. In the 2 weeks since opening, we have deposited more than \$10 000 and, as people become aware of purchasing opportunities at World Expo, they are returning to our stall prepared to buy. Some of the products have attracted more than just buyers. A small firm in Alice Springs, Walkabout Clay Jewellery, received its biggest order ever when its necklaces and earrings were accepted to be sold at World Expo. As a result of that and subsequent trade inquiries resulting from Expo, a network of Aboriginal crafts people can now expect even bigger orders. A Canadian firm has already placed an order direct with Walkabout so that it can take goods back to Canada for a market survey.

Mr LEO (Nhulunbuy): Mr Deputy Speaker, I draw your attention to the state of the House.

Bells rung.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: A quorum is now present. The honourable minister.

Mr PERRON: Mr Deputy Speaker, a Canadian firm has already placed an order direct with Walkabout so that it can take goods back to Canada for a market survey. As the goods from Walkabout have been our biggest seller at World Expo, I am certain that that survey will prove positive. We may be seeing the start of a whole new Aboriginal enterprise in central Australia. The Department of Industries and Development has since been assisting with packaging and export procedures to prepare the company to take advantage of this trade opportunity. I am confident that other Territory products will meet with similar buyer response as World Expo continues.

Unlike other displays, the Northern Territory exhibit changes its themes throughout the year to focus attention on the many aspects of Territory lifestyle. Theme weeks, ranging from Aboriginal week with the Elcho Island dancers to a Territory-fresh gourmet barbecue week, attract additional interest to the stand. The opening week saw the first 3 Conservation Commission wildlife weeks, achieving a standard that other participants will find hard to match. Frequent shows presented Northern Territory reptiles to Expo visitors, including unusual thorny devils, 10-foot pythons, fresh and saltwater crocodiles, long-necked turtles and spinifex hopping mice. Officers of the Conservation Commission have an excellent record in this type of event and, once again, have excelled themselves.

Although the Expo focuses predominantly on leisure and technology, the Northern Territory exhibit will take the opportunity later in the year, on at least one occasion, to feature and promote Territory industry and development opportunities. During the Northern Territory's industry week, the Department of Industries and Development will highlight trade and investment opportunities through a series of seminars, business workshops, meetings and a mini-trade exhibition designed to create a wider awareness of the opportunities that exist. Industry week will see the involvement of a range of Territory businesses and government authorities, such as the Port Authority and the Trade Development Zone. Both these organisations highlight the opportunities that exist for trade from Darwin with our northern neighbours. The zone, in particular, continues to be of great interest to business people as both an Australian first and a real opportunity for export manufacturing.

Additionally, through our participation in the World Expo 1988 Business Visitors Program, the Territory will be able to match interests with both interstate and overseas business people attending Expo and seeking business opportunities. Some 30 000 business people have registered with the program indicating their interest. Towards the end of Expo on 2 October, Northern Territory State Day will see all of World Expo focus on us. All of the activities of the 6 months will culminate in a gala show of Territory talent to be held in the World Expo amphitheatre. Arrangements for this day are currently being put in place. It presents a final opportunity to put the Territory well and truly on the world map. As media and public attention will be at its peak, we will indeed be a state for that day.

Less than 3 months ago, a Territory exhibit at World Expo was only a possibility. In just 10 weeks, through the Department of Industries and Development, the government has put together an exhibit and a range of

activities to be proud of - an exhibit that will represent the Northern Territory well during the next 6 months. It was done with the pride and team spirit of Territorians involving nearly all government departments and a wide range of Territory businesses which participated in activities ranging from the construction of 5 m high fibreglass rocks at Winnellie to the production of a high-impact 6 minute audiovisual display in Darwin. I take this opportunity to commend all those people who were involved in the preparation of our exhibit in Brisbane, both inside and outside the public service, and those who have contributed to this marvellous exhibit which, unfortunately, I have not seen myself as yet. I hope to do so in the coming weeks.

Mr Speaker, I move that the Assembly take note of the statement.

Motion agreed to.

ELECTORAL AMENDMENT BILL
(Serial 112)

Bill presented and read a first time.

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

Mr Speaker, this bill establishes a legislative base for a joint roll arrangement between the Northern Territory and the Commonwealth. The bill complements the enabling provisions of section 84 of the Commonwealth Electoral Act 1918. It has been generally recognised that a jointly maintained roll is the most cost-effective and efficient method of roll maintenance from both the Territory and the Commonwealth viewpoints.

Negotiations on a joint rolls arrangement between the Territory and the Commonwealth are nearing completion. The bill makes legislative provision for any future joint roll arrangements. The bill makes provision for the maintenance of a joint Commonwealth-Northern Territory electoral roll with notations to distinguish electors enrolled for a Territory or Commonwealth election only. I commend the bill to the House.

Debate adjourned.

DAIRIES SUPERVISION REPEAL BILL
(Serial 99)

Bill presented and read a first time.

Mr PERRON (Industries and Development): Mr Speaker, I move that the bill be now read a second time.

The Dairies Supervision Ordinance was introduced in 1939 when the Northern Territory was still under Commonwealth administration. The statute was mainly geared towards getting and keeping our dairy herds free from tuberculosis. The essential thing was to stop the TB microbacteria from being spread to human beings by way of milk and other dairy products. Now, nearly 5 decades later, the Territory has only 2 dairy herds, Fitzgeralds near Darwin and Rowlands near Katherine. They are both confirmed free of brucellosis and tuberculosis.

Early in 1987, the Dairies Supervision Act was transferred from the administrative portfolio of the Minister for Health and Community Services to

my portfolio as Minister for Industries and Development. Senior personnel in the Department of Health and Community Services are confident that officers of that department have ample powers under other legislation to safeguard public health from pathogens in all foods, including milk and milk products from cows and goats. They see no need, from a public health point of view, for dairy farms, factories and milk shops to be registered, nor for dairy farmers, factory operators and milk vendors to be licensed. On the other hand, under the Stock Diseases Act and related statutes, stock inspectors and veterinary officers have ample powers to deal effectively with cattle, goat or dairy farms known or likely to be infected with pathogens of economic and or public health significance.

Mr Speaker, taking all these matters into account in terms of the government's widely-accepted policy of deregulation, it is reasonable and sensible for the Dairies Supervision Act to be repealed. I commend the bill to honourable members.

Debate adjourned.

SOCCKER FOOTBALL POOLS AMENDMENT BILL
(Serial 97)

Bill presented and read a first time.

Mr POOLE (Tourism): Mr Speaker, I move that the bill be now read a second time.

The purpose of this bill is to amend the Soccer Football Pools Act 1978 to provide for an increase in the rate of duty payable on subscriptions received by the soccer pools licensee in respect of soccer football pools promoted, conducted or operated by him or her, whether in the Territory or elsewhere. This rate of duty has been paid, by agreement, by Australian Soccer Pools, the licensee, since 20 April 1986. This agreement was arranged to coincide with similar increases in duties levied by Victoria. All major states and the ACT indicated that they were proceeding to adjust their rates of duty to the Victorian level. This was due to the fact that the duty paid by the company to each participating state has historically been uniform. The Territory would therefore have been disadvantaged if such an increase had not been made.

I will now briefly summarise the substantive amendments made by the bill. Clause 2 provides that the increased duty will be deemed to have been payable since 20 April 1986, being the date from which the company has been paying the increased rate of duty by agreement. Clause 4 of the bill amends the existing section on payment of duty to the Northern Territory by providing a formula which has the following effect: it increases the amount of duty payable on Territory subscriptions to the pool from 32.5% to 34%, where total national subscriptions to the pool do not exceed \$1m; it allows for duty payable on Territory subscriptions to be charged at 35% on any amount in excess of \$1m; and it provides for the duty payable on Territory subscriptions to be 35% of all subscriptions for that year and any ensuing year, when gross national subscriptions reach \$104m. Clause 5 replaces the existing subsection limiting the obligation of the licensee who has made an agreement. The new subsection provides for the amount of duty to be paid by such a licensee to be calculated on the subscriptions to the pool and for specified subscriptions to be excluded from the duty by arrangement.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I commend the bill to honourable members.

Debate adjourned.

SUPREME COURT AMENDMENT BILL
(Serial 98)

Bill presented and read a first time.

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

The purpose of this bill is to provide that the Master and the Deputy Masters of the Supreme Court, when acting in the exercise of their jurisdiction and powers and the performance of their functions, are not subject to the direction of any person or body. The Master and the Deputy Masters of the Supreme court are public servants within the meaning of the Public Service Act. Notwithstanding this, these officers are often called upon to act in a judicial or quasi-judicial capacity. For example, pursuant to order 77 of the Supreme Court Rules, the Master has jurisdiction, inter alia, to hear or determine applications under section 46 of the Evidence Act compelling the production of bankers' books and also to approve a compromise on behalf of a person under a disability. It is important that, when so acting, these officers are seen to act independently. If anything, this is even more important when the Crown in the right of the Northern Territory is a party to proceedings.

There is, of course, no doubt that the officers have acted independently to date. The bill merely clarifies the position and removes the possibility of conjecture regarding independence. I commend the bill to honourable members.

Debate adjourned.

JUSTICES AMENDMENT BILL
(Serial 103)

Bill presented and read a first time.

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

The purpose of this bill is to make 2 amendments to the Justices Act. The first concerns the procedure for postal service of a summons. The second concerns procedures for committal proceedings.

Section 27A of the Justices Act provides that a summons for offences specified in section 57 of the act may be served by certified mail. The postal service procedure exists in all Australian jurisdictions. Such service saves the cost of personal service that would otherwise be required. It also avoids the social embarrassment of having a police officer call at the home of the accused after hours or on the weekend, and the stigma of police confrontation. I might say that sometimes it is a social plus to have a police officer call upon you, Mr Speaker.

Section 57(5) of the Justices Act, which was added in 1973, provides that the procedure is available if the penalty is not 'A term of imprisonment only; or ... a fine ... exceeding \$200'. Postal service is to be made by certified mail to a place of residence or business only. It cannot be made to a post office box. Even if an offence falls within section 57(5), the police may choose to serve it personally.

It has now become apparent that the monetary limit in section 57 is too restrictive. In New South Wales, Queensland and Tasmania, postal service is available for all summary offences. However, this bill does not propose to go that far. Under the amendment in clause 4, postal service will be available for offences which are punishable by a fine only or for offences against the Traffic Act or regulations, or the Motor Vehicles Act or regulations.

I now turn to the second amendment, that proposed in clause 5. A committal proceeding is the preliminary hearing before a magistrate to determine whether there is a prima facie case against a person accused of an indictable offence. There are 2 procedures used. Either oral evidence by a prosecution witness is given or written evidence is tendered. This latter is called a hand-up brief. The hand-up brief is also used for guilty pleas. It is a method of bringing a matter before the court without putting the victim through the trauma of an unnecessary court appearance. As such, it plays an important role in sexual assault cases, especially where the victim is a child. Section 105 of the Justices Act provides that a statement in a hand-up brief may be admitted into evidence if it is verified by statutory declaration and if the person making it is over 14.

Research indicates that no state in Australia provides a minimum age requirement. That is left to the common law. The common law is that a child can make a declaration if he or she understands that it is wrong to tell a lie. Generally, as a rule of thumb, it is assumed that children of 10 to 11 years of age can understand this. Obviously, however, there would be individual cases where a younger child could be competent to make a declaration. The amendment in clause 5 removes the minimum age requirement and leaves the competency question to the common law. The hand-up procedure is by consent only and any defendant who wishes to challenge the competency of a young witness to make a declaration can insist on an oral hearing.

Mr Speaker, I commend the bill to honourable members.

Debate adjourned.

LAW SOCIETY PUBLIC PURPOSES TRUST BILL
(Serial 106)

Bill presented and read a first time.

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

The purpose of this bill is to authorise the establishment of a public charitable trust. In the Northern Territory, lawyers are required to deposit clients' money in trust accounts with various banks. Traditionally, no interest has been payable on those accounts. The Law Society has been able to negotiate agreements with various banks whereby money, equivalent to interest on trust deposits, is paid to the Law Society. Similar agreements have been completed in all Australian states except Tasmania. The Law Society then holds this money in trust for various charitable purposes. A trust is used to ensure that the funds will be exempt from income tax.

The trust deed is almost identical to a similar deed in use in Western Australia and is set out in the schedule to the bill. The charitable purposes are set out in clause 3 of the deed and the trust funds consist of money paid from the banks. The objects of the trust are:

1. to advance the education of the community and any section of it with respect to the law;
2. to advance the collection, assessment and dissemination to the community, and any section of it, of information relating to the law;
3. to improve the access of the community, and any section of it, to legal services;
4. to improve the quality, standard and effectiveness of legal services available to the community or any section of it; and
5. to protect any members of the community using or seeking to use legal services.

Under the trust deed, the Law Society of the Northern Territory is the trustee of the trust fund. The application for grants from the trust fund will be considered by an allocations committee which will consist of 3 persons, 2 nominated by the Law Society and 1 nominated by myself as Attorney-General. Any community group may apply for a grant for any of the purposes I have just indicated. The trust deed provides that grants recommended by the allocations committee may be disapproved by the Attorney-General, although he has no general power to initiate recommendations.

I consider that the creation of the public charity trust will be of considerable benefit to Territorians. The amount received by the trust is expected to be \$100 000 a year. While I cannot preempt the decisions of the allocations committee on how such funds will be disbursed, in other jurisdictions the money has been paid to fund legal lectures to high school students, legal collections in school and public libraries, booklets on the law for young people, law reform and so on. It is my hope that the trust funds will be used to increase the general level of awareness in the community about the law and legal issues.

Mr Speaker, I commend the bill to honourable members, and I give notice at this stage that, with the concurrence of the opposition, I intend to move a motion for a suspension of standing orders to enable urgency so that this bill may pass through all stages at these sittings.

Debate adjourned.

CANCER (REGISTRATION) BILL
(Serial 105)

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 is a short bill which provides for the mandatory notification of diagnosed cancer. 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 problem 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 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 obtained on a voluntary basis only. 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 provide annual reports of incidence and mortality and 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 has 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 hospitals, nursing homes and pathology laboratories to provide the necessary information on prescribed forms. This bill provides also for the establishment of a register for recording 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 in various types of cancer. All of this will be of use to present and future patients who suffer from this disease.

Without accurate reporting of incidence, we cannot establish the malignancy rates of various cancers within our specific population: for example, the incidence of skin cancer and the survival rate of people who suffer from it 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 different ethnic origin; for example, those Aboriginal people who have a different lifestyle. The requirement for accurate information is reflected in the need for appropriate preventative 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 the services needed.

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 the collection of statistics by other agencies because of the need for identification of the patient 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. Numerical information will be supplied for general publication only, as is currently the case. Voluntary information to the cancer register is kept confidential. Where specific information is required for scientific research, it will be provided only to persons authorised in writing by the head of the department responsible for the administration of

the act; that is, the Secretary of 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. Mr Deputy Speaker, I commend the bill to honourable members.

Debate adjourned.

MINING AMENDMENT BILL
(Serial 88)

Continued from 3 March 1988.

Mr LEO (Nhulunbuy): Mr Speaker, at the outset I would like to indicate the opposition's unqualified support for this piece of legislation. In fact, a similar bill was passed in the House in 1984. At that time, I was fortunate enough to be shadowing the mining portfolio. The opposition accepted that sections 19 and 20 of the act as it then stood should be amended for reasons similar to those put forward by the minister in his second-reading speech on this piece of legislation. The opposition is of a similar mind to the government on this matter. We do not believe that the development of mining in the Northern Territory should be inhibited in any way by unnecessary legislation.

We believed in 1984 that subsections 191(1), (16) (17) and (21) would not result in unnecessary bureaucratic and legislative inhibition of the development of mining. As the minister has indicated, however, there has been a legal interpretation of those subsections which has caused problems and I can only hope that legal interpretations following the passage of this amendment will not result in interminable litigation. I hope it will not be another circumstance in which the profiteers of the law, the lawyers and various silks who deal in such matters and make large incomes from them, make another killing. With those few comments, I reiterate the opposition's support for this legislation.

Mr SETTER (Jingili): Mr Speaker, this particular bill refers in the main to dredging leases. It repeals subsections (1), (16), (17) and (21) of section 191 because they are no longer relevant. They were included in the old act to allow for the transition from the old act to the new act. Prior to 1980, dredging claims were up to 300 acres in area or, in metric terms, 121 ha. At that time, it was decided that the maximum size of those leases should be 20 ha. Those provisions were put into the act to allow a phasing-in period.

In the 8 years since then, there have been very few problems. However, all of a sudden, the question arose as to whether people who had existing leases of up to 121 ha would be required to re-peg those leases down to the 20 ha size or whether they should remain in place without the need for re-pegging. If people holding those larger leases had to re-peg them, some may have had to re-peg 6 different leases to cover the same area. There would be costs and considerable administrative problems involved. It would be unrealistic to expect leaseholders to have to go through that exercise and bear the cost. It was never the government's intention that that should occur. However, some doubt has arisen.

The purpose of this bill is to repeal those provisions of section 191 which refer to that whole transitional exercise and to validate those larger leases which have not been re-pegged and which have been in operation ever since and over which some doubt has arisen. Thus, in future, there will be no doubt as to their legality. With those few words of clarification, I would like to indicate that I support the bill.

Mr COLLINS (Sadadeen): Mr Deputy Speaker, I am delighted to support this legislation to remove what seems to be a possible legal doubt. It relates to an area which the legal profession can play with at the expense of the Territory and the mining industry and so make big money for itself and interfere with the wealth-creating capacity of this part of Australia. I indicate very clearly my strong support for this bill.

Mr COULTER (Mines and Energy): Mr Speaker, may I congratulate members on both sides of the House on their contributions to this debate, in particular the member for Nhulunbuy who is the shadow spokesman on mining matters. It appears that the Labor Party has developed a mining policy and a strategy. Honourable members will recall a similar piece of legislation that was before this House recently. To give the honourable member for Nhulunbuy full credit, he has listened to both sides of the argument as put to him by the legal fraternity and the miners. His speech today was a step forward.

The esoteric nature of the law is prohibiting the development of mining in the Northern Territory and simply increasing the wealth of certain members of the legal fraternity. I congratulate him for the conclusion he has reached on this particular issue. It really is heartening for me as the Minister for Mines and Energy to hear that type of commitment and involvement from the opposition spokesman on mining matters. I congratulate him for that. Having given the member for Nhulunbuy the kiss of death, I would also like to thank the member for Jingili for his contribution to the debate. There was never any intention that the legislation would be interpreted in any other way than is made specific by these amendments.

Mr Speaker, mining is still the great hope for the future of the Northern Territory. As yet we have but scratched the surface of our mineral wealth and I believe that the opposition's display of support for this legislation is heartening indeed. I only hope that it will continue and that we can further develop mining as one of our industries.

Motion agreed to; bill read a second time.

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

Motion agreed to; bill read a third time.

TRAFFIC AMENDMENT BILL
(Serial 87)

Continued from 3 March 1988.

Mr LANHUPUY (Arnhem): Mr Speaker, the opposition supports the amendment introduced by the Minister for Transport and Works. Clause 4 deletes section 48 and clause 3 effects minor changes to section 33. Section 48 relates to people who have been disqualified from driving because of DUI convictions. This includes intoxicated persons in charge of horses, bikes and camels. Concern has been expressed in relation to people using ride-on

lawn-mowers on their properties. There could also be problems with people on outstations using ride-on lawn-mowers to clear airstrips. I would like some clarification on that from the minister.

Mr Speaker, the opposition has no difficulty in supporting the bill.

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH (Koolpinyah): Mr Speaker, I have no objection to these amendments to the Traffic Act. The first amendment makes sense. Where the police have to take charge of an unregistered vehicle and tow, move or drive it to a police yard or other designated place, it makes sense that the restrictions should not apply.

I agree with the amendment repealing section 48 of the Traffic Act, which has not yet taken effect. It makes sense. It would be a little unusual to be drunk and disorderly in charge of a horse and, in any case, no matter what state the rider was in, the horse would probably be able to take him home. Like the member for Arnhem, I have been concerned about the inclusion in the Traffic Act of provisions giving the police the power to arrest somebody in charge of a motor vehicle on that person's own property. That vehicle could be a motor mower, tractor or ride-on mower. The member for Arnhem has problems in relation to the mowing of airstrips. I am aware that there could be problems with farmers using their tractors, quite legitimately, on their blocks. Under the act as it stands, they could be arrested. The only exception might be if they were in charge of a horse and considered the horse to be a lawn-mower.

Speaking realistically, I would like ...

Mr Smith interjecting.

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH: For the information of the Leader of the Opposition, if you have been up on a DUI charge, you run the risk of being caught by the police on your own property in charge of a tractor or ride-on lawn-mower. I do not say that it would happen, but it could happen. On the other hand, even with the repeal of section 48 which deals with people riding animals, you can still be DUI riding a horse. The only consolation I can see is if you ride your horse to mow your lawn.

I would like to be assured by the minister, given that we have already made changes to the Traffic Act and that it has not yet come into force, that consideration will be given to repealing the sections giving the police power to arrest people who have been penalised for DUI simply for driving motor mowers and tractors on their own private property.

Mr FIRMIN (Ludmilla): Mr Speaker, I did not think this would prove to be a contentious amendment to an existing Traffic Act. Whilst the member for Arnhem has his facts right, unfortunately the member for Koolpinyah seems to have the facts back to front in relation to repealing sections of the act and the amendment that is before the House.

Mr Speaker, you will recall that, when we introduced the Traffic Act in 1987, it was one of the most dramatic alterations to traffic legislation for many years. As I pointed out in the debate at that time, 2 or 3 years were spent investigating the legislation and the amendments needed to effect an enormous change in the Northern Territory, one which would reflect changes elsewhere in Australia. It was necessary to identify which sections of the legislation should be repealed or upgraded to reflect common attitudes and local attitudes. At that stage we said that, having taken on such a massive

exercise, there would probably be some provisions which needed further clarification. The 2 amendments we are considering today contain 2 small - and I stress that they are small - adjustments to correct a minor - and I stress that it is minor - anomaly.

The member for Koolpinyah referred to the opportunity for the police to go onto private property and arrest people on DUI charges when they were using ride-on mowers on their own private property. That was never the case. That was not provided for in the legislation. It is not the case at the moment and the minister does not have to answer that charge. It is completely spurious. In fact, the minor alteration that we have had to make was in relation to the verges bordering on properties - public open space. The provision has nothing to do with private properties at all. It relates to the road reserves only. The reason why that particular section came into being in the total amalgamation and alteration of the existing act was as a result of seeking to clear up a different anomaly in respect of joint usage of the road surfaces by bicycles. We were trying to give, at law, the same right to cyclists that motor vehicle drivers and riders have. Unfortunately, in doing so, we placed them in the same situation in respect to DUI. Because we consider that to be unfair, we have proposed an amendment.

I can assure the honourable member that, when she asks the minister to turn around and assure her that it will be repealed, that is exactly what this piece of legislation will effect. It will repeal that section and clear up that anomaly which she pointed out so clearly, although she got the facts wrong again.

I commend the minister. As he said in his second-reading speech during debate on the traffic legislation last year, it was landmark legislation and was the culmination of a very lengthy process. It took a considerable number of years to get it right. The minister said at that time, and I supported him, that minor alterations would become necessary. These 2 small alterations will adjust anomalies that have been pointed out to us from time to time and I support the honourable minister in his actions in putting through this amendment today.

Mr EDE (Stuart): Mr Speaker, I support the amendments. I think I have said in this House before, and I have certainly said it in a number of other forums on various occasions, that I am not a strong supporter of the system of putting up blue flashing lights at strategic locations along roads and pulling up motorists as they go past. In our small towns, we might be better off ...

Mr Dale: He's scared of getting caught.

Mr EDE: I have never been caught.

Mr Speaker, we might be better off using the Western Australian system in our small towns. There, all police vehicles are equipped with breathalysers. They get out on the road and travel around the known trouble spots, keeping an eye out for people who are drunk.

That is not the point in this bill. I support this bill. I think it is good. These days, unfortunately, people seeing someone riding a bicycle in work clothes often wonder when that person lost his driving licence. That is a shame because people still need to have mobility. I do not envisage people taking their horses to work. However, I am reminded of the film 'Cat Ballou'. I remember the scene in which Lee Marvin finds his horse drunk and leaning up against an alley wall with its head down trying to get another drink. We

obviously do not have a provision to rule out drunken horses and the days when we would have to worry about that are probably gone.

I support this bill. It is good that the minister has taken the matter up so quickly and that the provision will be backdated so that it will be effective from the time of the commencement of the principal act.

Mr FINCH (Transport and Works): Mr Speaker, I thank honourable members for their contributions, particularly the member for Stuart, who has given us some food for thought in respect of breathalyser tests on camels, horses and other such means of transportation. In respect of his suggestion that perhaps we ought to look at the Western Australian system whereby all police vehicles have breathalyser units, we shall report to him in due course. I think the furphy about the riding of lawn-mowers on private property has been adequately addressed. There was never a problem.

Whilst this amendment clarifies that the provisions do not apply to bicycle riders etc, the regulations which are due to come into effect on 20 June will contain other sensible road traffic requirements pertaining to bicycle riders, horse riders, goat riders, camel riders etc. In the drafting of the new Traffic Act, it was a major exercise to separate the driver responsibilities from the technical requirements for vehicles contained in the Motor Vehicles Act.

The member for Ludmilla hit the nail on the head when he applauded work done by the Road Safety Council and departmental officers in putting together an extremely valuable document. Whilst there have been the minor problems dealt with by these amendments and whilst others may arise from time to time, we now have a very clear delineation of responsibilities in respect of driving on the road.

The other minor amendment, in relation to the removal of unregistered vehicles from a public thoroughfare, is simply a precautionary measure. That is all that is intended. I am quite confident that the act and its regulations are as up to date as one could possibly hope and, I would think, well ahead of most of the work that has been done interstate. I thank honourable members for their contributions and acknowledge the valuable work done by departmental officers, the Road Safety Council and other bodies that contributed to its production.

Motion agreed to; bill read a second time.

Mr FINCH (Transport and Works)(by leave): Mr Speaker, I move that the bill be now read a third time.

Motion agreed to; bill read a third time.

PUBLIC TRUSTEE AMENDMENT BILL
(Serial 96)
ADMINISTRATION AND PROBATE AMENDMENT BILL
(Serial 95)

Continued from 3 March 1988.

Mr BELL (MacDonnell): Mr Speaker, as the Attorney-General indicated, the purpose of these 2 cognate bills is to increase the value of wills that may be administered informally - that is, without applying to the courts. It seems to me that the basis of these bills is founded in inflation.

Basically, there is a need to increase the amounts applicable. In certain cases, the amount of the estate may be sufficiently small that it can be dealt with under particular sections of the Public Trustee Act. Specifically, the amendment increases the amount mentioned in section 35(1) from \$5000 to \$15 000. For an estate valued at less than \$15 000, the situation will be that the Public Trustee can apply for a grant of probate or letters of administration and may file an election to administer the estate on that basis. Having done so, it may be found that the estate is worth a shade more than \$15 000, in which case section 53(5) allows the amount to be increased to \$17 000 before the Public Trustee has to return to the court to obtain a memorandum stating the value of the property.

There are consequential amendments to the cognate legislation, the Administration and Probate Act, under whose provisions application may be made to grant probate where an estate is worth less than \$5000. That amount will also be increased to \$15 000. The opposition has no problem with these amendments and accepts that they are in step with inflation and the need of the Public Trustee to carry out his duties efficiently.

Mr REED (Katherine): Mr Speaker, I rise to support this bill which proposes to increase from \$5000 to \$15 000 the maximum amount that may be administered by the Public Trustee without the need to obtain a court order. The ability for the Public Trustee to administer estates to the value of the increased amounts will serve to minimise delays and avoid the high costs involved in processes which would otherwise apply. The previous limits of \$5000 and \$15 000 were set in 1979. The Public Trustee is to be commended on declaring limits of \$15 000 and \$45 000 in their stead, with an allowance for a margin of error to \$50 000 together with the ability to adjust these amounts by regulation in the future. I support the thrust of these cognate bills and commend them to honourable members.

Mr COLLINS (Sadadeen): Mr Speaker, I want to make 2 brief points. The fact is that the amounts need to be raised as a result of inflation. Inflation is brought about by governments which are not game to tax people in the normal way but instead turn the handle of the printing press to produce heaps of paper money which represents the wealth of the country. The wealth of the country has not changed, of course. The only thing which has changed is the amount of money. That is why the buying power of money drops. I welcome the general thrust of the legislation, which will allow probate to be processed more simply and at considerably less cost than otherwise would be the case. I appreciate the need for the legislation although it is a pity that we have inflation, which leads to taxation by stealth. Governments are acting in a somewhat cowardly fashion when they turn the handle of the printing press.

I am sure that my next point would have been raised by the former and independent member for Nightcliff. I did not always get on well with that good lady but I am sure she would have picked up the fact that the minister said in his second-reading speech: 'The bill also allows for these amounts to be increased by regulation at some later date'. What that means is the removal of this House's right to consider the matter, which is a step towards government by regulation rather than government by elected representation. Nobody else has bothered to mention that. I think it is something which this House should consider. We should guard the rights of this House to consider matters rather than leave them to be dealt with by regulation through the executive arm of the government.

Motion agreed to; bills read a second time.

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

Motion agreed to; bills read a third time.

MOTION

Noting Paper on Horticultural Industry

Continued from 10 June 1987.

Mr EDE (Stuart): Mr Speaker, I rise to support the paper in general terms although there are a few points that I would like to make.

I believe that the horticultural industry has enormous potential for the top end of the Northern Territory. We have a very specific opportunity because of the way our seasons alternate with the seasons in South-east Asia. We need to exploit that opportunity. The path is not easy and many false trails will be followed. Future generations will thank the department and the pioneers of the horticultural industry for the work that they are now doing in order that, in future, there will be a very substantial horticultural industry in the Top End. However, I want also to talk about developments down the track because sometimes people consider horticulture to be confined to the Top End.

First of all, I want to mention the horticultural research conference which was conducted in Ti Tree a week or so ago. I heard that it was very well-attended and did a great deal of work in considering what sort of horticulture might be appropriate in that area. I would like to compliment the Jurnkurakurra Council which has been carrying out basic work to determine the types of fruit trees which will grow in that area. It has been providing trees to outstation communities for some years and has given them a certain amount of basic information. I was very happy to hear that the council provided its information as part of the general pool of information available to the research conference so that people could develop together all the possibilities.

I was surprised by one statement made by the minister when he was talking about the successful establishment of early-season grape varieties at Ti Tree and Pine Hill. He said: 'The Ti Tree project alone should extend to some 400 ha within 3 years with an anticipated crop value of \$4m by 1992'. I think that that may be a slight exaggeration. I see the member for Sadadeen grinning and wishing that it were true. In spite of the efforts of the member for Sadadeen and the incredible work carried out at Ti Tree by Ian Dahlenburg, I think the minister has been a little over-optimistic. I cannot say too much about the work done by Ian Dahlenburg and followed up by the member for Sadadeen. He put in his work at a time when everybody said that the venture was not a goer and the department itself, which had a plot there, was backing off. Basically, it came down to Ian Dahlenburg having the courage of his convictions. He followed a number of false trails, but he stuck with it, and I cannot pay too high a tribute to his work. The minister's reference to the 400 ha within 3 years probably relates to Pine Hill. If the minister visits the area, he will find that it is south of Ti Tree but still in my electorate - so it has every chance of being a substantial success.

The minister said that, if we allow the grass to grow under our feet, we will find that grass is all that we are growing. He said that, with that in mind, the government would boost staff in the horticultural section and would advertise the vacant positions of Director of Horticulture and Principal

Agronomist locally, interstate and overseas. He went on to say that 'it is hoped that both positions will be filled within 2 months'. That would have been about mid-August last year. I would ask the minister to advise the Assembly on staffing in the primary production area and to give us his views on staff morale in his department.

Obviously people tend to come to us more often with bad news than good news, but my information is that morale in the Primary Industries Division has plummeted since the amalgamation of departments. There are some very good people involved who really want to stay in the Territory but are finding that they are just unable to pursue career paths and are forced to take up the well-paid positions they are offered elsewhere. Perhaps the minister can clarify the staffing situation in the division and tell us whether all those vacancies have been filled, whether the resignation rate is higher than standard at this stage, and whether he has provided the resources he said he would provide for the division to carry out its work. Everybody is not like Ian Dahlenburg. Many people do require considerable assistance from the government to be able to establish the best varieties, the best soil types, the best techniques and the best means of packaging.

Mr Collins: They are better off doing it themselves.

Mr EDE: I disagree with the member for Sadadeen. I think it is a function of government to undertake that basic research. Other people can contribute also. There will still be mistakes but the mistakes will not be quite so disastrous. As a result of the hard work of the farmers and the hard work of the department, we can have a very successful horticultural industry, not only in the Top End but right throughout the Territory.

Mr McCARTHY (Labour, Administrative Services and Local Government): Mr Speaker, I would like to say a few words on the horticultural industry. In the very early days, many people did not believe it had much chance of survival in the Northern Territory. A few years ago, individuals working on small holdings in the rural area would bring their produce into Darwin, but they found it very difficult to find ongoing markets for their produce. The main reason for that was that they could not ensure continuity of supply. The industry has realised over the last few years that it will never be able to fill every niche in every market. More recently, what is happening is that the horticultural industry is filling openings in the market that could not be filled from elsewhere.

A number of horticultural products were mentioned by the minister in his statement, the majority of which have been developed in the Northern Territory over a fairly short time. Many of the vegetable varieties, such as capsicums, tomatoes and cucumbers, have been grown for quite some time. In my own electorate, quite a significant amount of fresh fruit and vegetables is grown for the Darwin market. However, there is a need to expand on that wherever we see a niche in the market.

All credit should be given to those individuals who got off their backsides in the rural areas of Darwin, Alice Springs and Katherine and marketed their products. Horticulture in the Northern Territory is an industry that has been developed mainly by the growers. The government has provided research and it has been very supportive of that industry in its early growth, but the major part of the work was done by the growers and is still being done by the growers. When one considers what is being achieved on quite small properties, often without much assistance and without any reasonable road access, it is quite clear that there is a great deal of heart

and will on the part of horticulturists to get the industry up and going. That is not to say that the government has not played a very significant role in developing water resources and in identifying land that would be suitable for horticulture. It is continuing to do that.

I remember visiting the Ti Tree grape farms. The operator of Territory Grapes told me a couple of years ago that he did not expect to be able to grow grapes beyond Ti Tree. A short time later, I was at Kununurra where I saw a new variety of grape being grown that would obviously also grow in Katherine. I understand that Katherine is being considered as a location for the growing of those earlier varieties of grapes. They are quite likely to be very successful there. The Ti Tree grapes ripen about 6 weeks ahead of those grown in the south and I understand that Katherine grapes could ripen 4 weeks earlier again. That presents advantages in terms of early access to markets.

A tremendous amount of work was done by the Department of Primary Production and later the Department of Industries and Development with regard to research on and treatment of fruit-flies. Obviously, that is a problem that is likely to continue to cause concern in the Northern Territory. As recently as a year or 2 ago, the Territory fruit-fly began to move into fruits which it had not previously been attacking in the Northern Territory, a development which is causing considerable concern.

As well as fruit and vegetables, we have the developing cut-flower industry and many nurseries. Horticulture is an expanding industry in the Northern Territory. Much credit must be given to the pioneer growers who put so much hard work into the development of the industry. There is a need now for the Department of Industries and Development and other departments to ensure that what has begun as a fairly modest industry will become one of our major industries.

Mr TUXWORTH (Barkly): Mr Speaker, over the last couple of months, I have had the opportunity to visit some of the horticultural projects in the Territory at Manbulloo and Ti Tree. In Alice Springs, I visited the flower-cropping project and the project relating to the rejuvenation of the date farm. One of the interesting comments that I heard was that the main thing we have learned in the past 10 years is what not to do. They have been pretty painful years for people involved in the industry, the people who put in their blood, sweat and dollars. It has been a pretty hard grind for most of them. As the man at Manbulloo said, if he had known 5 years ago what he knows today about how to grow mangoes, he would have saved himself hundreds of thousands of dollars.

Mr Palmer: We would all be rich with hindsight.

Mr TUXWORTH: That is right. Hindsight has 20:20 vision, but I guess that is one of the problems we have to contend with.

As the minister said in his statement, we have a great deal to look forward to in the horticultural industry. I would like to raise with him the future of the industry in the Tennant Creek area because officers of his department went to some trouble a week or 2 ago to conduct a seminar in Tennant Creek. The aim was to bring developments in the horticultural industry to the attention of those not really familiar with it, and to involve members of the industry in looking at opportunities which might be available in the Tennant Creek area.

Tennant Creek is like horticultural prospects elsewhere. We can grow anything: all we need is water. I remember having a discussion some time ago with the former senator, Bernie Kilgariff, about growing grapes in Tennant Creek. He said that, when he lived in Tennant Creek in the 1930s, unsuccessful attempts were made to grow grapes. People could not understand why the same plants grew when they were taken to Alice Springs. He said they worked it out that Alice Springs had bees and Tennant Creek did not.

It is interesting that such a simple ...

Mr Coulter: I would imagine there were lots of bees in Tennant Creek.

Mr TUXWORTH: Yes, different sorts of bees. I am talking about little bees.

It is interesting that such an important catalyst had escaped the notice of people for so long. In Tennant Creek nowadays, people are involved in beekeeping and making honey and are doing pretty well at it. Some of them are making a pretty good product.

The point I want to make is that the future of horticulture in Tennant Creek is directly related to the availability of water. To hold seminars in Tennant Creek to discuss all the things we could grow, would like to grow or which would make a dollar, does not mean a thing until we have addressed the issue of water. I asked that the seminar give special attention to the issue of water because, if the government is not in a position to undertake the supply of water, horticulture cannot go anywhere and seminars such as the one we had, although really very nice, do not mean anything.

If there is any doubt in the minister's mind about the problems we have with water, I remind him of some representations I made to him 2 or 3 years ago. I approached the minister regarding the provision of water from the local basin so that the Seven Mile Station could grow lucerne crops the way they have been grown down on McLaren Creek Station with great success. He advised me that there was not sufficient water and that the idea was not feasible. It was with great reluctance that I had to say to the people who were ploughing a fortune in development funds into the Tennant Creek station: 'You have just got to give this one a miss because we cannot supply the water'.

Anybody who has tried to obtain an adequate water supply in the farm area from the town supply would be aware that the old Water Supply Division went to a great deal of trouble to make sure you didn't get much more than a half-inch crop off the main. The reason for that was the fear that, if a decent water supply were provided, farmers would grow stuff like mad and draw down water at a faster rate than it could be supplied. The great concern is that, if we wreck the hydraulics of the Kelly Basin, it will be necessary to put a water supply in from Wiso or somewhere to keep the place going.

That may be the answer in the long term. We may have to do something like that if we are serious about developing a horticulture industry in Tennant Creek. I think that it is only a matter of time before that water supply comes on stream. It might take 5 or 10 years, but it will happen. Perhaps when it does, the horticulture industry will really take off in the area. People would be able to invest without the fear of being told, after they have been in the game for a couple of years, that they cannot have water, the supply is to be cut back, or the quality of the water is not sufficient to enable them to stay in business.

I commend the minister's paper. I also endorse the remarks made by the Deputy Leader of the Opposition concerning the state of morale in the horticultural area of the Primary Industries Division. Staff experience no shame at all in talking about how bad it is. They are happy to tell anybody who will listen, and that is not good. It is not good for the industry and it is certainly not good for the department. Obviously, staff in the horticultural area are working under a tremendous load because their numbers have been depleted pretty seriously. If the minister is in a position to fill the gaps and get people into place to give support to horticultural farmers, then that is good stuff.

In conclusion, I would like to say again that I support the minister's paper. I agree with everybody that, on a Territory-wide basis, the horticultural industry is just coming out of the starting blocks and is looking really good. As far as Tennant Creek is concerned, I think it is important that we do not raise false expectations about possible horticultural prospects until we have seriously addressed the issue of water and committed ourselves - ourselves being the government or the Territory community - to a guaranteed supply of water for anybody who wants to invest in horticultural development.

Mr REED (Katherine): Mr Speaker, in speaking to this statement I am reminded of a conversation I once had with an old horticulturist who lived in Pine Creek. For many years, he farmed on a property called Esmeralda, just to the north of that town. He was a man by the name of Bob Lee and he died in Katherine Hospital some years ago. He told me of a time during the war when he had a very good crop of watermelons. As is often the case when one farmer has a good crop, others have similar crops. That is what happened. There was a glut of watermelons and, contemplating the market, Bob considered that he would be doing well and might recoup his costs if he got threepence a melon.

As I said, this was during the war years. In due course, Bob was visited by a member of the United States military who was investigating sources from which to acquire food for the US troops, particularly fresh fruit and vegetables. A discussion ensued in relation to the availability of certain products. Bob was happy to be able to advise this gentleman from the US military that he had a good crop of melons. He was offered threepence per melon. He thought he was onto a winner but, being a bit smart, he hesitated in his response. He thought that, if he were offered threepence for a melon - which he considered to be a top bid - he might even be able to do a bit better. As the discussion proceeded, he was surprised to find that the bid was actually threepence a pound. He sold his melons to the US military at threepence a pound and gleefully accepted the price. If you put it in the context of prices today, it is nice to reflect on the history of the industry.

Mr Speaker, I would like to endorse the minister's statement and place on record the extent of development in the horticultural industry since 1979. It seems that the value of production has increased by some 4000% since self-government. I would like to take the opportunity to refer to some growers, particularly those in the Katherine region. The people who come to mind at first are Mr Ron Hersey and his family who have laboured in the horticultural industry for over 20 years. They were leaders in the industry and it is only in recent years that they had had the good fortune to achieve high yields and to obtain some benefits. However, in the context of 20 years of labour, it is a fairly small reward for their efforts. The produce from the Hersey family farms, as is the case with produce from many other farms in the Katherine area, is marketed in Darwin, Katherine and Alice Springs. Substantial quantities are also sold interstate.

In 1983, the Marks family established Ballongilly Farm and, last year, produced melons and butternut pumpkin. Their melon production per hectare more than doubled that of the previous year. In fact, they had a 20% increase in overall production per hectare on that for 1986-87. This was largely attributable to improved techniques, variety selection and crop management. The last season's average daily production at the Ballongilly Farm was 70 t and that peaked in October at 1100 cartons of melons per day.

Another farmer who established in Katherine 5 or 6 years ago on a block adjacent to the Katherine River was Mr Terry Williams. He came to Katherine with a broken-down old truck and a desire to go into the horticultural industry. The effort that he has put into developing that lease and, more recently, a block on the new Venn horticultural subdivision, is something to be commended. At this moment, he is transferring his operations from his leased farm on the Katherine River to the Venn horticultural block. Over the past year, he has put considerable effort into establishing the new block. I am sure that effort will prove worth while and he will contribute even more significantly to the horticultural industry.

Terry Williams has concentrated his efforts on the Territory market. Through the production of a high-quality product, he has been able to retain one or two market outlets which he supplies almost exclusively. That has been the reason for his success. If one considers the growers in the Katherine region and the different market niches that they have established, it is commendable for someone like Terry Williams to have isolated a particular local market and to have maintained such a high level of acceptance.

The quality of the Katherine horticultural produce has become well known and it has a very high market acceptance. Indeed, one local producer is recognised as consistently producing the best quality melons in Australia. As a result of that record, he has no difficulty in getting his products to market or in selling them.

Product presentation and packaging are improving continually. This is reflected in growers' use of individual fruit labels and specific marketing. Last year, an agent of one of the Katherine growers was selling 20 t per week for export to Singapore and Hong Kong. Whilst that is an insignificant amount in the context of the total market, high prices are being achieved for export goods. The high quality of the goods is a tribute to the efforts of the growers. The estimated value of production by Katherine growers in 1987 was in the order of \$2.5m: \$1.2m for rockmelons, \$0.36m for butternut pumpkins, \$0.198m for tomatoes and \$0.16m for other melon varieties. This estimated crop value excludes mangoes.

Most members would be aware that the Manbulloo mango plantation, which was established in Katherine some 5 or 6 years ago, has in the order of 31 000 trees and the potential to expand to 50 000 trees. As intimated by the member for Barkly, the trees have not been producing at the anticipated rates. It is thought that the reason for this is that seedling trees were planted, as opposed to grafting onto higher-producing rootstock. It is expected that the trees will develop and become very good producers. Unfortunately, the lead time to high production will be much longer. In fact, it cannot be determined exactly. It is expected to be 5 to 7 years.

Last year, I visited the mango farm just before the picking season. Some of the trial trees, which were planted by the plantation owners, CSIRO and the Department of Industries and Development, were 2 to 3 years old and were up to 2 m high. They were bearing fruit at a rate greater than the seedling stock

in the orchard which had been growing for some 4 or 5 years. Considerable research is in progress. The difference between the production rates of the grafted and non-grafted species is considerable. Unfortunately, the mango farm at Manbulloo does not have the ability to refer to previous trials. It is at the forefront of large-scale mango production in the Territory and is bearing the brunt of having to lead the way.

Last year, production at the Manbulloo farm was a little in excess of 9000 trays. I was out that way last week and the trees appear to be about to flower. It is very early and perhaps that is attributable to the fact that the wet season this year was fairly dry. The trees are already experiencing some degree of stress. If they experience a good flowering and setting of fruit, the product might be available for an early market, much to the benefit of the farm. It is interesting to contemplate the potential of the farm. A yield of 40 trays per tree would total something in the order of 1 240 000 trays per year. Assuming a price per tray of \$7 to \$12, it is conservatively estimated that this industry alone will make a gross income of between \$8m and \$14m per annum. If one compares that with the present level of production and the value of the horticultural industry, we can see that the future does have some considerable potential.

Mr Coulter: The flying foxes will eat them all.

Mr REED: I understand that the Minister for Labour, Administrative Services and Local Government has the flying fox problem well in hand. They will be exported in cans.

To move on to government assistance provided to the horticultural industry, I must take this opportunity to commend the Department of Industries and Development for the assistance that it has provided to the horticultural industry in the Katherine region. The department has increased its horticultural staff and its assistance to growers in the region. From the comments that I have received from growers in the Katherine area, I am aware that this assistance is much appreciated and is considered to be of a very high standard. I take this opportunity to pay tribute to the staff of that department.

In conclusion, we all recognise that the industry has come a long way. In 9 years or so, the value of production has increased by some 4000%. There is potential, both real and perceived, in various areas. It was my pleasure a couple of weeks ago to attend the seminar held in Tennant Creek. To pick up the comments by the member for Barkly on the availability of water, I thought that the Power and Water Authority staff provided a great deal of information at the seminar. It offered assistance and advice to anyone who was interested in establishing a horticultural operation in Tennant Creek. It seemed to me and others that, if someone wished to embark on a horticultural operation in the Tennant Creek area, water would not be a constraint at this time. However, it must be recognised that, where one is dependent on subterranean sources of water, it is very difficult to prove the long-term viability of that supply. That would be a factor that would need to be recognised by anyone who intended to invest in the industry.

The continued success achieved by dedicated producers of horticultural products and the success of such ventures as Manbulloo mango farm will attract new producers and markets and further stimulate the horticultural industry in the Northern Territory. The industry has a target of something in the order of \$40m worth of production by 1990. When we consider such new products as grapes, cashews, kenaf and other crops which could come to the fore, we can

only agree that the horticultural industry in the Territory has a bright future, and I take this opportunity of supporting the minister's statement.

Mr COULTER (Mines and Energy): Mr Speaker, I rise to add my considerable support to the statement. From time to time, I have been one of the greatest critics of the pastoral and horticultural industries and farming in general because of the huge amounts they receive in subsidies. However, we have to remember that it took Australia 60 years to get into the wheat business. We had to invent the stump-jump plough, headers, Farrer wheat and rust-resistant wheat. It was a long road and our forefathers, mothers, children, blue heeler dogs, chickens and everything else deserve great honour and credit because, over a period of 60 years, Australia became one of the world's greatest producers of wheat. Horticulture in the Northern Territory has a similar history.

I want to pay particular tribute to the Coastal Plains Research Station for its efforts in horticulture. I draw the attention of the member for Barkly to this. I am not sure whether he has visited the Coastal Plains Research Station for a while, but it has developed considerable technology in terms of the application of trace elements, minerals and fertilisers and various types of watering systems. That work is a credit to the staff involved and the research station has done a great deal to help establish the pastoral industry in the Northern Territory. I would also like to pay credit to the Water Directorate for the amount of work it has put into finding water on various blocks. The people from the drilling unit have spent considerable time finding water to enable major projects to go ahead and some of their discoveries do them great credit.

The amount of water available at Ti Tree was known about for some time and its use in the grape-growing industry has really opened up that country. The minister might like to correct me if I am mistaken, but I think that about \$300 000 worth of grapes will come out of the Ti Tree area this year. That is not bad going when we consider that no grapes were grown there 5 years ago.

The value of the entire horticultural industry in the Territory shows how far we have come. Just 5 years ago, annual produce was worth \$400 000. Today it is worth almost \$8m, and that figure does not include the large mango farms which are about to come into production. Of course, there have been some failures. We know about taking risks, a subject which has been debated in this Assembly during the last 2 days. Many people have taken risks and set themselves up in various horticultural enterprises. They range from bush battlers to large multinational corporations that have become involved in the Northern Territory's horticultural industry.

I might suggest to the member for Barkly that he take a look at the Woodcutters venture near Batchelor to see how mining has been able to accommodate horticulture and provide it with the much-needed resource of water. I do not know the name of the farm, but no doubt the member for Victoria River will address that issue when he stands up to add his considerable support to this statement. I have no doubt that the de-watering of the Gecko Mine in the Tennant Creek region could lead to the establishment of a similar venture. I am not sure whether it is possible or not, but I think it should be looked at because the joint venture at Woodcutters has really been a success story. I believe that something like 16 000 t of water per day is pumped from the mine, a considerable amount of water. I am not sure how much water is in the Gecko Mine but I believe it would be a considerable quantity. Both industries could survive through the utilisation of that water.

Before I conclude, I want to pay tribute again to the government officers at the Coastal Plains Research Station. Their work in developing new technology has had a big impact on our horticultural industry. The drillers from the Water Directorate are also to be commended for their efforts in finding water to enable many horticultural projects to proceed. I believe that the horticultural industry will become bigger and better than it is at present. It will receive great impetus when my colleague the Minister for Labor and Administrative Services develops markets for flying foxes. They will in fact be mango-flavoured flying foxes and they will have a big future indeed.

Mr Speaker, I commend this statement.

Mr BELL (MacDonnell): Mr Speaker, I want to make several comments about the minister's statement on the horticultural industry. I want to place on record my concern about the availability of fresh fruit and vegetables around the Territory as well as to express my interest in and concern about the developing export markets referred to by previous speakers. Recent initiatives in that area are very heartening.

I was interested to hear the Minister for Mines and Energy refer to the difficulties experienced in developing wheat production in this country. That, of course, is a most interesting chapter in Australian agricultural history. There is a temptation to imagine that agricultural development in the Northern Territory only started with self-government. I do not claim to be particularly well-versed in this field but I am aware, for example, that Baldwin Spencer, who is better known for his anthropology than for his agriculture and who was a friend and colleague of the much-reviled Administrator Gilruth, shared the administrator's dream of the development of horticulture and agriculture in the Territory.

It is very exciting to hear about the export opportunities that have been built up as well as the increase in the use of domestic markets, particularly with the table grapes that have been referred to by honourable members: I was interested to hear the member for Stuart refer to the Pine Hill development. I have heard a couple of reports about it and I understand that there have been a few teething problems, such as dingoes wreaking havoc on the drip lines. I do not know whether that is a problem that the member for Sadadeen suffers from in his other part-time job. However, I was most impressed by the comments made by the member for Stuart. His taking credit for the Pine Hill development is an interesting variant on the old post hoc ergo propter hoc fallacy. I think we will have to coin a new one. Instead of post hoc ergo propter hoc I think it will become the in hoc ergo propter hoc fallacy. I am sorry, I will transcribe that for Hansard afterwards.

A member: Intra hoc?

Mr BELL: Intra hoc ergo - yes, that would be intra hoc. That is accusative rather than ablative. It is an interesting logical proposition.

A large array of horticultural exercises is carried out in the Territory. Those which quite appropriately draw the most attention are those targeting prospective export markets or those where people are finding a domestic market, as is happening with the early table grapes.

From a central Australian perspective, it has always gnawed at me that we still have to truck most of our fruit and vegetables into Alice Springs from 1000 miles away, and pay for the costs of that, when actually the water and

soil in the Centre would make market gardening quite feasible. It is not something that I have looked at particularly closely, but I think it is worthwhile mentioning in the context of this debate that at least some attempts at market gardening have been thwarted by pricing arrangements and wholesale marketing arrangements.

Mr Speaker, you will be well aware of the price maintenance controversies of the 1960s and the early 1970s. I am aware of one particular case where a potential producer was forced out of production because a wholesaler, bringing fruit and vegetables from 1000 miles away, was able to drop his prices temporarily and undercut the local producer for long enough to squeeze him out of the market. The wholesaler was able to carry the loss on the particular lines that were being produced. That is a matter of concern to me. I am not sure that the minister touched on it in his statement, which has been on the Notice Paper for some considerable time. However, I do hope that the issue will be addressed in the minister's reply. I will remind him of what it entails.

The argument runs briefly that, if wholesalers bring the whole range of fruit and vegetables into a town like Alice Springs, that should not lock out a local producer who, say, wants to produce tomatoes only. My understanding is that, in some cases, local producers have been undercut by a large wholesaler who is able to transport a whole range of products to Alice Springs, and carry a temporary loss on a particular line. I hope the Minister for Industries and Development has understood the point I am making. I think the minister will agree with me that there is great potential for local market gardening in many Territory centres but that some people are frustrated in or dissuaded from entering the industry because of these sorts of wholesaling strategies. I look forward to hearing the minister's comments on that issue.

If there are problems with the provision of a good supply of fruit and vegetables to Alice Springs and other Territory centres, in many bush communities the difficulties are immense. In fact, the situation is often impossible. Having spent a few years of my life in bush communities, I know how difficult it is to obtain decent, fresh vegetables. The situation was bad enough in Alice Springs for a long time. In fact, it was not until the Coles New World began trucking up pantehnicons, virtually on an overnight basis, that we began to have really fresh vegetables. In Coles store there was a substantial improvement in the quality and freshness of produce available. I think you will agree with me in that regard, Mr Speaker.

However, in the bush communities the situation is absolutely desperate. It seems to me that there are 2 problems. One is a more acute experience of the isolation that the Territory suffers from generally. It is as if there is a thin trunk going up the Stuart Highway and that, if you live along that, although you are not too well off, you are a bit better off than the people living on the branches out in the bush where things get pretty thin. The provision of horticultural products in the bush is complicated by isolation, freight costs and all sorts of other factors. That is one problem. Again, I believe the market garden idea needs to be fostered.

The other problem is that, by tradition, many of the Aboriginal people in the bush are hunter-gatherers. Horticulture is anathema to that tradition and, because of that, there is a tendency for it to be less than successful among such people. What bothers me is that, in the process of contact between the cultures, whitefellers from the majority society have tended to devalue the advantages of bush tucker. I do not share that view. One of the great joys of life in the bush is to gather bush bananas and bush tomatoes and

njalkima which, I think, is an Aranda term for a big sweet potato. The member for Stuart informs me that, in some of the communities, there is much more husbanding of that particular variety than was the case previously. I can remember spending afternoons digging yalka, the little bush onions, out of a creek and heating them over a fire. They are very nice and they are very good for you.

The issue of nutrition needs to be given some consideration. As well as considering the development of markets outside the Territory, we should also look at the extent to which people in the Territory are able to use local resources to maintain good nutritional levels. Such matters need to be considered.

That concludes my comments on the matter. I hope that the Minister for Industries and Development will take them on board and respond to them in the cooperative vein in which they are made and that we can look forward to a continuing wide-ranging debate about the possibilities of horticultural development in the Territory.

Mr SETTER (Jingili): Mr Speaker, in his statement the minister referred to the horticultural industry as a cinderella industry. Perhaps it is. However, as he indicated - and I can cope with his pun - it is about to bear fruit. It is indeed. He pointed out that, in 1979, the total value of our horticultural industry was only \$200 000. In 1986-87 it was worth \$8.5m, which indicates an enormous growth rate. The member for MacDonnell referred to the fact that, prior to self-government, our horticultural industry was almost non-existent. A look at history reminds one of the attempts to grow sugar cane on the Cox Peninsula, rice at Humpty Doo and many other failures through the decades. Today, however, there is no doubt that the industry, and the government's commitment to it, is certainly maturing and bearing fruit.

Since self-government, we have seen the development of the Douglas-Daly project farms. Whilst I understand that poor rains in the last few years have led to production levels lower than was hoped for, the Treasurer has indicated that the government's commitment remains. As Treasurer, he is always concerned about subsidies but he has indicated that the subsidies will remain to ensure that those farms become firmly established so that the industry can proceed on a firm basis.

We have seen enormous growth and expansion in the growing of melons, which has become a major horticultural industry both in the Top End and in the Kimberley area. Many truck loads of melons go south every year from the Kimberley region, as they do from the Northern Territory. I am pleased to say that, as far as melons are concerned, we are accessing the Hong Kong market this year. In recent years, we have been selling melons into Singapore, Malaysia and, I believe, Brunei. Hong Kong has now been added to this list. Perhaps next year it will be Taipei or Tokyo. Why not?

The member for Katherine referred to the enormous area that has been put under production of mangoes. Also, the grape industry is developing and I understand that the member for Sadadeen is a grape-grower of some note. He is one of the growers in the Ti Tree area. I believe that they have been very successful and good luck to them. We have dates in Alice Springs, cashew nuts at Wildman River and so the list continues. We are only scratching the surface of our potential. Perhaps it is not a horticultural industry but I know that, on the Prickle Farm just down the road from Yarrowonga, the member for Koolpinyah grows goats. They are not a horticultural product but their by-product is very helpful.

A wide range of produce is being cultivated and developed and there will be much more to come. I must pay tribute to the former Department of Primary Production, now the Primary Industries Division, for its good work over the years in carrying out research and assisting and supporting farmers in getting the industry to where it is today. I feel very confident that, as time goes by, horticulture will become one of the major income producers for the Northern Territory, right up with the cattle industry, the mining industry and various others.

The industry I wish to discuss now is aligned to horticulture. I am talking about beekeeping. I heard the member for Barkly talking about how people tried to grow grapes in Tennant Creek. The vines did not produce there but they produced in Alice Springs because there were bees there. Today, there are 3 major apiarists in the Northern Territory and one happens to live in my electorate. His front yard is full of beehives and, in addition, he has about 300 hives in the rural area and as far west as the Kimberleys.

Mr Manzie: Is there an appropriate zoning for that?

Mr SETTER: I am coming to you, minister.

The bees themselves are not the issue; it is the fact that they pollinate the melons, the mango trees, the grape vines and a whole range of other fruit and vegetables. Without those bees, that production would not occur. There would be about 1000 hives in the Northern Territory and it is a darn good business, an excellent business, with enormous potential. The horticultural industry and the agricultural industry will not develop without those bees.

Our apiarists are battlers. They are not big business people or large commercial operators who have come in from down south. They are local Northern Territory battlers who are having a go. They have an excellent product because, in the Northern Territory, bees are disease-free. That is not true in the south and, in fact, we will not allow other apiarists to bring their bees here unless they are quarantined. We can export our bees. Let me identify a market of enormous potential. In this current financial year, Canada is importing over 100 000 queen bees because its own hives are diseased. The American hives are diseased also. In order to maintain productivity, queen bees need to be replaced on a regular basis. We have immense potential in that area because we have a disease-free product. Given that an enormous market exists, the government should get out there and support the industry.

I know one apiarist who has been negotiating for a block of land with the Department of Industries and Development and the Department of Lands and Housing. During the 2 years since he first submitted his application, I have spoken to various ministers and their staff in relation to it. The poor fellow still does not have his block of land because there is some dispute over its size. What size block do you need to keep so many thousand bees, or a million bees? That is a very important point.

Mr Dale: How big is the bee?

Mr SETTER: But how many bees are in a hive? You see? There lies the question. And how far do they fly? What is their range, and so on and so on. More importantly and more critically, if there is agriculture or horticulture adjacent somewhere and a farmer decides to spray, and that spray wafts across on the breeze, an apiarist's beehives can be totally destroyed.

The moral of this story is that the block of land needs to be large enough to protect the apiarist's investment. If the block is not large enough, there is a threat to the apiarist's investment, and we have to convince the Department of Lands and Housing of that fact.

The other point I want to make is that it is incumbent upon the Department of Industries and Development to support Northern Territory battlers. Many of them are just ordinary blokes. They might know a great deal about keeping bees or growing tomatoes but they do not know how to put together a business plan. Unfortunately, because we have many professional people in the department and they expect professional submissions, business plans are required. A bloke like the apiarist I am talking about does not know how to put together a business plan. He knows how to handle bees and he knows how to produce a good product. I think a considerable number of people are like this particular apiarist. Such people need assistance. I would like to think - and perhaps the minister can enlighten me about this - that there are people within his department who can offer professional advice to Aussie battlers, Northern Territory battlers. Unless we can do that, small entrepreneurs who have a hell of a lot of heart but not much money or professional standing will find it very hard to make it to the top. I believe that we have a responsibility to ensure that they are given every opportunity to do so.

In closing, that is the point I want to stress: that we have a responsibility to support and encourage the small horticultural and agricultural operator. I also want to say that I thought the minister presented an excellent paper.

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH (Koolpinyah): Mr Speaker, it gives me great pleasure to stand up here and speak on the minister's statement. I want to say at the outset that, in general terms, it was a very good statement. I am glad to see that the minister is backing his department because some ministers do not always do that. The paper raised many queries which I will address briefly in my remarks.

Mr Perron: Will you solve all my problems for me, please?

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH: I might be able to solve one problem that you caused down in Newcastle Waters.

Mr Coulter: I wish you would. That was sad.

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH: Mr Speaker, the horticultural industry has been encouraged by previous Northern Territory governments and, to a point, by this government. However, this government also places gross obstacles in the path of the industry's smooth future progress.

Our growers are becoming more active, not only in terms of the quantity of horticultural produce that they grow, but in terms of improving its quality and trying out various species of a particular product. I wonder, however, whether the growers are walking in tandem with the Department of Industries and Development's horticulturists or being followed by them. I believe that it is the latter and that the growers are far ahead of the Department's advisers, as indeed they always have been. The advisers seem to come along after a grower has started to grow something and has proved it to be either a failure or a success. That is when they come along and tell him what to do.

I am not casting aspersions on particular people employed by the Department of Industries and Development. Rather, I am casting aspersions on the administration of the department. I would like to reiterate what one honourable member said before me. There is considerable unrest in all sections of the department, not the least cause of which is the relocation of many staff from Berrimah Farm to the Milatos building in town. I will digress slightly from horticulture to matters of pastoral interest by saying that locating stock inspectors in the city centre renders them as useless as tits on a bull.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! I would ask the honourable member to rephrase that sentence.

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH: In town, they are as useless as ashtrays on a motorbike.

Mr Speaker, about 10 years ago, the main horticultural products coming from farms in the Top End were bananas and pineapples and, from time to time, a few pawpaws. A continuity of supply could not be maintained and, therefore, the shops and other local outlets were not really interested in that produce. Growers could not achieve a steady return from what otherwise was a successful growing project.

Nowadays, not only are the old-fashioned crops such as bananas, pineapples and pawpaws produced in abundance but, as the minister said in his statement, many other varieties of tropical fruit and vegetable are also produced. In addition, many varieties which were once considered to be suited only to temperate climates are now grown here. I am talking about vegetables like broccoli, cauliflower and cabbages. Anything can grow here, within reason. The main thing is to find the markets. Just before the turn of the century, an experimental station was established at Batchelor. It was located on land which is now owned by us. If one consults the old Residents' reports, one can read of all the crops that were grown there long before they were grown commercially. The big problem was finding markets. That is where everything came unstuck.

I agree with the minister that it is very exciting to consider the future of horticulture in the Northern Territory. My electorate of Koolpinyah encompasses the greater part of the Darwin rural area, which is one of the Territory's leading horticultural areas, so I am very interested in what is happening. From year to year, I see the increase in farming and horticultural activity in the rural area and this brings me to 2 factors which are relevant to this subject. One is the subdivision of land and the second is water, including the placement of dams, bores and so forth.

Most of the horticultural produce is grown in an RL2 area which has a minimum block size of 20 acres, except in village areas. There is good horticultural land in this area, especially at Berry Springs and Darwin River. A previous Minister for Lands, the present Chief Minister, put an embargo on subdivisions of less than 20 acres on RL2 land and 5 acres on RL1 land. I was in the CLP at the time and I may have had some influence on his decision. I do not know whether that is so or not but I was only expressing the views of many people in the rural area who did not want the creation of smaller and smaller subdivisions, especially in RL2 areas where there is good soil for horticultural production.

The Power and Water Authority has indicated that Acacia Hills and Blackmore River are possible dam sites. Before any decision is made - and I

do not believe that people in the area want the dams there anyway - it must be recognised that good horticultural and agricultural land would be flooded to supply more water to Darwin to water pocket-handkerchief lawns or to flush toilets.

Mr Perron: Or to attract more population to support more farmers.

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH: Mr Speaker, I do not think the minister has full knowledge of the issue. The people in the area have bores to provide water for their blocks and to grow horticultural produce. The 2 dams would flood this land and put it out of production. I do not believe that much of that water would be diverted to horticultural land because it would be too expensive to use.

I agree with the minister that it is exciting to look ahead to future horticultural production. Everybody is becoming interested. There is a feeling of enthusiasm and that results in increased plantings of particular products. There is a possibility that such increased plantings could lead to gluts in the future. It is not good enough to sit back and say that we will feed any excess produce to the pigs. Instead of spending \$100m or \$200m - the figure varies from month to month - on putting up new office blocks and a new Legislative Assembly to be used for less than 30 days per year, the government should be examining the possibility of establishing middle-range horticultural processing plants in the rural areas outside Darwin, Katherine and Alice Springs. This would do more for development, employ more people and be of more long-term benefit to the Territory than a new parliament house. There will be gluts in the industry and the government should give thought to how these can best be dealt with in the Territory's interests.

It was interesting to hear the member for Katherine talking about the Manbulloo mango farm. He said that it is leading the way in terms of growth initiatives. If the minister was really desirous of encouraging horticultural interests, he would have his advisers working in tandem not only with the Manbulloo mango farm but with every other grower who wants to start something new. The expertise should already exist in the Department of Industries and Development so that it can be used when it is needed.

The member for MacDonnell spoke about encouragement of the growing of native bush tucker. I would like to say that the rural area is out in front again. The Taminmin farm school already has a joint project with CSIRO to grow a small plantation of billygoat plums. This will be very interesting because it might lead to the growing of other bush tucker which is high in nutrients.

Encouragement of the horticultural industry requires the backing of a good research group. I would like to be assured by the minister that the backup group at Berrimah Experimental Farm will in no way be disadvantaged in the future by the loss of its buildings and land to a private school.

Mr PERRON (Industries and Development): Mr Speaker, I will touch on a number of matters raised by honourable members this afternoon. Clearly, honourable members support the development of the horticultural industry and that is natural enough.

The member for Stuart asked if there had been a boost in staff numbers in my department as I indicated there would be last year. I am pleased to advise him that there have been quite a number of staff changes in the structure of the department. Additional positions have been created in the horticultural

section in Katherine. There has been an upgrading of positions as well as an increase in numbers in the horticultural section, and 3 additional positions have been created in Darwin and 2 in Alice Springs.

In addition, the horticultural section at Berrimah either has been or is about to be relocated in much better premises than the shabby demountables at the Berrimah Experimental Farm. We are doing what we can to put those people on their feet. The important position of Director of Horticulture has been vacant for a while. I am pleased to advise that an applicant has been selected and the job has been offered to him. As yet, he is not in place but we look forward to that occurring fairly shortly.

It was disappointing to hear the member for Barkly say that we should not have wasted our time by holding a seminar in Tennant Creek on horticultural potential for the region until we got our act into gear and found the water that would be used. I do not accept his view. We held that seminar as a result of very strong expressions of interest by Tennant Creek people in becoming involved in horticulture. We determined a conference theme. Believe it or not, there is some water at Tennant Creek and people are using it. We involved people in the conference to discuss the existing constraints involved and what could be done if they could be removed. High on the list of constraints was water availability. Others were land availability and the availability of markets - whether products would be grown for consumption in Tennant Creek or elsewhere - and pests and diseases. We need to look at such things before we go out and solve the world's water problems only to find that everything that grows is chewed up by grasshoppers.

Investment requirements are also important. If a whole army of people are busting to get into the horticultural industry, it surely would be wise to tell them: 'If you go down this course, you must realise that it will cost you bread. It will cost so much to get into the game and we want you to have a clear picture in your mind so that you do not pursue some ridiculous dream'.

It is true that water is a very difficult problem in Tennant Creek. When the member for Barkly was Chief Minister, he urged us to make water available to a nearby pastoralist. I think there was mention of the McLaren Creek Station, which is on the bore field currently used for Tennant Creek's water supply. The Water Division advised most strongly against allowing the pastoralist to extract the very large quantities of water that he wanted for his particular project. I think it was a pasture project more than a strictly horticultural project. He wanted vast quantities of water and the Water Division's calculations indicated that, if the project were allowed to go ahead, it would have advanced by many years the need to develop the next bore field required to service Tennant Creek's water needs. From memory, I think the development of the next bore field will cost \$10m or \$20m. The need to spend that money and to provide new infrastructure to bring the water to Tennant Creek would have been advanced by some years. That is a very serious matter for government and it had to be considered when we were considering the pastoralist's proposal.

I recognise, as does the government, that water is the key to the full development not only of the horticultural industry in the Northern Territory, but indeed of the development of this nation. I have always held the view that the one thing that will limit the population of Australia will be the availability of water. Gone are the days when we thought that Australia was a very hostile place only suitable for habitation around the very coastal fringe. It was then considered that the interior of the country was so arid

and barren that few people would want to live there and that it was only good for grazing a few cows and as the home of many Aborigines. We have proved that very wrong.

With water, and with today's knowledge of nutrients, plant species and varieties, there is an enormous potential for food production in outback Australia. The Pine Hill area is an example of what can be achieved, as are areas around Alice Springs which will demonstrate that we can produce great quantities of food for Australia and, hopefully, other countries. Water is again the key. We acknowledge that. Indeed, the government contribution to the successful Pine Hill venture into grapes and other fruits and vegetables was a very expensive water survey and a continuing monitoring program. Considerable expenditure was involved in demonstrating that there was enough water to allow a private entrepreneur to come along and spend a couple of million dollars in establishing his farm - which is fantastic. Horticulture will expand in that area as fast as we can demonstrate that there is plentiful water available.

The government contributed also to the peanut and cashew nut trials at Wildman River through a \$200 000 water investigation program which, fortunately, proved to be successful. Now we are looking south of Alice Springs at Deep Well. Indeed, I believe that recent results have shown that there is potential for a large date farm or farms. The first requirement was to determine whether there was enough water available for ongoing production. We are now importing date varieties and doing all sorts of exciting things, getting ready to establish the big plantation. Water is a vital consideration at all times. It is a shame that it is so expensive. I would like to spend tens of millions of dollars of this government's budget on water supply exploration across the Northern Territory. I really would, if only we had enough resources to put in.

The member for MacDonnell raised the subject of Aboriginal communities. The horticultural situation in those communities has always disappointed me, particularly in the coastal areas. I think Maningrida, Elcho Island and other places had big market gardens in years past, but they do not have them any more. I suppose all their fruit and vegetables are now imported from places like Darwin, no doubt at great cost. If that happens, it is a shame. I do not know what the answers are. Members opposite and the member for Victoria River are in a better position to advise how we might be able to get people back into the market garden situation, for their own benefit. Obviously, they would not be supplying outside markets because of the cost.

The member for MacDonnell made an interesting point about the hunter-gatherer attitude. It may be difficult in some circumstances to get people on remote settlements to change their ways. Maybe we should be trying to encourage those people to gather seeds from native species which do not require any tending. Thousands of those seeds disappear on the wind and through erosion. Perhaps some of them could be collected at the right time of the year for planting in suitable locations so that there would be a massive increase in the amount of native vegetation which produces various types of fruit and vegetables eaten by people in those communities.

The member for MacDonnell asked whether the government had any answer to the problem of big wholesalers and retailers bringing in huge loads of fruit and vegetables, thus severely squeezing the small local grower. We do not have any draconian solutions to that problem. We do not believe the government should be involved in regulation in any way, and I do not suggest that the member for MacDonnell was asking for that. The answer is for the

locals to produce a product of very high quality. I believe that the retailers will take such produce. Indeed, a place called the Growers Market was established in Alice Springs. When I opened it, the people involved told me they searched out and welcomed any local produce from the Northern Territory - not just from Alice Springs but also from further north. They said they would put it on their shelves and sell it. In addition, they bought produce from south.

I do not want to do Coles and Woolworths in Darwin a disservice but I know that they are prepared to buy top-quality fruit that is delivered to their doors unannounced by local growers, if it is good-quality produce. They will take that produce, irrespective of the fact that they are bringing stuff up from south. Indeed, Coles in Darwin has its own transportation system, running big chiller vans from the south. It has actually exported products like rockmelons when they are in large supply on the Darwin market. Coles exports them to its stores in South Australia, backloading them on trucks from Darwin. I believe that the answer is to get our local fellows to grow top-quality produce that the local stores cannot resist.

Katherine is a really exciting area which has been mentioned frequently in today's debate. It exemplifies the way horticulture has been developing in the Northern Territory. In the 1987 growing season, about 8 growers in Katherine produced crops of various varieties to the value of \$2.5m. An enormous mango farm is being developed in the Katherine area, as honourable members will be aware. Whilst there have been some problems in the last couple of years in terms of the timing of flowering and fruit-setting, the prospects for mangoes are really very exciting. Let me read a paragraph from a report on the mango situation in Katherine, with a view to giving members an inkling of what the future might hold at Manbulloo.

Once the maturity of the trees is reached, the influence of this crop on horticulture in the region will be immense. With 31 000 trees in the ground - and initial planning has allowed for that to be expanded to 50 000 trees - and an expected yield of 40 trays to the tree, it is reasonable to expect 1.234 million trays in a year. It is difficult to nominate a price per tray at this stage. However, prices in the vicinity of \$7 to \$12 a tray would be a reasonable expectation.

Therefore, this industry alone - and indeed we are talking about one property alone - stands to make a gross income of between \$8.68m and \$14.88m per year, every year, once these beautiful Bowen Special mango trees reach full maturity. It will be a really big boost to the Northern Territory. A whole infrastructure will have to develop to cope with those mangoes and smaller mango producers will be able to dovetail into that production system. It will be really great. Some people have said to me that there will be a glut of mangoes and that they will not be worth anything. Other people, such as Darwin's top exporters of the product overseas, say that is not so. They say that if the quality is right, they will sell more mangoes than we can ever produce. Let us hope that we continue to have people growing plenty of mangoes and other people telling them they will never grow enough. We really have something going for us there.

The member for Koolpinyah said that we placed obstacles in the way of horticulture. I dismiss that totally. She said that we give advice to farmers too late. Her version of what happens is that a farmer grows something on his property, proves that it is either a success or a failure, and then the departmental officers come along to tell him what he has been

doing wrong. There is a problem and it is not the one which the member for Koolpinyah has described. I am not trying to be critical of people in the industry; they work very hard. By and large, however, there seems to be great suspicion about taking advice from public servants. There is no need for that. Farmers or intending farmers should develop a liaison with one of the horticultural advisers in the department and obtain all available information on the product they wish to grow. There is a heap of information and it is all available to anyone who wants to walk in. The situation is the same with on-farm advice. It is no good growing something, having it fall over and then asking what has gone wrong. If the farmer had done everything by the book and the crop had fallen over, he would have every reason to contact the department and get someone out to see whether there was a soil problem or some other unforeseen problem.

I took over this portfolio a little more than a year ago and I remember horticultural staff telling me at that time about the variety of rockmelons being grown. About 4000 t of top-quality rockmelons were produced last year and it was interesting to be told by people on our experimental farms, who are still growing rockmelons and refining the varieties and procedures, that they believe the department is still 2 years ahead of the farmers. They believe this is due to the reluctance of farmers to take advice from the public servants who had told them that they should increase and decrease the water supply at specific times during the day. Of course, every farmer has his own theory, and that is fine. A couple of very successful projects have been initiated near Darwin by people who did not know anything about farming. Every single step they have taken has accorded 100% with the department's advice, because those farmers do not have their own pet theories about what time the sun comes up and goes down and so on.

The member for Jingili said that we should help the small battler who can grow produce but is not a business manager. This is one of the most awkward areas for my department to service. I guess there are many fields in life where you get someone who is very good at producing something but is not a good manager. Such people cannot manage their money. They don't know how to run a business and they cannot seem to grasp the principles although they are very good in other areas. The department will do what it can to provide advice, if a need is demonstrated. I am happy to have booklets done. We have developed computer programs to encourage the bigger farmer to computerise his business operations and so on. I am happy to try to help but the problem could persist because some people find it very difficult to manage a business of any description.

Of course, the actual growing of produce is only part of the story. Infrastructure plays a big part in the horticultural industry. Probably one of the major items of infrastructure that we need is adequate cold storage at the airport for the holding of cargo for a period of hours pending the arrival of aircraft. Quarantine requirements for international flights necessitate the arrival of cargo at the airport between 2 and 4 hours before loading. In the absence of suitable cold storage facilities, the product gets warmer and warmer and starts to deteriorate. Southern airports have extensive cold storage facilities so that produce can be palletised and stored. In that situation, it does not matter how late the plane is. In association with the Horticultural Advisory Committee, my department is working with various air transport companies to develop a proposal which I might submit to Cabinet.

The horticultural industry is in its infancy in the Territory. The rest of Australia has a head start of about 100 years although we have the advantage of modern technology which has been developed as a result of efforts

elsewhere. Every year, significant advances are made in the Territory and I am sure the industry will move ahead in leaps and bounds. It is still a personalised industry though, in as much as one person seems to be able to grow something much better than another. Elements of personal technique are involved.

In conclusion, I see nothing but good for this industry. As it grows, it will provide increasing employment. It is a shining star on the horizon and I am sure that all honourable members support it.

Motion agreed to; statement noted.

MOTION

Noting Pastoral Industry Study

Continued from 10 June 1987.

Mr EDE (Stuart): Mr Speaker, I expressed considerable support for the previous statement, but I have quite a number of criticisms of what has become known as the GRM Study. I was hoping to obtain the government view of the report before making my observations. However, I will make the points I wish to make and the minister may be able to respond to some of them when he speaks in reply to close the debate. Then we can see what the government's position is.

It seems to me that the report fails to recognise that, over a number of years, the scientific community has been indicating that the future of the industry depends on the management of native vegetation in a sustainable manner. The report makes little mention of the environment except to describe it as 'harsh and unreliable'. The terms of reference for the study have been criticised by a number of people and organisations since they were first announced in 1985. They have been described as too narrow, not sufficiently comprehensive and lacking in a basic understanding of the nature of the industry in the Northern Territory. The report fails to meet even the weak criteria of the final term of reference. The first of the terms of reference is: 'To provide a draft industry plan for raising the level of pastoral productivity covering initiatives which the industry and government might take within a 10-year period, after proper consultation and agreement'. Such a plan, however, is not produced by the report on the GRM Study.

I will work through the report chapter by chapter and talk about its shortcomings in terms of information. In chapter 2, the report fails to provide the reader with a sample questionnaire so that verification of the analysis can be undertaken, especially for any possible bias caused by the framing of the questions and the range of options which respondents had to choose from in replying. A major omission of that kind seriously detracts from the findings and the credibility of the work.

The data produced by the questionnaire does not provide any new information, merely an update of the sort of material obtained in questionnaire surveys conducted by Petty in the Alice Springs area and Robertson in the VRD in 1982. Much of the marketing information and destinations of NT cattle can be found in existing DPP records. In section 2.6 of the report, there is an analysis of the questionnaire results which actually discounts many of the findings on various grounds. It says, for example, that 'there is no indication of the financial performance of pastoralists at the lower end of the scale, who could be in difficulty'.

Again, the year of 1984-85 was not considered normal in many respects. There was drought in both the Alice and Barkly districts, together with the effects of the BTEC program. There seems to be little point in using a questionnaire based on a specific time period - a period which is considered to be abnormal in many respects - as the main instrument for establishing a database.

There is no index of the information produced by the questionnaire. Many of the tables presented are not discussed at all and the significance of the data has received little attention. It is possible that the high standard error, the low sampling percentage and the failure of the questionnaire to address the fundamental issue of management of the resource could account for the scant information contained in this, the major data acquisition section of the report.

Chapter 3 is totally unreferenced. Various figures are presented on historic trends in the industry. These figures are available to any student. In the context of a report which apparently cost \$100 000, that is unsatisfactory. The tables used in chapter 4 are at least 7 years out of date. More up-to-date figures are available. GRM should have been required to calculate the new input-output tables if the study was to be taken seriously.

Chapter 5 covers the industry projections. The report finds that the historical growth rate in the NT cattle population will not be continued in the future. It says that an increase in the herd size will not bring about an increase in profitability and, unless some major changes occur in marketing or there is a technological breakthrough, the industry is not likely to be a significant contributor to the NT economy in the future. In other words, GRM disputes the statement it made in chapter 1: that the industry will continue to make a major, long-term contribution to the economy of the region. The report itself fails to make that connection. This is a report that is aimed at highlighting the limiting factors and which has to present the industry warts and all if it is to be useful to planners.

At this stage, I would like to cite the work of Bob Purvis at Atartinga in the context of the statement that an increase in herd size will not bring about an increase in profitability. In fact, Bob Purvis reduced herd sizes and changed the management practices on his property. He found that by doing that he was able to increase profitability. I am glad that people are starting to take some notice of him. He is gaining a reputation around Australia, albeit still at a fairly low level. That reputation is based on the work he has done on his property. It really is an example that both pastoralists and the department itself should be looking at in order to see how his management has turned a drought-ridden and degraded property into a very profitable operation. The fact that he has done that in the electorate of Stuart does not have a great bearing on the matter.

The GRM Study has identified marketing as the single most important issue raised by pastoralists. However, chapter 6 does not provide any new information or present any solutions to the problems of lack of control over price competition with other world producers, isolation and lack of communication. It only suggests that the new STD facilities currently being installed throughout the NT will help solve the problems. The information provided in this chapter is already available through information services in the Primary Industries Division and, once again, this chapter contributes nothing to the overall aim of the report in terms of producing an industry plan. I will skip over the coverage of the buffalo industry in chapter 7. It

is one of the scantier chapters and presents no new information. There is no indication that there was consultation with the Northern Land Council and Aboriginal people who, in fact, are major partners in land hunting and the buffalo industry.

Chapter 8, relating to BTEC, again presents no new information. It merely confirms the pastoral industry's established view that the BTEC program will create as many problems as it solves and that many producers will not be able to recover. You do not need to spend \$100 000 to obtain that information.

Chapter 9 relates to micro-electronic technology. It may be interesting to some pastoralists, but it will not bring about any technological fix such as this report keeps hinting at. Computer management of accounts and marketing is not new. Again, I do not think that a \$100 000 report was needed to bring that to the notice of government.

Chapter 11 relates to regulation and management. The report devotes less than 2 pages to the subject of natural vegetation and 1 paragraph to the soils of the Northern Territory. Those 2 major components of the environment are vital to the future of the industry yet, in a report which we are told is aimed at all aspects of the pastoral industry and at highlighting any factor which may limit the long-term utilisation of industry resources, there is an obvious display of ignorance of that basic fact. The report states incorrectly that there is no evidence of plant communities being threatened by overgrazing. The loss of the Mitchell grass plains in the VRD and the Barkly and the disappearance of many of the botanical species recorded less than 40 years ago clearly disprove the report's findings. In a submission to the Rural Land Use Advisory Committee, the Northern Land Council talked about Aboriginal people being greatly disturbed by the disappearance of native plant and animal species from pastoral lands. Many species of bush foods and medicines have either disappeared or are in a serious state of decline and some areas that were once flourishing gardens are now devoid of food species. That is most unfortunate in itself.

Indeed, in recent days more examples of food species have come to light. I commend the Aboriginal pharmacopeia which is at least starting to index some of the bush foods that are available. Anybody who saw Quantum last night would recognise the medicinal importance of the specific qualities of some of our native trees and plants. It would be criminal if, through lack of interest on our part, we were to lose botanical species which might be vital to the continued development of Australia and our continued ability to live in this country. I recall a CSIRO conference at which it was stressed that it was necessary to maintain the genetic rootstock of plant varieties which have been improved upon. If there is a major problem, you can return to the rootstock and begin again.

The lack of any in-depth information about the soils of the Northern Territory or any mention of the extensive research work that has been conducted on the effects of overgrazing on soil structure is another major indictment of the GRM Study. The report contains a number of very damning statements about the place of the pastoral industry in the economy of the Northern Territory and the effect it is having on the national environment. It then proceeds to bury those facts under a mass of padding, useless information and unsubstantiated statements. Quite apart from the unscientific method of presentation, there is the matter of the \$100 000 spent on compiling the document which could have been put into meaningful research into the care of the land.

Regarding the omissions and misinformation, the use of out-of-date figures in an analysis of an economy such as the Northern Territory's is a major blunder. In recent years, mining and tourism have become much more important both in terms of dollars and numbers of people employed. The tables used in chapter 4 are out of date and therefore totally useless for any new in-depth analysis. These figures have been available to the industry and the Northern Territory government for some time now and their reappearance in a report that is supposed to provide the industry with a plan for the next 10 years is absurd.

In considering the economic situation of the industry, GRM looks at classifications such as the average property. In fact, there are 283 individual properties operating in a wide range of ecosystems. The diversity of land types contained within the various leases is not taken into consideration when constructing information about average properties. Pastoral leases need to be considered on an individual basis and, where lease boundaries are found to be inappropriate in terms of maintaining correct land management procedures, boundaries should be altered, leases amalgamated or specific areas withdrawn from use so that rehabilitation programs can be put in place. Issues such as this must be addressed and it is unfortunate that the GRM Study failed to do that.

The long-term economics of the pastoral industry will not be sustained on the calculation of average figures. They are useful in determining what areas are likely to be profitable or not, such as the Darwin and Gulf regions where the figures give a good indication that most of the area is unsuitable for pastoral occupation. The long-term economics will come from sound management of the vegetative systems. If the native vegetation is maintained, the resource will remain viable in the long term.

The pastoral industry is subject to huge fluctuations in gross income and, as no analysis of net income is calculated, the industry's true position is still unclear. The GRM Study fails, as have all other reports on the pastoral industry, to take the cost of land degradation into account. The loss of productivity due to land degradation is something that the industry cannot continue to ignore. Land degradation results in a drop in productive capacity of the land and, as such, should be included in the overall costs of the industry.

Many of the tables are useless because no information is given as to the basis on which the answers have been given. For example, table A7 relates to development potential and gives information on the percentage of a property that is controllable. No information is given on how those figures are derived. We do not know whether that development would require unlimited access to money or would occur regardless of the environmental consequences.

The report argues, on the basis of the survey data, that the cattle population could expand to 2.7 million. That is a total distortion of the facts. On a number of occasions, the report mentions the fact that the expansion of cattle numbers has been due to an expansion of the land area used and not due to an increase in productivity. It also states that this historic trend cannot continue. The GRM Study fails to put those 2 pieces of information together and, consequently, fails to address the question of how the industry can expect to grow.

Mr Speaker, a major gap in the report is that, when it deals with productivity increases, it fails to mention such factors as the introduction of Brahman blood. Having come from a cattle background in Queensland, I can

remember as a youngster that we were all for straight Poll Herefords. We used to cull on the basis of colour as much as anything else and we maintained a line of Poll Herefords that used to win top prizes at the shows. It was a fair adjustment for me to accept the Brahman but even I have to admit nowadays that it is a superior beast in terms of its ability to travel to water, store fats, put on weight and be turned off at the earlier years which the market now requires. That seems strange when I remember how we used to turn our cattle off at 10 to 12 years. Nowadays, cattle are turned off at 2 to 3 years. We called those animals vealers.

In terms of the handling of the BTEC program, I have some problems. I have taken them up with the minister and I am sure that he will be able to respond on them in this debate. As people in the industry say, there has been a change from circles to lines. We had a system of circles. Circles were drawn around the good properties and those areas were gradually expanded. I am told that the change has been made in response to arguments from South Australia, now that it wants to be declared disease-free, although the recent outbreak in the north of that state has not been mentioned. A line, which I will call the Alice Springs line, has been drawn right across the Territory. It begins just north of Alice Springs and runs north-west by west from there.

The problem is that there are people above that line whose properties have been clean for many years. In the early part of the brucellosis campaign, they invested money, got their fences organised and cleaned up their properties. As a result, they were able to benefit from high prices by moving stock to New South Wales and places like that. Those properties are now classified as dirty, simply because they happen to be on the other side of this line. The cattle are disease-free; there have been no reactors for years. However, because they happen to be on the wrong side of the line, they are treated as dirty cattle.

Recently, I wrote to the minister about Murray Downs. The property owner's son had hundreds of head of cattle mustered on the Thursday. They were yarded first thing on the Friday morning and the vet was then contacted to do the blood tests. Friday came and went. On Saturday, the property contacted Elders to try to get some assistance. By Sunday, nothing had happened. Eventually, on the Monday, the property was told that somebody might be there at about 2 o'clock. The loss of those 4 days, plus the fact that another 4 days had to elapse after testing before the cattle could be released, meant that those cattle were in the yard for a week. That was on a drought-ridden property where the owner was trying to move cattle off to reduce the size of his herd to carry him through until, hopefully, it rains later in the year. He had to bear a substantial cost. He already had problems with obtaining a decent price for his cattle, because they were coming from a drought area. He had to pay for fodder whilst the cattle were yarded and he had to take the losses. That occurred on a clean property, a property which had been clean for years. It is being forced to undergo blood testing and that is forcing it to bear substantial costs.

Mr Speaker, I am most disappointed with the GRM Study. It seems to me to be another indication of the government's inability to manage its affairs in an orderly manner. When it was first announced that GRM had been chosen to conduct the study, the Environment Centre raised the possibility that a conflict of interest was involved and that GRM was not a suitable organisation to conduct the study. That was denied at the time but the report is clearly inadequate and was out-of-date well before it was presented to this House, let alone when we have finally got around to debating it.

Mr McCARTHY (Labour, Administrative Services and Local Government): Mr Deputy Speaker, I get the impression that the member for Stuart has a problem with the pastoral industry study. I heard only criticism. He gave no indication that there was anything good about the study.

Part of the task of compiling such a study is to draw together all existing information. The member for Stuart, however, based many of his criticisms of the report on the fact that it drew on information that was already available. Obviously, that was what it had to do. It would not have made much sense to go out and duplicate information. It has drawn on existing information and used it.

Mr Ede: It could have brought the information up to date.

Mr McCARTHY: As has been indicated, the pastoral industry was once the major industry in the Northern Territory. Obviously, it still has a major role to play. I understood the member for Stuart to say that it did not have as bright a future as minerals and tourism. I would venture to say that the cattle will be there long after minerals and tourists have gone their way. The cattle industry has been around for 100 years or more and it will continue to be with us because of the strength of the people currently involved in it. There is no doubt at all in my mind that the pastoral industry is very viable. There is no indication that it is failing and there is no indication that the people in that industry are going broke in large numbers. Certainly, there are parts of the industry and areas within the Territory that are having difficulty in supporting a cattle industry under the present management regime.

When the member for Jingili was discussing the horticultural industry, he raised the issue of management and management training. It is obvious that, in the pastoral industry as in the horticultural industry, many operators have a perspective based on harvesting. They have grown up in the industry and know it thoroughly but do not necessarily have the management skills needed in an industry which has been brought into the 20th century by BTEC and other developments.

Parts of the Northern Territory have experienced a fairly serious drought during the last few years. The member for Stuart spoke about Mr Bob Purvis at Atartinga. I had the privilege of visiting and talking to Bob Purvis a few years ago and I have to say that I was very impressed with what he was doing. I know that he does not necessarily have the support of all of his neighbours but he has managed to pull his property out of a very serious state of degradation which, I understand, was brought about by his own father's activities in raising horses for the Indian army some years ago. I take my hat off to people like Bob Purvis. He is a family man on his own property and he has put a great deal of effort into developing grasses, although not necessarily the natural vegetation. He has put in grasses that can survive and sustain the numbers of cattle to be run. He does not run big numbers anywhere but he manages his cattle and his resource carefully.

That brings me to the resource, Mr Deputy Speaker. The member for Stuart spoke at some length about degradation of the resource and there is no doubt that the land resource has been degraded in some areas around the Territory. It is not, however, as widespread a problem as the member for Stuart would have us believe.

Mr Ede: According to the federal report, it is 50%.

Mr McCARTHY: There is little long-term degradation. Mr Deputy Speaker, cattlemen who have been around the Victoria River region all their lives, as were their fathers before them, will tell you that areas that appear degraded in times of drought can rejuvenate in just a few good years. I have seen that happen myself. I have no doubt at all that much of the degradation that people talk about in terms of the disappearance of natural grasses and herbage is only short-term and most of those grasses and that herbage will grow back after rains. I am not talking about the effects of erosion, which are serious in places.

Recently, I had the privilege of attending a meeting in Katherine of the Victoria River Conservation Group. That group is made up of most of the cattlemen in the Victoria River region and I believe it will extend to other areas. They have got together because they say there is a problem with land degradation, although it is not as serious as many of the conservationists would have us believe. Those cattlemen know and love their land and they recognise it is their livelihood. They have a greater interest in it than the conservationists. They have got together to fix problems; they are certainly not ignoring them. They are right in their developing approaches to overcome problems.

One of the most positive things to come out of the meeting in Katherine was that the group was not looking for government support. The strong theme of the meeting was: 'It is our problem and we have to fix it. We need to identify where the problem areas are. We need to take it on a priority basis and get together, not as individuals but as a group, and fix the problems where they exist'. I found that approach very positive. I know that that group of people, because of their very strong commitment to their land, will fix the problems.

There have been vast improvements to the cattle industry throughout the Northern Territory in the last few years, not just because herds have been improved with Bof indicus blood, but through BTEC and the effects of BTEC - the fencing, the watering places and the grids that have been put into place. These developments have brought the Territory cattle industry into the 20th century. It is no longer a harvest industry. It is an industry that is growing, developing and well-managed. While there is more work to be done, the industry has certainly improved.

Mr Deputy Speaker, as almost every honest cattleman will tell you, BTEC is the best thing that has happened to the industry in the Northern Territory. There are those who, for whatever reason, perhaps including their own mismanagement, will disagree with that. However, I would be prepared to say that 90% - maybe 95% - of pastoralists in the Northern Territory will tell you that BTEC is the best thing that has happened to the Northern Territory cattle industry, and I agree with that. While numbers may have been reduced, quality has improved. That applies not only to the cattle but to the land itself and such things as fencing, waters and a variety of control measures.

I would like to take some time to give credit to those people in the Department of Industries and Development who have been involved in developing our BTEC program, which is probably the best in Australia. It had to deal with some of the harshest conditions and yet people like Geoff Neumann, and later Bill Sykes, have done great work in making BTEC work in the Northern Territory. While it has been hard on some of our pastoralists, it has had an effect which will be felt forever as far as the cattle industry is concerned.

I believe that there needs to be more development and I know that not every pastoralist in the Northern Territory will agree with what I am about to say. Whilst some of the bigger landowners would have a problem with this, it is my view that the Territory pastoral industry will improve dramatically only when the big parcels of land are subdivided into more usable, family-managed areas that will be developed more intensively and used with the commitment which a farming family can bring only to land which it owns. As I said, that view will not have the support of every cattleman in the Northern Territory although I believe it has the support of the majority. Our land is divided into very large parcels at present, which makes it very difficult to manage it effectively. It is very difficult for people managing those properties actually to obtain a piece of land for themselves.

Just recently, blocks have been subdivided in the Victoria River region, something which has not occurred much previously. The top end of Birrimba Station was recently subdivided and sold off. I have had cause to drive through that part of the Territory a couple of times during the last 12 months, and the land can obviously be subdivided further. The area of the property was 2000 km². It has been cut into two 1000 km² properties and I believe that the sort of development envisaged on the new subdivision at the top end of the station will enable further subdivisions to occur, perhaps to areas of a few 100 km². I believe that such areas could still provide incomes for families owning them. Obviously, not every part of the Territory can be subdivided in that way. Not all areas are capable of sustaining families because the land is simply not suitable. The land in the Gulf region is one such instance. Of course, there are other sorts of animals which could be used out there and perhaps buffalo are one of those.

Pasture improvement needs to be a big part of any more sustained development. The pasture improvement that is being carried out on Tipperary Station obviously has its merits. It is a big property and a great deal of money is being spent on it. The average person cannot afford to do anything like that. However, pasture improvement is certainly within the capacity of people on smaller properties of perhaps 500 km² or, if they are sustainable, properties as small as 100 km². In that context, pasture improvement is possible and will make a big difference to the industry in the long term.

I touched on buffalo just now. I believe that they represent a truly sustainable resource in the Northern Territory. Many people find them difficult to manage and many people hate them. In fact they have potential, not only for a meat product but for tourism. I am very keen to see the domestication programs that are currently being carried out and the improved product that comes from younger beasts being grain fed and turned off for the restaurant market. Activities of that sort will put buffalo on the map.

Abattoirs play a very big part in our pastoral industry. We need to have abattoirs in the Territory so that we can process the product of the cattle industry to the next stage: preparation for human consumption. Abattoirs have had a very chequered history in the Northern Territory, as members well know. They have been difficult enterprises to manage because of the industrial relations involved in abattoir operations throughout Australia and which existed in the Territory until fairly recently. It is essential that abattoirs in the Northern Territory are located strategically. Probably they should be reasonably small and certainly they should be more efficient than some of the abattoirs that have existed in the past. I favour small, strategically-placed abattoirs like Meneling at Batchelor, and Victoria Valley. Of course, the Point Stuart and Mudginberri abattoirs are no longer strategically placed. I think that places like Elliott and Tennant Creek could quite feasibly support small abattoirs.

I spoke about the subdivision of large properties and the better management of properties flowing from that. I believe that such subdivisions will lead to the growth in the rural area which will benefit the Northern Territory so greatly. Currently, we have development only along the spine of the Northern Territory; we need to fill out the ribs. More intensive development in the rural sector and the pastoral industry will bring people out into the bush. Towns will grow. It will create employment and, of course, employment will require training. We are already into that area. The stockman courses at the Katherine College are just a part of that. We need to extend that training into management courses which will give pastoralists greater skills and lead to better management of our properties.

In the Victoria River region, most of the selling is done from the farm to people who come in and purchase the beasts from the yards. In recent years, there has been an extension of that into the saleyards at Elliott. We need to extend the saleyards around the Territory into more strategic areas so that reasonable numbers of cattle can be sold at any one time. Marketing generally has been ad hoc. Once we get into the abattoir stage and the selling of beef overseas or throughout the country, most of the marketing has been done by individual abattoir operators. Perhaps more work is needed to bring everything together. However, I think most operators prefer to market their own product, as does the farmer. Pastoralists prefer to market their own product at this particular time.

I do not share the member for Stuart's criticisms of the report to the same extent. There are faults in the GRM Study. Perhaps it could have given more direction for the future. I think that the compilers of the report found that fairly difficult. It has been hard to pull all the information together over the years. It is possible that the industry itself will have to provide much of the required information. Just as the industry is taking steps to preserve the resource, it probably needs to provide its own directions for the future.

The GRM Study provides a resource base. It will have to be updated continually. It has pulled together a great deal of information which was all over the place before and for that reason it has value. It is absolutely essential that we follow that up with continued effort for the pastoral industry. The government needs to be very much involved in ongoing research, not only for cattle but also for improved pastures.

In summing up, I want to address a number of matters which I intended to raise while I was talking about BTEC. In recent times, the BTEC program has provided for grids on major highways to overcome some of the problems that we have been having with the movement of cattle. It is my view that, in many of those places, we would do well to forget about the grids and put fences along the highway. Obviously, that will not always be economically viable. However, if there are 2 grids within an area of 15 km or 20 km, it would certainly be more effective to fence both sides of the highway at those points rather than to provide the grids. That would overcome some of the problems of loss of cattle in collisions with vehicles, damage to vehicles and injuries to persons. Quite a few cattle have been hit on the Victoria Highway. We will have to come to grips with the problem eventually. Perhaps the owners and the government could get together to provide that fencing.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I support the statement.

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH (Koolpinyah): Mr Deputy Speaker, the Minister for Industries and Development has given statements in this Assembly on the

pastoral industry, the horticultural industry, the buffalo industry, the grain industry and BTEC. All have been interesting accounts of achievement. I wonder, however, whether they are just statements or are linked with the future implementation of recommendations. I believe reports and statements are necessary from time to time but they must also give projections for future achievement. Otherwise, they are just so much paperwork.

The pastoral industry is a prime dollar-earner for the Northern Territory. It has gone through the depredations of BTEC and it is still alive. I believe that the herds will build up again. Unfortunately, some pastoralists have gone to the wall because of BTEC and I think everybody would greatly regret that. The requirements of markets overseas, especially the American market, demand that we have certain standards of disease control. Whether the standards in the United States are as high as those they demand from us is another question. The farm lobby is very strong in the United States and pastoral imports from Australia can be subjected to standards which are much higher than those applying to the local product. That is politics for you, Mr Deputy Speaker.

The BTEC program is not all bad. Not only does it seek to eradicate brucellosis and tuberculosis but it has led to the beginnings of more thorough development of pastoral leases. More fences and yards have been built, more grids put in and more bores sunk. That can only lead to better husbandry in the pastoral industry. Coupled with this will come a greater realisation by the pastoral lessee of the actual value of his property because every pastoral lease has soils of different values within its boundaries. Some parts are very good, horticulturally and agriculturally, and some are not so good. From this realisation, better management of the pastoral industry will ensue.

The member for Victoria River spoke about closer development going hand in hand with family properties. I would agree that that is the way we are going. It will lead to the betterment of the industry. If the numbers of cattle are decreasing as a result of BTEC, in many cases this gives breathing space to the lessee so that he can evaluate whether he should continue with the same breed or turn to another one, and what his future management programs will be.

In any evaluation of the pastoral industry, diversification must be considered. If all the efforts of the pastoral lessee are directed at the cattle industry and the price of meat falls, the property is in the doldrums until the price rises again. It would be much better if pastoralists had other means of earning an income from their properties. Some years ago, the sheep industry in Queensland was experiencing a very lean time due to low prices and poor markets. At that time, there was not much future in the sheep industry either from the wool or the meat. That was about the time the angora goat industry developed in western Queensland. It is still going strong. It provided a very profitable diversification for every sheep property that took up angora goats. Not only did they have an income from the sheep, but also an income from the angora fleeces. In any diversification, consideration must be given to how the projects will dovetail into each other. The husbandry of sheep and goats dovetails very neatly.

Diversification does not necessarily mean that all types of stock on the property have to be managed at the same level or in the same way. The cattle on a cattle property may comprise a grade herd providing income from slaughtering, the end product being the carcasses sent to market. The diversification could be into pigs or goats, and managed as a stud rather than a meat project. Diversification could also take in the farming and husbanding of certain native animal species. There is a market for the meat and other

products which come from these animals. We have only to look at the enthusiasm for the crocodile industry to realise that there is a definite market for the husbanding of our native animal species. Diversification need not necessarily be into another animal industry; it could be into a horticultural or agricultural project.

BTEC has presented many problems with its eradication procedures. In its basic concept, I see a parallel between the clearance of brucellosis and tuberculosis from our buffalo and cattle herds and the clearance of caprine arthritic encephalitis from our goat herds in the Northern Territory. There are many interested breeders in the Northern Territory who are working hard to clear their herds through testing and the slaughter of infected animals. I must say that, even with the limited resources of the Department of Industries and Development, those goat breeders in the Northern Territory who have asked for the help of particular veterinarians and stock inspectors have received it in abundance. They are a good mob to deal with. This is a project that is industry-instigated, not a government initiative. We get no recompense for our slaughtered animals, which we have tested and decided to cull voluntarily. Western Australia is the premier state in caprine arthritic encephalitis control and eradication and we are trying to follow its procedures.

Mr Deputy Speaker, in conclusion, I will say that I support the study that the minister has brought forward for debate. Working in the pastoral industry is not easy. It needs our interest and support. I hope it receives the continued interest and support of the honourable minister and his department. When the minister closes the debate, if he so wishes, I would like to see him comment on my idea of discussion on diversification in the cattle industry.

Debate adjourned.

LEAVE OF ABSENCE

Mr COULTER (Leader of Government Business): Mr Deputy Speaker, I move that leave of absence for today be granted to Mr Hanrahan as a result of his having to return to Alice Springs.

Leave granted.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT Screw-worm Fly

Mr PERRON (Industries and Development)(by leave): Mr Deputy Speaker, during routine quarantine inspections in April, insects were trapped aboard a vessel in Darwin bringing cargo from Asia. Subsequent tests have confirmed that 5 of the insects were screw-worm flies. The Department of Industries and Development has implemented a campaign to monitor the situation involving the location of additional flytraps, the location of insecticides at the 10-mile abattoir and the placement of wounded sentinel cattle at appropriate locations.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I advise the House of these actions as it would be a most serious matter if live screw-worm flies were found in Australia. At present Australia, New Zealand and the South Pacific islands are the only areas in the southern hemisphere free from screw-worm fly. All relevant federal authorities are aware of the situation and, naturally, they will be kept informed. A prepared exotic animal disease plan will be implemented immediately in the event that screw-worm fly is found to have established - and I point out to honourable members that I am advised that the possibility of that is considered low.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I move that the statement be noted.

Motion agreed to.

TABLED PAPER
Publications Committee - Fifth Report

Mr SETTER (Jingili): Mr Deputy Speaker, I table the Fifth Report of the Publications Committee and move that the report be adopted.

Motion agreed to.

ADJOURNMENT

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

Mr Speaker, I rise in tonight's adjournment debate to draw the attention of honourable members to an interview that was conducted on the 7.30 Report last night. I have been asked by a number of people whether I have any evidence showing that the Leader of the Opposition actively sought to sabotage the operations of Hungerford Refrigeration. If ever anybody wanted any evidence, it was given last night on the 7.30 Report.

Quite apart from the wealth of conclusive evidence which I had available to me previously, some of which was referred to in this House during the last 2 days, the interview conducted with the Leader of the Opposition on the ABC 7.30 Report last night was more than sufficient in itself to serve as an indictment of the way in which the Leader of the Opposition chooses to operate against the interests of Territorians. As well as this, it was evident that he had no comprehension or memory of yesterday's proceedings in this House when he made an utterly stupid statement at the beginning of the interview. I quote: 'No one knows why Barry Coulter selected the Hungerfords. What we do know, of course is that Hungerford, as I said, is in exactly the same situation as it was 12 months ago: in trouble. That is the key question'. If the Leader of the Opposition had bothered even to look at the documents which I tabled yesterday, documents dealing with respective ministerial approvals, he would have realised that the decisions regarding Hungerford were already firmly in place when the TIO came within my portfolio of responsibilities.

In response to the honourable member's specific question, however, I believe that Territorians would have been most disturbed by the evasive and unconvincing answers given by the Leader of the Opposition in last night's interview. I think it is important that the text of the interview be read into Hansard so that the Leader of the Opposition may be judged for what he really is. Mr Speaker, the proceedings went as follows:

Interviewer: You are described as Terry the Terminator, which is a new description for you, but the Treasurer also said that what you had done over the last 12 months was the most treacherous piece of commercial sabotage he had ever seen in the Northern Territory. Did you actually blacklist Hungerford?

Mr Smith: I tell you again that the company is in exactly the same situation as it was 12 months ago.

Interviewer: Did you warn local businesses that they might not be good payers?

Mr Smith: It has liquidity problems. It has bad management problems. It has had them for 12 months.

Interviewer: But did you actually warn those companies?

Mr Smith: Local business makes their own decisions.

Interviewer: With your help. You are avoiding me.

Mr Smith: I am not avoiding you at all. I have provided the information. Even Marshall Perron today was good enough to admit that we had more information on this matter right through the whole process than the government did.

Honourable members will all recall that, in fact, the member for Fannie Bay said precisely the opposite: that the opposition had no accurate information.

The interview continued:

Mr Smith: I have provided the information. The firms out there made their own decisions as a result of it, and no doubt some of them have avoided being hurt. Some of them who might otherwise have traded with Hungerfords and had debts at this stage do not have debts because of my actions.

Mr Speaker, if that is not an indictment on the Leader of the Opposition, then I do not know what is: 'because of my actions'. It took a while for him to answer the question and he tried to avoid it - but he finally came clean. He is condemned by his own words and is slinking off with blood on his hands. It is one more example of the destructive and negative influence the Leader of the Opposition has had on development in the Northern Territory.

A very unusual way of announcing a contract occurred yesterday in the Northern Territory in the form of a press release from the federal Minister for Administrative Services. Does he think that Territorians will not understand what happened? On the very day that the Northern Territory government decided to make a ministerial statement on Hungerford, well after the closure of tenders on 14 April, and the date they were to be announced, 2 May, a press release suddenly came out on the afternoon of 18 May announcing that the contract had been won by Lasala Pty Ltd of Moorabbin, Victoria. Mr Speaker, do you honestly expect Territorians to believe that that was just a coincidence?

Mr Ede interjecting.

Mr COULTER: The Deputy Leader of the Opposition has interjected. Honourable members will remember that, when I asked him how he knew the pecking order of the tenderers, he went to some pains to explain to us that Hungerford was the second-highest. Today, he committed himself again with a personal explanation in this Assembly in which he indicted himself and his role in the matter. I asked him how he knew about the tenders. His answer across the Chamber was: 'That is for me to know and you to find out'. He has had his grubby little fingers in this exercise too. He committed himself and exposed himself in his personal explanation. Members opposite will have to get much sharper than that before they get anywhere. I doubt whether exposing

himself is unparliamentary, Mr Speaker, but that is exactly what he did in this House today. He was caught with his pants down because, in the course of a personal explanation in this Assembly, he committed one of the greatest sins one can commit in the Northern Territory.

Mr Ede: What? Tell the truth?

Mr COULTER: How he did know, Mr Speaker? The announcement had not been made at that time. Hungerford itself has not been able to find out about the situation for the last 14 days. When we made inquiries, we were told that the minister had intervened. The minister went to great pains to say that he did not, but I can name the officer to whom we spoke. He said: 'We were told the minister has intervened and it is not known'. Nevertheless, members opposite knew who the successful tenderer was and what the pecking order was. How did the Deputy Leader of the Opposition know? He said: 'It is for me to know and you to find out'.

Mr Speaker, this whole Hungerford affair is looking a little bit suss, to put it mildly. The role that the Leader of the Opposition and the Deputy Leader of the Opposition have played in this is yet to be revealed, but I believe that it will come out. There is more to be told about the involvement of both in relation to this contract.

The Deputy Leader of the Opposition made a personal explanation today. He will probably go on television tonight and go through the sort of exercise the Leader of the Opposition went through last evening. It has been nothing but a disgrace. It pains me that a project which almost succeeded has been destroyed by the vindictive attitude and manner in which the opposition has carried out its smear and scare tactics. The evidence is there. The Leader of the Opposition went on television and told all Territorians about his role. I was asked whether I had any evidence that would confirm that the Leader of the Opposition actively sought to sabotage Hungerford. Evidence is not a problem. 14 days after the successful tenderer was supposed to be announced and on the same day that I made a ministerial statement about Hungerford, the federal minister put out a press release. It does not seem right to me. The Northern Territory people will realise what has happened. As another piece of evidence, we have the Deputy Leader of the Opposition saying not only that he knew who the successful tenderer was but also that he knew the pecking order.

Mr Ede: I did not.

Mr COULTER: He knew. Mr Speaker, he will probably make another personal explanation next week and shoot himself in the other foot. He put it on the public record that he knew the pecking order and that he knew that Hungerford's was the second highest bid. When I asked him how he knew, he said: 'That is for me to know and you to find out'. More will be revealed on the role that these 2 gentlemen have played in this affair.

Mr REED (Katherine): Mr Speaker, I rise tonight to discuss the issue of the loss of trained personnel being experienced by our Australian defence forces. The most publicised example of this is the loss of pilots from the Royal Australian Air Force but the problem does not stop there. It is being experienced in the navy and in the army. These forces are said to be losing staff, which have been trained at the expense of the Australian taxpayer, at the rate of 13% annually.

Serving personnel in the defence forces are unable to comment in relation to this problem. However, it has been of interest in the last few months to

read various press releases by people who have recently retired from the defence forces and who have been moved by the severity of the problem to speak out in relation to it. I quote from the NT News of Friday 15 April. In that edition, there was a reference to a Lieutenant Colonel Paul Wilmot, who had resigned from the forces. I quote:

The drain of personnel from Australian defence forces was a national disaster. Mr Paul Wilmot, a former Lieutenant Colonel, who resigned last year after 22 years service, said plummeting morale was responsible for the wastage. Mr Wilmot said defence personnel were quitting at a rate of 13% a year compared with 6% in the public service. It is a waste of taxpayers' money because these people are trained intensively and expensively.

The problem is widespread and occurs across the range of defence force operations. I believe that it results from a number of issues. The main issues that relate to the problem are the conditions of service, salaries, housing, leadership and morale, job satisfaction and the public perception of defence forces and their operations. This is particularly evident since what might be called the 'civilianisation' of the operations of the Australian defence forces and the bureaucratic structure that has been put in place to oversee operations. There is common reference to 'Russell Hill bureaucrats', the effect that this bureaucracy is having on the defence forces and its misunderstanding of the needs of the forces.

Salaries are inadequate and they have not moved with the times. In many areas, housing is said to be a particular problem. Lieutenant Colonel Paul Wilmot said that the Army married quarters in Perth were a socioeconomic disaster. Of the houses, leased from Homeswest, 70% were in urgent need of repairs. The resultant dissatisfactions have gone unattended and are exacerbating the problem of loss of trained personnel from the defence forces.

Another significant contribution to this loss is the continued reduction in the use of equipment during recent years. Whilst there have been considerable purchases of significant defence items - and the F18 is a fine example which nobody would argue against - the equipment is being used less and less. Pilots are there to fly and the winding back of flying hours which various aircraft squadrons are able to undertake is having an effect on the morale and the leadership of personnel. Another aspect relates to numbers of personnel. For example, No 75 Squadron in Darwin has 17 Mirages but only 7 pilots. This puts considerable strain on those pilots to maintain operational efficiency. In other squadrons, flying time has been reduced. I quote from the May 1988 edition of Australian Aviation, a well-recognised publication in aviation circles in Australia. It refers to the Orion maritime patrol aircraft:

The flight hours of the Edinburgh-based PC3 Orion maritime wing have been cut from 1200 hours per year to a mere 700 hours per year. The major area affected, ironically, is the north-west and Indian Ocean region at a time when incursions by Indonesian fishermen have been on the increase. One benefit of the cutback, though, is that the long-understaffed maritime wing is now acutely undermanned. With a significant reduction in PC3 flying hours, it is even now more vital than ever that the civilian-operated Coastwatch operation run at peak capability. Skywest has been flying as normal since the Amann Aviation Coastwatch debacle of last year and is operating on an extension till September this year when a new operator is due to be appointed. However, at the time of closing for press in early April,

tenders have still not been issued, which makes it clear that it would be doubtful if a new operator could be in place before the end of the year.

It is clear that both the cutback in operational hours for aircraft and the poor organisation of other contracts, such as those for Coastwatch, are having markedly deleterious effects on our defence forces.

There has been some reaction by the federal government in terms of dealing with this issue. One indication of that was the introduction of what an article in the NT News of 27 April referred to as a '\$70 000 carrot'. I quote:

The Royal Australian Airforce pilots will be offered a special one-off bonus of \$70 000 in an attempt to keep them from resigning. 'The move was in response to the present unacceptably high resignation rate among pilots', Defence Science and Personnel Minister, Ms Ros Kelly, said in announcing the bonus. The taxable bonus will be available to pilots of wing-commander rank and below, under 37 years of age, who already receive the airforce's flying allowance and who agree to stay in the service for another 6 years. The bonus will cost about \$13m next financial year. The airforce expects to lose about 130 pilots this year but will train only 52.

That clearly indicates the severity of the problem from the RAAF point of view due to its loss of pilots. On examining the '\$70 000 carrot per pilot' that is being offered, I cannot see that it will have any impact at all on the problem. Half of it will go in tax and a commitment will be required from the recipients of the \$70 000 that they will remain in the service for another 6 years. That means that, at best, they would receive about \$6000 per year over the 6-year period, an amount which, I suggest, would be a pittance in relation to the salary they could be earning as a civilian pilot with Qantas or some other airline.

In addition to that situation, we have to take into account that the solution tends to downgrade other personnel within the defence forces who, whilst they might not be as well-trained as the pilots, nonetheless fill an essential role. They are not recognised in the federal government's attempts to retain their services. Of course, we have also to consider that personnel of similar rank in the other defence forces, who are also leaving and are included in the 13% wastage figure, do not have any benefits flowing to them to attract them to remain in the services, and the opportunity for other personnel does not exist.

The federal government has established an inquiry under the Joint Parliamentary Committee of Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade - the Defence Subcommittee - and Senator Grant Tambling is a member of that committee, which is to look into and consider the problems of the defence forces. Our defence force personnel merit every praise for their commitment to serving the nation and, given the impact of the problem on the effectiveness of the forces, I would highlight the urgent necessity for the federal government to look seriously at the personnel structure, salaries and conditions. We need to recognise the fact that defence force personnel are the most treasured resource of our defence forces. We can acquire high-technology equipment, some of the best available, although perhaps not in the quantities that we might want because of the reality of financial constraints. However, the bottom line is personnel. Without them, we cannot operate the equipment and we may as well not have it.

I reiterate that this problem is severe. There is a great depth of concern within the defence forces. Serving personnel do not have the opportunity to express their concerns but one has only to look at the remarks of retiring personnel and the 13% figure to see that this must be addressed as a matter of urgency.

Whilst I am on my feet, I want to make brief reference to another matter. That is a project undertaken by the Katherine Historical Society to purchase a Gypsy Moth aircraft which was owned and used by Dr Clyde Fenton in 1934 to establish the aerial medical service in the Northern Territory. When Dr Fenton came first to the Northern Territory he realised quickly the need to provide medical services and improved communications to people of the outback. He purchased the Gypsy Moth aircraft, a DH6DN, in 1934, and established those services. Unfortunately, he crashed his first aircraft at Victoria River Downs Station in May of that year.

Subsequently, the aircraft was transported to Darwin and rebuilt after which, in 1937, Dr Fenton test flew it. After passing through several hands, it reached the hands of the present owner, a pastoralist in western New South Wales. That gentleman has offered the aircraft for sale to the Katherine Historical Society. The cost is \$100 000 and the historical society is presently undertaking a fund-raising campaign to obtain the money to purchase it. I would indicate to honourable members the importance to the Territory of obtaining significant items relating to our history, particularly in relation to the pioneering individuals who did so much to establish services to the people of the outback.

I would draw to the attention of honourable members and the people of the Territory the fact that fund-raising is under way. The historical society is holding a lottery in which the first prize is \$10 000. Tickets will be on sale for some 2 months in all centres throughout the Territory. Other fund-raising activities are under way also. I would ask the people of the Territory to support that campaign in an effort to bring this important piece of our history back to the Territory.

Mr COLLINS (Sadadeen): Mr Deputy Speaker, I support the remarks of the member for Katherine regarding the defence of this country. There may be very little that we can do as a small parliament and a small part of Australia, but I know people up here feel very keenly about the matter of defence. It was good to hear him express those views, which I am sure many of us support.

I was delighted to hear the response from the minister this morning regarding sandmining in the Todd River, particularly in the section which flows through the town from the Telegraph Station down to the Gap. The advantage of removing sand is that it will lower the riverbed level and will play a part, maybe only a small part, in flood mitigation in the town. The Deputy Leader of the Opposition has tried to claim in this House that the sand is worthless because it is too dirty to be of any use in the building industry. Over the years, I have written to the government on behalf of concerns like Centralian Industries which want to mine that sand at no cost to the government.

You will recall, Mr Deputy Speaker, a very costly exercise undertaken when Jim Robertson was Minister for Mines and Energy. It involved the clearing of rubbish and sand which had accumulated by the casino causeway. The expense of operations like that is not justified when a concern like Centralian Industries will carry out mining under government direction through the appropriate authorities. Centralian Industries has also indicated a

willingness to pay a royalty. Clearly, that company has no doubt about the economic value of the sand. One of the things that it is very concerned about is the fact that, if sandmining is stopped in the Todd and the sources downstream are no longer able to be used, then it will have to go a long way at great cost to get sand and the cost of sand for the building industry will rise. That will be passed on to the consumers, and homes, bricks and concrete will cost us more. There are many advantages in having sand mined in that stretch of the Todd and I am pleased that the minister has promised to expedite the process.

I want to tell a story this evening, Mr Deputy Speaker. About a week ago, one of my constituents came into my office and said: 'I want to get hold of a piece of land in the Alice Springs area. I did the usual thing. I went to the Department of Lands and Housing and made application to get the land and find out what I had to do'. She was informed that, of course, the Aboriginal Sacred Sites Protection Authority would have to be contacted and asked whether there were any sacred sites on the land where she wanted to set up a business. This lady is not one to sit around. She is a person who knows many of the Aboriginal people in the Alice Springs area and she had pretty good information that a certain gentleman was the custodian of the land.

To speed things up, she took a bit of initiative, went out and saw the custodian and brought him to the land in question. He assured her that there were no sacred sites in that particular area. Being a go-getter, she went along to the Aboriginal Sacred Sites Protection Authority and said: 'I have been told by the custodian that there are no sacred sites there. Can you please hurry up your part of the work'. She was then told that the person she was talking to had been out there in a 4WD with 3 of the custodians a few days earlier and the custodians said there were sacred sites all over the place.

She came to my office. She was going to ask me to get in touch with the Sacred Sites Protection Authority to find out exactly who the custodians were. I was out on other business. My secretary rang up and was told that the authority did not want to deal with third parties, and that the information was not available.

The lady went out to see the gentleman whom she thought was the custodian of the site - and who claimed to be the custodian - and told him that the custodians had been out to visit the area and said it was covered in sacred sites. The gentleman was not very happy. He said that there were other people involved in the custodial role in that particular part of the town. He arranged to visit the site himself, along with the lady who wanted to set up the business, the one person who was above him in the custodial role and a young lady. Again, they all said that the area was free of sacred sites. Accompanied by those people, she rang the authority. She said she wanted a meeting with the authority and the custodians. She was told that that was not convenient because the custodians were not around and would not be available for a long time. In other words, she was given the bum's rush.

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

Mr COLLINS: I withdraw, Mr Deputy Speaker.

The gentleman on the phone was somewhat nonplussed when she said: 'The custodians are here in my presence'. Even then, he was still not particularly helpful. The lady reported this to me.

I am not too sure how, but another well-known Aboriginal gentleman of the Alice Springs area, Mr Bob Liddle, found out about the matter. He met with the custodians, saw the site and was in agreement with the 2 people claiming to be the traditional custodians that there were indeed no sacred sites there. Mrs Rosalie Kunoth-Monks was also mentioned. She is a well-known lady in Alice Springs who has a very important role with the women's sacred site near the Telegraph Station. Since her grandmother Amelia passed away, she has had an increased role in that area. The lady who was trying to get the land told me that Mr Liddle said that neither he nor, to his knowledge, Mrs Kunoth-Monks had ever been approached by the Sacred Sites Protection Authority in relation to the area.

This does not seem to be a very good state of affairs, Mr Deputy Speaker. I would suggest to the government that some amendments to the Aboriginal Sacred Sites Act are well and truly due and that there should be a register of custodians and traditional owners and maps of the general areas over which they have authority. This does not mean that those maps should actually pinpoint the sacred sites. I can appreciate that custodians feel that sites are better protected if they are not actually pinpointed. There should be no problem, particularly around developing areas such as towns in the Territory, in preparing such maps and registers of custodians. It would be wise not to make them generally available because some traditional owners and custodians may need a degree of protection. However, if a register were set up, Aboriginal people themselves should have the right to look at it and confirm, query or oppose the listing of certain people. Only the Aboriginal people themselves would really know what the rules were and I dare say that they could come to agreement over who had the authority, what the lineage was and who was to replace whom when certain people passed on.

Also, I believe that access should be available to those officers of the Department of Lands and Housing who deal with land allocation. They should be able to go to the Aboriginal Sacred Sites Protection Authority with an application for land and ask that the area be checked out. No doubt, the authority has a role to play in that. However, there are suspicions that the authority is playing ducks and drakes and that its ideas on the identity of traditional owners are not those of some Aboriginal people. As I have said, Aboriginal people have claimed that they have not been consulted on sacred site matters concerning areas of which they are the traditional owners or custodians. I believe that the Sacred Sites Protection Authority should welcome such a register. Its integrity is on the line in a sense. I would remind the Sacred Sites Protection Authority that its role is to do the bidding of the Aboriginal people. It is not a power broker. It is the servant of the people.

I believe that amendments along the lines which I have suggested would remove the problems which arise in cases like the one I have been discussing, where there is some dispute as to who should have the say under Aboriginal law. I would request that the government take the idea on board and act quickly so that people can know that things are being done fairly, not only for the sake of those who apply for land but for the Aboriginal people involved, so that the proper people are consulted. We should not have people making up names and stories and saying that they do not want to deal with third parties because they want to keep everything secret. In doing that, they put their own integrity under question. One would like to think that they act in a proper manner. However, they should not only act properly but be seen to be acting properly. I believe my recommendations would allow that to occur.

Mr FIRMIN (Ludmilla): Mr Speaker, I would like to take a few minutes of the Assembly's time this evening to place on record my thanks to the Secretary and staff of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association UK Branch, whom I had the pleasure of meeting when I visited London recently as this parliament's delegate to the 37th Parliamentary Seminar.

This was my first opportunity to travel on a CPA visit and, in company with 23 other persons from the Commonwealth associations representing 20 countries, I was extremely pleased to attend the 2-week seminar in London. Both the CPA staff and the members of the Houses of Commons and Lords involved in the program treated us with enormous respect, preparing papers for us and spending a considerable amount of time leading us through an extremely good program designed to give us maximum exposure to the parliamentary system. We were able to see all the operations of both Houses, including administration, the Chambers, committees and dealings with the press. I found it an extremely interesting experience.

Each day's program was split up into morning and afternoon sessions with 1, 2 or 3 speakers, depending on the subject matter. When the subject was a political matter, speakers usually came from the 3 major parties so that a balanced view was presented. The debates which followed those presentations were quite lively and very enlightening, bearing in mind some of the countries represented.

It was enlightening and interesting to see the attitudes people took, depending upon their parliamentary systems and their political persuasions. Discussing parliamentary matters and procedures, together with other matters of interest, in a forum comprising people of varying political viewpoints was thoroughly enjoyable. Discussion was open, free and frank rather than adversative. I know that the member for MacDonnell attended such a seminar on a previous occasion and that he had similar feelings about it. I am sure that he gained a great deal from his visit to London. The other delegates and certainly the staff gained something from his visit, as I hope they did from mine. They remembered him clearly and asked to be remembered to him. They appreciated the gift that he presented to them, which is still on display in the Chambers in the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association UK Branch area, as I hope mine will also be.

Mr Speaker, I recommend that anybody who travels to the UK from this parliament make the effort to visit the people in the UK branch. They are extremely helpful and very knowledgeable, and they are very nice people to meet. I met some wonderful people and had some enlightening visits while I was there.

I was fortunate enough to be attend the Commonwealth Day celebrations on 14 March. We do not appear to treat Commonwealth Day observance with a great deal of gravity in this place or, indeed, in Australia. Whilst we recognise it, we do not indulge in a great deal of pomp and circumstance in our observance of it. In London, of course, it is different. It was interesting to see the flagpoles in Parliament Square flying all the different flags of the Commonwealth.

We attended a church service in the morning at Westminster Abbey in the company of the Queen, all the members of the parliamentary delegations, the Commonwealth Secretary-General, heads of state, ambassadors and so on. It was a moving service which was attended also by schoolchildren from different parts of the world who were there for sporting, cultural and educational reasons. It was the most ecumenical service I have ever seen. Every religion

was represented and all present joined in the prayers as part of the Commonwealth Day observance. I found it to be a moving experience. I enjoy Westminster Abbey for its historical and architectural significance but it was also nice to be part of a service there which involved considerable pomp and ceremony.

Apart from being extremely interesting and well-known persons, many of the people we met have had, and continue to have, ties with Australia. I had rather an interesting experience with a member of the House of Lords who invited several of us home to dinner one evening. I found that he was writing a television series about the Northern Territory. Although he had never visited the Northern Territory, he was writing the script of a 6-part children's series.

A member: Who was that?

Mr FIRMIN: Lord Ted Willis who used to be involved in the BBC in London. He is now an independent scriptwriter at the age of 74 or 75. He is an extremely interesting fellow who has written several books. He had a long history with the theatre, radio and television. In fact, I think he has been involved in the arts for some 57 years. Whilst he has travelled to Australia regularly - I think almost annually for the last 25 years - I do not think he has ever been to the Northern Territory. I invited him to the Northern Territory because he is writing a children's script which he intends to call 'The Jabiru Trail'. I have sent him some photographs of jabirus and posters about Jabiru. Perhaps that may make his script just that much more exciting for children.

At the end of the seminar, I took the opportunity to visit areas which might assist me in understanding some of the problems we have with 2 aspects of our development: ports and trade zones. I visited the port of Felixstowe in East Anglia which, 14 or 15 years ago, would never even have rated a mention as an English port. To the east of London and approximately opposite Dunkirk, it was surrounded by mudflat areas. Previously owned by the county, the area had been sold to 3 local farmers who decided to turn it into a port for container ships. Just 20 short years later, it has the largest turnover of any port in England. I understand that it has the fifth or sixth largest turnover of any port in the world.

It was incredible to see the port in operation. I was informed that \$117m was being invested to expand the port half a mile upstream and that a large section of common land was being purchased to protect the environment. In the 20-odd years of the port's operation, the effort to clean up the river and the port has been so successful that large numbers of seabirds have been attracted back into the area. As a result, conservationists will not allow further development on the mudflats and a marsh has been purchased so that the sea birds can move 200 yards up the river. Having done that, the port owners believe they will succeed in getting permission from the authorities to build another 200 yards of wharfing infrastructure on the river, thus considerably expanding the port.

The port operations are containerised. So many ships come and go that there are traffic lights on the river. You can see the ships backed up out in the English Channel. When the green light is given, the tugs bring a ship into the wharf and it is unloaded immediately by huge movable cranes. Specially-designed trucks drive in under the cranes and the cargo containers are dropped onto them. The trucks then race to a backloading area where the containers are dropped. Two trucks are used per ship crane. I watched while

a 5000 t cargo vessel was unloaded and reloaded with cargo for Holland. The whole operation took 27½ minutes and the vessel was then on its way again. I was told that the maximum time for a ship to be in port is about 4 hours. We would have the opportunity to use the same system if we could attract the shipping. Hopefully, we will be able to do that one day.

Mr Speaker, I also had a look at some trade zones. I will have to speak about that in the adjournment debate next week because I am running out of time. However, I will briefly touch on Shannon in Ireland. The morning after visiting Felixstowe, I visited the Shannon trade zone, supposedly the mother of trade zones. She is certainly the oldest trade zone that is still working today and probably the most successful trade zone in the world. The zone takes in an enormous area. It began as a small trade zone authority but it now controls the entire airport operations, the free stores, the industrial village that backs up the trade zone and all the administrative aspects as well. The management has been so successful that it has been chartered by the Irish government to take over the development of the entire western region of Ireland in terms of tourism and trade.

One of the most exciting things in the trade zone at Shannon is something that we might be able to look at. Whilst the zone is expanding in the manufacturing area, it is also expanding in some administration areas. It is actually making considerable sums of money in the area of banking and ...

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

Mr BELL (MacDonnell). Mr Deputy Speaker, I want to make a few comments about a couple of matters in this evening's adjournment debate. I will endeavour to be as quick as I can.

The first matter I want to speak about tonight is the way the government has been doing its business in this Assembly. In order to explicate exactly what I mean, perhaps I should give honourable members a quick lesson in inverse proportions. Inverse proportions are well-known to several of us. For example, generally speed and time are thought to be in inverse proportion, so the faster you go the less time it takes. There are many other types of variables which are in inverse proportion to one another.

We have heard some interesting examples of inverse proportion from the government benches this week. I think the most interesting one came from the neophyte Leader of Government Business, the Minister for Mines and Energy. As you will recall, Mr Deputy Speaker, I have been unkind enough to refer to the mindless energy of the Minister for Mines and Energy. He probably gave the clearest examples of inverse proportion this week and his contribution to tonight's adjournment debate was a case in point. He gave a clear example of the inverse proportion between the volume of his voice and the truth of what he had to say. The shakier the ground he moves onto, the louder he becomes. I am sorry, that is an example of direct proportion. The less sure of his ground he is, the louder he becomes. That is an inverse proportion.

I think it is becoming clear to all of us, and certainly that is so on this side of the House and among those who report on the proceedings of the Legislative Assembly, that the shrieking indulged in by the Leader of Government Business is clear evidence of his lack of certainty about the content of his words.

The second interesting example of inverse proportion also relates to ministers' feelings about the sureness of the ground they are on, particularly

the Ministers for Lands and Housing and Health and Community Services. Honourable members will have noted the number of occasions on which members of the opposition have called points of order whilst these ministers have been speaking during the 3 days of these sittings. They will also recall the number of times the Speaker has been forced to request the ministers to withdraw improper comments directed at opposition shadow ministers. I suggest that we have another interesting example of inverse proportion here: the more the Minister for Lands and Housing and the Minister for Health and Community Services play the man, the less sure they are of their ground.

I give fair warning to the Minister for Health and Community Services that we have a little more to draw to his attention next week. I sincerely hope that at that time he will have the good grace to actually understand the arguments involved rather than to play the man.

To return to the Minister for Lands and Housing, who was playing the man this morning and accusing me of acting on the basis of all sorts of bad motives and so forth, I merely want to point out one thing. Either the minister is so stupid that he did not understand what I was saying last night or he has wilfully ignored it. I point out once again to the minister that the implication of what he said - that special purposes leases will be freehold as long as some money has been paid - is that 8HA will be able to get freehold title on its lease for approximately \$85, unlike a former director who a few years ago paid \$35 000 for a special purposes lease along the way.

The minister can accuse me of all sorts of calumny, falsehood, corn and so forth but the fact remains that the implication of what he said, whether the conversion has taken place or not, is that conversion can be effected for \$85 when, in fact, an earlier conversion cost \$35 000. Mr Deputy Speaker, I am sure that that is not your idea of equity. If that is the Minister for Lands and Housing's idea of equity, I suggest to him that nobody out there would share it.

Another subject I want to touch on briefly this evening relates to the Leader of Government Business seeking leave of absence for the member for Flynn on the basis that he has gone back to Alice Springs, his home town. I would not mind being back home tonight either, but I feel an obligation to put in my hours here in order to try to keep the government as honest as possible. I assumed that a serious medical condition had caused the member for Flynn to seek leave of absence. A serious medical condition has been afflicting a number of members of the government over the last few months, and several other members of the CLP. The Country Liberal Party has been suffering an epidemic of this medical complaint which has been diagnosed, certainly by those of us in opposition, as a severe case of having the nose out of joint. I am sure that will be of concern to Territorians generally, and I certainly hope the member for Flynn recovers from his affliction in due course and once again contributes to debate in this House. It has been one of the most extraordinary performances that I have had the opportunity to witness in 7 years in this Assembly.

Mr Deputy Speaker, in the time that remains to me I want to draw to your attention and to the attention of the Minister for Mines and Energy and the Chief Minister, the considerable uncertainty that exists with respect to charging for essential services and metering, particularly for power and water in some communities in my electorate. I am raising this issue tonight because of representations I have received from people in places like Hermannsburg and Santa Teresa, about what is really a very unclear government policy.

I refer honourable members to a letter to the Chief Minister from the manager of the outstation resource centre at Hermannsburg, Mr Glenn Auricht. Its subject was outstation water supplies and it covered 8 matters which I would like to place on record in the Assembly. First was the concern that there was no written agreement or policy directive from the Power and Water Authority to authorise its request that the community pay for bore diesel fuel. The second matter related to the fact that the Hermannsburg community apparently does not pay water rates and is reimbursed for its diesel costs. Thirdly, no notice had been given to outstation leaders to arrange finance for this new charge. I draw attention particularly to the case of Mr Hermann Malbunka at Ipolera, who will have to find some \$200 per month to pay for bore diesel. He is conducting a tourist enterprise which involves people staying for one or two nights at a time. Fourthly, there will be concern about employment, health and work projects which may deteriorate if people cannot buy their bore diesel. Fifthly, outstation leaders, who are responsible for their outstation costs, will be paying for their water at a rate which is 4 times as high as that paid by other Territory households. Sixthly, Mr Auricht states that the outstations around Hermannsburg provide better health and employment programs than elsewhere and have fewer social problems; it appears that the Territory government is insisting on penalising Aboriginal people for those initiatives. The seventh point is that the bore fuel costs could be met many times over if the visits by bore consultants checking up on the consumption of water and fuel did not occur on a monthly basis. The eighth point, which to my mind is the central one, is that the user-pays principle is fair enough but, to use Mr Auricht's words, 'sensitivity, fairness and negotiation is required for Aboriginal people to feel responsible for government initiatives'.

Mr Deputy Speaker, as a conscientious local member, I pursued the representations from the outstation resource centre at Hermannsburg. Subsequently, I have received further representations from the people in the community at Santa Teresa. The fact is that policy in this regard is all over the shop. The people do not know what is going on. I really think that the government's insistence on the implementation of the user-pays principle in this regard is extremely unjust. In closing, I simply say that a slavish devotion to the user-pays principle is not appropriate in these circumstances. The history and economic arrangements applying in the places I have referred to are different to those of other outstations. I believe that a just contribution principle should apply. People are prepared to pay but they need to be able to pay what they can afford for services that everybody else takes for granted.

Mr TIPILOURA (Arafura): Mr Speaker, I want to say a few words about my recent trip overseas with the former Minister for Tourism and the Chairman of the NT Tourist Commission, Bob Doyle. It was a very good trip. It was my first overseas trip. I was glad to be a member of the party promoting Territory tourism in Europe, the United States and the UK. I was astonished at the level of interest shown in my people and culture by industry and media representatives and the general public. At the same time, I was concerned that the level of interest was not being met with sufficient information.

Mr Speaker, we must look very hard and more intelligently and creatively at the role of Aboriginal communities and their potential in Northern Territory tourism. My own people, the Tiwi people on Bathurst and Melville Islands, have demonstrated what can be done in joint venture tourism promotions like Putjamirra on Melville Island, Barra Base Lodge on Bathurst and also the Tiwi tourist operations on both Bathurst and Melville. Except for the Tiwi Tour operation, these are all joint ventures. All are making a

real contribution to the economy of Bathurst and Melville Islands and the Territory economy generally. What might be done if this approach were more actively pursued?

The fact is that the great upsurge in Aboriginal culture in recent times has been attacked and resisted by extreme conservative forces, not so much in the Territory but in the southern parts of Australia where there is very little knowledge about our culture and the way we live. In fact, the upsurge in Aboriginal culture has brought tremendous benefits to Australia and the Territory. Nothing demonstrates this more than the worldwide interest in Aboriginal culture which is responsible in no small way for the upsurge in tourism. Long-term tourism demands long-term management. The danger of allowing ad hoc and accelerated growth in tourism can be seen around the world. The Costa Brava is one of the most glaring examples. Closer to home is Kuta Beach in Bali. We must not allow development to destroy the very environment that is the primary attraction.

During the trip, I had the pleasure of meeting many people who are in the tourist industry, as well as the general public. They know very little about us and I gave them some background on how we live in the Territory and how we still have our culture, land and language. They were amazed because the only Aboriginal people they know are the activists, the likes of Mansell and Foley and all that mob. They were very surprised. They had never met a real, live full-blooded Aboriginal person and I was very pleased about that. The Territory's future in tourism is good if we can approach the Aboriginal communities throughout the Territory and perhaps get them involved.

Since coming back from my trip, I have been around my electorate and told people about it. I have talked with people about what we can do to promote tourism in the Territory and help out the Territory economy. Interest is also great in the electorate of the member for Arnhem. He has asked me about my trip overseas and his communities have taken an interest in the matter. Maybe the new minister for tourism can approach the member for Arnhem about the possibilities in his area.

The trip itself was very worthwhile. We did not have much spare time; we were on the go from the time we left Darwin. We opened up new offices in Singapore and in Frankfurt, where I saw snow for the first time in my life. It was quite an experience. I wouldn't like to live in a city like New York or London. They are just too big for me. Coming from the bush, I need the fresh air, the trees and the grass. In New York, you would be lucky to see the city itself. All you can see are the rows of buildings all around you. All in all, I think the future of tourism in the Territory looks great.

Another matter I would like to touch on relates to comments made by the activist, Mr Kevin Gilbert, in regard to the mosaic exhibition by Mr Nelson Tjakamarra. Mr Gilbert claimed that the mosaic was cursed to all white Australians until justice is done for Aboriginal people. I find that hard to believe. Being an Aboriginal person myself, I admire people like Mr Tjakamarra, who has been given the opportunity show his mosaic in front of Parliament House to the rest of Australia and the rest of the world. I had the pleasure of attending the opening of the new parliament and I think something needs to be done about activists who say they represent the interests of all Aboriginal people whilst at the same time condemning people like Mr Tjakamarra. I cannot work that out.

Mr Tjakamarra is a well-known person in Papunya. He is a traditional owner in that area and he knows the country well. He has said that his mosaic

represents goodwill between white and black Australians in seeking a better future for everybody. I think Mr Tjakamarra can be given credit for that; I certainly give him credit. I personally look forward to a better future for everyone. Something needs to be done about the likes of Mansell and co, otherwise they will divide the community and may destroy us. There is the media too. People in the media are paid to do a job and make a lot of noise but often they do not get the facts. The bloke who made the mosaic was there at the opening of Parliament House. Members of the media could have asked him about the mosaic but they did not bother. They went straight to Mr Gilbert, who made claims about a curse. I find that hard to believe.

I have taken up the matter with the Northern Territory member of the House of Representatives, Mr Warren Snowdon, and also with the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs, Mr Gerry Hand. I am sending a personal letter to them. I had a confrontation with Mr Hand when he was first appointed but if he, the DAA or the federal government can do anything about the activists, they should. There is a danger of the communities getting hurt.

I can understand the feelings of many white Australians in the southern states because they know little about us. Some have never been up to the Territory or seen a full-blooded Aboriginal person. If the activists get bad publicity in the papers or on television by protesting and so on, I do not really blame southern white Australians for saying that we are bad. All the tension is coming from the activists. We in the Territory know that. The sad thing is that none of the Aboriginal organisations, especially the CLC and the NLC, have commented or backed up Mr Tjakamarra's comment about the mosaic. I am a bit angry about it because I thought the CLC and the NLC represented the interests of Aboriginal people in their areas. It makes me wonder what the land councils are set up for. They exist to protect the landowners and the traditional people. Mr Tjakamarra is a traditional owner in Papunya. I thought that the CLC at least would have backed up what he said about the mosaic. However, it seems to have done nothing. Maybe it has done something and I am not aware of it. Maybe it has acted on the quiet. If that is what has happened, it is not good enough. That is all I want to say, Mr Speaker.

Mr POOLE (Tourism): Mr Speaker, it is not often that we stand up and pass compliments about people on the other side. However, I would certainly like to compliment the member for Arafura, not only on the comments he has just made but also on the reports that I have had from the Tourist Commission and from industry representatives. I would like to pass on the opinion of some of the people to whom I have spoken. It is probably best summed by saying that they feel that he is one of the best ambassadors the Northern Territory has ever had in terms of selling the Northern Territory to the markets of Europe and North America.

I would like to touch on a couple of newspaper articles. In the Sunday Territorian of 24 April, there was an item in the well-known Bushranger column entitled 'Slack Service'. It concerned criticisms of the tourist industry and what could be perceived as criticism of the Northern Territory tourist bureaus in Darwin and Adelaide. I sought some advice on the incident recounted in that column. It related mainly to 2 female passengers who came to the Northern Territory, found that some of the tours they had booked and paid for were not operating, and tried to get refunds.

The crux of the matter was that neither the government tourist bureau in Darwin nor the Adelaide office sold the tickets in the first place. I understand they were sold by Australian Airlines in Adelaide. Unfortunately, but naturally, the tourist bureaus are not set up to give refunds to

passengers who have paid their money to other companies. Despite the comments in the paper, the manager of the tourist bureau in Adelaide received a letter from the South Australian residents. It said, inter alia: 'We were very disappointed with the tourist services or, perhaps I should say, the lack of tourist services in Darwin'. As Minister for Tourism, I certainly intend to attempt to address that over the next few months.

The people who had the unfortunate experiences referred to in the newspaper column said in their letter that they checked at the Darwin tourist office to see whether shorter day trips were available. However, there was nothing offering. Importantly, they said that the bureau staff were very courteous and helpful. In signing off their letter, they said: 'We also had a ticket issued through your office for a 2-day tour to Ayers Rock from Alice Springs. This was excellent and we were more than pleased with the service we received from them'. As you well know, Mr Speaker, sometimes comments in the newspaper do not really reflect what has actually happened to people.

In the NT News on Thursday 12 May, there was a letter entitled 'Not Good for Tourism'. Really, the crux of that letter was a complaint from a Mr Charles Lindall that he found the tourist bureau in Darwin closed at 4.55 pm. I raised this problem with the Chairman of the Tourist Commission, who has advised me that he has fully investigated the allegation. I would like to make the following comments. Usually, the staff of the Northern Territory Tourist Bureau are still in the bureau office until 5.30 pm or 6 pm every night. Whilst the doors are closed at 5 pm, bureau staff have to carry out various administrative duties before they can leave. If any customers are standing at the door after closing time and are seen by staff, usually the staff open the door and try to assist them. I am told that it is quite common for clients who have been in the bureau since before 5 pm still to be working out itineraries with bureau staff as late as 7 pm in the evening. In any event, after hearing of the complaint, a meeting was held with all members of the bureau staff. They even checked the time of the bureau's clock with Telecom. It was found to be correct. They believe that the allegation is unsubstantiated and might simply be a case of human error on the part of the gentleman concerned.

It is worth noting that the 2 bureaus I have mentioned tonight - Adelaide and Darwin - are small operations in many respects. Sales from the Adelaide bureau are running at 64% above those of last year, with a total of \$1.68m. The Darwin bureau is 23.6% above last year's sales with a total of \$1.73m. With the number of staff they have, the bureaus are very busy. It is indeed unfortunate that complaints appear in the media because I am sure they do nothing to encourage the very well-performing staff.

I would now like to turn to a letter published in yesterday's NT News. It is entitled 'Horrified by Drunks' and was written by visitors from Switzerland. They said they went from Darwin to Kakadu, Katherine Gorge, Tennant Creek, Alice Springs, Yulara and the Olgas. They made the comment that the land was beautiful and the bush at night was really something. However, the main point of their letter was that they were 'quite horrified by the number of people in the streets or public parks drunk, dirty, abusive and sometimes sleeping in their own vomit'. The letter says: 'The main streets in Katherine and Tennant Creek must take first prize for that. What a sight for the visitor! What an example for the local children!'. They concluded by saying that we should not count on them encouraging their friends and acquaintances to visit the Territory unless we did a lot of tidying up.

That is quite a topical comment and one can relate it to all aspects of our communities. In the last few days, there has been comment about campers in the Todd River bed from the Mayor of Alice Springs and the member for Stuart. It is an unfortunate fact of life that the criticism of campers in the Todd River does not really relate to the traditional Aboriginals. I walked down there about a fortnight ago with Bill Ferguson from Tangentyere Council and spoke to some of the groups of people. The majority of them certainly are not drinkers. They are people who have come into town for a short stay and who will return eventually to outstations etc.

However the perception of the general public and certainly of the residents of Alice Springs is that trees are damaged while casks and cans are left lying around, sometimes for months. Before the flooding, the litter in the Todd was shocking. It looked very good for a couple of weeks after the flood but litter is beginning to accumulate again. It is a problem that the community must face. There is a need for discussions with Tangentyere Council to try to change the situation and to provide facilities if need be.

I have a couple of camps in my own electorate and I know many of the people who move out of those camps do so for various reasons. However, it is not good enough to allow people to live in places like Araluen Park where the fences and some of the residents' back gardens are used as public toilets, where drinking parties and fights continue all night and where residents are regularly disturbed by people knocking on doors to summon ambulances, to call the police or to call taxis. Casks, cans and broken bottles litter the back fence of Gillen Primary School because that is a regular drinking spot. Empty casks and cans litter the oval between Millner Road and Flynn Drive because people are regularly camping there and drinking there. It is not good enough to have people camping in Lovegrove Drive within 200 or 300 yards of residents. There is no fresh water and no public toilets. These people are destroying both young and old trees and generally making a mess. It is a community problem and I wish I had the answer to it.

I suggest, however, that if we do not tackle such problems, either nicely or in ways that are sometimes seen by other people as not so nice, we will certainly do incredible damage to the tourist industry in the Northern Territory. The days are rapidly approaching when people will no longer be prepared to travel on their holidays and be surrounded at various times by foul-mouthed drunks. I am not talking particularly about Aboriginal drinkers. I am talking about people of all races because the problem in many communities relates as much to the whites as it does to the blacks.

Mrs Padgham-Purich: Why doesn't the 2 km law work?

Mr POOLE: I will pick up the member for Koolpinyah's question. According to the statistics, the 2 km law works fairly well. I can cite a number of nights in Alice Springs when between 180 and 320 people have been picked up by the police and locked up.

Mr Ede: What about drinking areas?

Mr POOLE: I am not disagreeing with the idea of drinking areas to pick up the ...

Mr Ede: We will have to do something about it.

Mr POOLE: Yes, but we need to do more than establish drinking areas. It is a major problem for the Territory and a major problem for the tourist industry, and it is a matter that I intend to address.

Mr McCARTHY (Victoria River): Mr Speaker, I wish to raise a couple of matters.

In last night's adjournment debate, the member for Stuart made a statement which was untrue. He said, and I quote: 'I now want to talk about the 3% 1986 national wage case claim by the public sector'. He went on to say: 'The agreement was that 3% would be paid in the form of superannuation. It became part of the public service dispute last year. It was agreed in the arbitration tribunal that it would be paid as 1.5% from 1 July 1988 and 1.5% from 1 January 1989'. Mr Speaker, that is wrong.

What we agreed to do at the time of the dispute last year was to commence negotiation by 1 January 1988 and to complete negotiation by 1 July 1988. We said that, if we reached agreement on payment of superannuation, we would pay no more than 1.5% on 1 July 1988 and no more than 1.5% on 1 January 1989. We did not reach agreement. In fact, we have commenced negotiations with the Trades and Labor Council over superannuation and there is a delay at this very moment. It has not been brought about by the government, which agreed to pay 1.5% from 1 July this year with a further 1.5% from 1 January next year, as an unfunded scheme.

I would venture to say that the offer is better than what has been offered in other states. In fact, it is an offer that the Northern Territory government can support. How we handle that scheme has absolutely nothing to do with the unions. The fact is that every state except Queensland has put in place a scheme which is unfunded. The TLC has decided to go to the wall on this particular issue and has threatened to do what it did last year, to have blood in the streets. Mr Speaker, that will not change the situation. The decision on whether the scheme should be funded or unfunded is clearly one for government and not for the TLC. I am prepared to say right now that, if individual unions wish to negotiate with the Public Service Commissioner, I will listen to their arguments. If they wish to accept the scheme we have offered, I would be happy to put it into place. There was no commitment to pay last year but there is a commitment now. How that scheme is funded, however, is entirely a matter for government.

The member for Stuart also mentioned the person at the Trades and Labor Council who has received some funding from the Commonwealth government and the Territory government through the Australian Traineeships System. That system has been successful in the Northern Territory to date and, hopefully, it will continue to be so. I am rather surprised that the Trades and Labor Council has nominated the member for Stuart as its spokesman in this regard.

Mr Ede: I am the opposition spokesman on industrial matters.

Mr McCARTHY: In fact, last year the Trades and Labor Council came to us and said: 'You are supporting a person in the Confederation of Industry through this scheme. How about supporting us?' I said: 'Put a proposal to us'. It did so and it received support. As yet, the TLC has not come back to me asking for further support beyond the time when the present arrangement finishes. I forget just when that is.

Mr Ede: March 1989.

Mr McCARTHY: Yes. The TLC has not come back at this stage to ask for renewal. Until it does so, I am not prepared to make any commitments. I certainly support the Australian Traineeships System and, in fact, if we can reach agreements more quickly with unions - who have been the intransigent

ones in terms of that system - I will certainly do everything I can to get the system working in many more areas. The unions need have no fear in that regard. It is rather unfortunate that, 12 months before any renewal is due, the matter is raised by the member for Stuart, who is not the person I would expect to come to me looking for ongoing support to the TLC in that regard. I am sure that the Confederation of Industry will come on its own behalf to seek support and not send somebody whose responsibilities do not cover such matters.

Mr Ede: They do.

Mr McCARTHY: The next matter I wish to discuss relates to my own responsibilities as Minister for Labour and Administrative Services. My department has responsibility for the Aboriginal Employment Development Program, which was the outcome of the Miller Report. With the mainstreaming of functions that occurred last year, Aboriginal employment comes quite clearly under my portfolio.

There has been a very clear commitment from the Northern Territory government to Aboriginal employment, particularly in terms of our training programs. I can cite places like Batchelor College and the Katherine Rural College and a number of training courses funded by the Department of Labour and Administrative Services, not the least of which are our own group intakes. Only this week, I launched a new scheme which will take a group into the private sector. The 20 young people involved will get their training support from 11 businesses around Darwin involved in retail industry, banking and the professions. It is very pleasing to see that program up and running.

Mr Speaker, there are some very solid signs of improvement in the commitment of Aboriginal people to employment and training. I have been concerned for many years that the commitment might have been stronger. I think it still has a fair way to go but there are clear signs that Aboriginal people see the need for training for employment. I will cite a number of places in which there is a clear commitment from Aboriginal people to do something on their own behalf. I was very pleased to see recently that a family group at Ngukurr had taken on the garbage contract. The group had bought a garbage vehicle and was running the business quite successfully. My concern was that there was nobody in that family group who really had the management skills to ensure that the business would be ongoing. Obviously, we need to look at the issue of management. We can initiate any number of jobs but they will fail if there are insufficient management skills to keep them going.

Mr Speaker, just a while ago the member for Arafura raised the subject of the potential for tourism on Bathurst and Melville Islands. I will not dispute the tourism potential of those 2 islands because I have been pushing it for 20 years or more. I am not having a go at the member for Arafura because I have been aware of his commitment for a long, long time. I know that the views that he has expressed today are genuine and heartfelt. I really give him credit for perhaps putting himself out on a limb with his own counterparts today by saying some of the things that he has said. Tourism on Bathurst and Melville Islands has a great future.

However, I am concerned that the Barra Base Lodge and Tiwi Tours do not really involve Aboriginal employment to any great extent. If an Aboriginal group were ever able to get involved in tourism, it is the Tiwis. They are outgoing and capable of talking to people and handling people and I think it is a pity that many more Aboriginal people are not involved. I understand the

Barra Base Lodge is bringing in guides from Darwin on a 2-weekly turnaround. That is ludicrous. Obviously, there is a need to see that local people are trained and take up those jobs.

There is a need for commitment from Aboriginal people. Nothing will happen without it. The Aboriginal Development Division of my department is recognised Australia-wide as a trainer. It is doing a tremendous job with the group intakes, as I explained just a while ago. There is a need to expand training out into the field a little more. It is very difficult to provide training in the major towns for many Aboriginal people. We need to expand it, and I am working towards being able to take training programs out to people in the bush. When I talk about taking training out, I do not mean developing new systems of providing training. I would expect that, in all cases, we would use facilities and organisations which currently exist and provide programs, such as the Department of Education programs and others. We need to address the issue and we are doing so.

One of the things that needs to be done is to focus on existing jobs at this stage and provide the training in management to handle those jobs. Many existing jobs are filled by Aboriginal people, but they do not have the skills to make them ongoing. They don't have the management skills and the development skills, and those will have to be provided to create further jobs.

I am bringing forward a Cabinet submission in this regard which I hope will start to turn the tide of Aboriginal employment and training in the Northern Territory. In the long term, the development of the Northern Territory will have to rely on the involvement of Aboriginal people in the work force. We need to get many more Aboriginal people into the work force. The only way we will do that is through the provision of skills training. Obviously, before that comes, there needs to be commitment from the people themselves. The Territory government is fully committed to this task and I would venture to say that, given another few years, the Aboriginal people will be truly taking part in the Territory work force.

Mr EDE (Stuart): Mr Deputy Speaker, in early March, myself and the Leader of the Opposition were approached by a couple of gentlemen who wished to discuss a proposal they had for an international grammar school in Darwin. The discussion was on the basis that they were hoping to run a program for the International Baccalaureate Diploma. We discussed the numbers and the type of school it would be. A draft paper of 22 February described it as an independent, non-denominational, coeducational, day and boarding secondary school called the Darwin International Grammar School.

We went through the proposal with the gentlemen and said that it was all very nice but what was it going to cost? What was it going to cost the government? The answer was very clear: 'We will expect only the per-student amount every year that the government pays for other secondary schools, and we will expect that only in respect of students from the Northern Territory'. Whilst I believe in submitting proposals like this to a needs-based analysis, I really could not argue against that answer. I said that was fair enough, and asked what else was needed for the school to operate. They answered: 'The land at the Valuer-General's valuation'.

Not long afterwards, on 5 March 1988, a front-page article in the NT News stated that the school had received the go-ahead. In it Mr Clark said that the school had approval from the federal government to bring in foreign students. The Chief Minister said that his government was fully behind the proposal although it would not be putting any money into it, and that it would

mean an enormous boost for Darwin. At that stage, I thought that the government had probably taken a harder line than I had and had told the school that it would not even be receiving the per student amount which it gives for students in other secondary schools. I thought that was fair enough, and I presumed that the proposed site at the Berrimah Experimental Farm would still be sold at Valuer-General's valuation.

I was quite astounded when I heard later on that my assumptions were wrong and that the Northern Territory government had decided to give the school a subsidy. It works out at 10% of up to \$11m as an interest subsidy and 5%, up to a total of \$350 000, in capital subsidies. That gives a total of \$1.45m per year for the next 6 years. I must admit that, prior to the announcement, there was a rumour going round that this would happen. I discounted it because the remarks made by the people we met with had been quite strong and they had said that they would not be seeking government funding.

When I saw the amounts involved, I did some arithmetic. I knew that at that stage about 67 students were committed to attending the school and that there was some difficulty in attracting sufficient numbers.

Mr Harris: They were having trouble keeping them away.

Mr EDE: That is not the case. Those things have changed in about 3 days. I believe at this stage that there are definitely 66 day students and 10 boarders. The proposal I saw involved 400 students attending next year. I am now advised that, if they get around 300, I might have to make some commitment to follow the Treasurer when he keeps his promise to jump off the Elizabeth River Bridge because the swimming pool in his electorate was not completed by the date he nominated in an election promise. That pool is hardly completed now.

When I divided the \$1.45m of funding by the number of 67 Territory students presently enrolled, the subsidy came to \$22 000 per student per year. That means that the school is not merely operating on the standard subsidy but is using additional funds. When it became clear to the government that the original proposal was no longer valid and that lower-than-expected enrolment numbers would drive the subsidy over the standard amount of \$1136 per student, it should have applied the criterion of need.

We have heard the Minister for Education say that the school will save money for the government because it will not have to build another high school to cater to student numbers. There are 2 problems with that: one is Kormilda College and the other is the change in demographic trends in the Northern Territory. In fact, we are going through a bad situation where the number of people in the work force is dropping. I am told that high school enrolments are dropping. If the government moves students from a school which is not full and puts them into another school, it is not saving but losing money. It will result in an inefficient utilisation of the government's buildings whilst the government subsidises another school to make its own system more inefficient.

The minister stated that the argument regarding Kormilda was a fallacy and that there were not 450 vacancies. Kormilda cannot run economically until it has 600 students. That is on the basis of its own figures. Its own figures say it requires 600 students. It has 150 students now and it is necessary to place another 450 students at Kormilda before the school becomes economic. What is the government doing putting money into another school? It is a case of sorry priorities.

Let the minister contrast this decision with one affecting Dagaragu, where there is an education centre. One third of it has been built and it has been in that condition for months. It is in severe danger of being vandalised, which would result in the government losing the money it has spent on it so far.

As I stated, the government should have made a needs-based decision. The federal government's funding program is needs based. I can tell the minister now, and I am sure of this, that the federal government will not put money into the Darwin International Grammar School. I certainly I hope it won't. I will be telling it not to. I will not have education money put into the Darwin International Grammar School when we have needs in our own government system and when our government system is not full. That is the major difference between the Darwin International Grammar School and the Catholic and other religious schools.

Look at the minister's response in another area, Mr Deputy Speaker. The government has said that it will not prop this school up if it goes down the tube. I will be wanting to make sure that that is the truth and that the government does not prop this one up when it goes down the tube. I know the problems that the school authorities are already having in attracting students. I know the difficulties they are having. It is understandable when you look at the fees structure. I notice that the tuition fee has come down from \$7000 in the space of a month or so. It is now \$5000 for 8 to 10-year-olds and \$6000 for 11 to 12-year-olds. The building fund contribution has come down from \$1000 to \$500. I do not know whether that bears any relation to the money which the minister has so generously provided.

Mr Coulter: Table the documents.

Mr EDE: I am quite prepared to table the documents. They came from the International Grammar School.

There is another point which day students should be aware of. More than two-thirds of students were to be boarders. At the moment, about 1 enrolment in 7 is for a boarder. The day students need to realise that the school has a requirement that they stay on until after dinner at night and that they have lunch and dinner at the school. Those costs, however, are not included in the tuition fees. Those fees will be determined only when it is known how many students will be attending.

There is a distinct difference between our approach to private schooling and the government's approach. The government's approach is that if it is private it is good and that if it is public it is bad. The point that needs to be made is that, if you are making a decision about a private school, you do it on the basis of need. You do not attempt to marginalise your own public system. You do not attempt to bring in an inappropriate private system to complement the public system. You try to make your own public system better.

Some of the concepts being mooted for this school are really quite ludicrous. I will give one example. At the end of Year 10, we are told, the International General Certificate of Secondary Education of the University of Cambridge Local Examination Certificate will be awarded. I skipped over that the first time because I did not twig to it. Suddenly, I was taken back over 20 years to the old colonial days when, I recall, the children of colonialists who could not come to grips with the local education system worked themselves through what was called the Cambridge Certificate. That is what it is: the Cambridge Certificate revisited. It is a program which is run from England.

It is appropriate for English systems and is used in a number of schools which are set up for the children of the colonialists and the acculturated locals.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I am worried about the students who move into the baccalaureate program only to find that they are unable to complete. I am concerned about how they will be able to move back into the stream which, I believe, will be provided for our own system.

My main point relates to the reason for the school's change in attitude. I want the minister to listen to this because I am going to advise him of something I have on very good authority. It relates to why initially the school required no money except the ordinary subsidy but then had to come to the government for additional funds.

In the beginning, the school authorities genuinely believed that they would be able to find a corporate sponsor - somebody who wished to own a school, would feel good about owning a school and would not ask for an economic return for a number of years. The phrase used to describe this to me was 'sugar daddy'. The school authorities were looking for a sugar daddy and they referred to other cases around the world where such people have been found. They found out in a very short time that sugar daddies are very thin on the ground, that the rains had dissolved them all. Of course, they immediately knew what to do. It came to them in a flash. It took them just 5 seconds to realise that, as soon as your sugar daddy dissolves out there in private enterprise, you go the the traditional sugar daddy, the Northern Territory government! True to form, the traditional sugar daddy said: 'No worries, fellas. How much do you want? I will rezone the land so that it is appropriate for a school before I put the Valuer-General on to it, so that you can get it for \$270 000'. I know plenty of people who would have paid considerably more than \$270 000 for that piece of land for purposes other than a school. That is how the government got the price down: by rezoning the land before it put the Valuer-General in. The government then said: 'Here is \$1.5m per year, no problem at all'. The traditional sugar daddy had run true to form.

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH (Koolpinyah): Mr Deputy Speaker, last night I gave the first instalment of the story of Pinnacle Developments' land claim on a Darwin City Council park. I will continue the story now.

On 26 February 1988, Pinnacle Developments said in the NT News: 'We have offered the council a large sum of money to redevelop the golf course currently in the park'. On 29 February 1988 Pinnacle Developments said that it would spend \$2m to upgrade the golf course to an executive 9-hole course. One does not have to be blind in one eye and unable to see out of the other to realise that nobody is going to give \$2m to anybody or any project unless he expects a substantial reward. In the NT News of 3 March 1988, Pinnacle Developments described a plan to spend \$2m upgrading the Gardens Park links in connection with the hotel development as its 'gift to the people of Darwin'.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I am sick and tired of hearing this company's sickly sentimental stories about gifts to Darwin. The proposer of the development said that he had given a great deal of work to Darwin and that he deserved something from the people of Darwin and the government. It is nice to see developers come to Darwin and it is nice to see them developing Darwin - but they are not Robinson Crusoes. There are many small developers who also help in the development of Darwin. No developer investing money and capital in any development does that out of the goodness of his heart. He always gets a few dollars in return and that in itself should be a sufficient and just reward without the good wishes of the people and more free land.

On 16 March 1988, the NT News editorial said that Pinnacle Developments should be sold the land and should pay for it at commercial rates. Yesterday, I stated the amount which has been calculated as what should be paid for this block of land. What Pinnacle Developments would end up paying, however, is shrouded in ambiguity. One would expect that, at the least, it would be required to pay about \$3m for the land and \$2m to the council for the golf course upgrading as promised. However, that promise of \$2m for upgrading the course has been revoked.

Mr Hatton interjecting.

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH: I have worked it all out.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I believe the Darwin City Council asked the developer if he were prepared to give it the \$2m and let it upgrade the golf course. He said no. The value of the work to be done would be \$2m but a large proportion of the money, as expected, would be spent on projects directly in support of the hotel: for example, relocating the third green, demolition of the old clubhouse and car park and rebuilding them next to the hotel, and building pumps and pipes to draw water from the lake for the hotel's ponds. In effect, the golf course as a public facility would be converted to private benefit. It would be a gift from the people of Darwin to Pinnacle Developments.

I would like to touch briefly on the subject of the private development of the golf course. This was brought up at the 2 public meetings that I attended, Mr Deputy Speaker. The fact is that 3 small business people had been given a lease on the golf course to develop it over a period of 5 years with an option to renew the lease at the end of that period. From what I have been told, they have done a good job. I do not play golf there myself. The golf course and existing facilities can be used by anybody who comes in off the streets. You can play there in stubbies and thongs, straight off the job. It stands to reason that, if the hotel develops the golf course to first-class standards, it would take away the opportunity for ordinary people to play for \$5 per round or whatever it costs. Mr Deputy Speaker, don't get me wrong, I am not a socialist. However, I believe that if facilities are available to the public at a reasonable cost, those facilities should continue to operate and not be taken over by a private development.

In a letter to the Darwin City Council on 16 March 1988, the Chief Minister said:

The community would be able to gain freehold tenure over the golf course. With the agreement of the council, the government would be prepared to include the present area of Gardens No 3 oval and the land between the casino and Myilly Point for golf course purposes. Such agreement would mean that the government and the council would need to agree on the re-establishment of an oval at least of the same standard as Gardens Oval No 3.

However, on 28 March 1988, the Minister for Lands and Housing, also in a letter to the council, said:

You refer to land between the casino and Myilly cliffs for the purpose of extending the golf course. This proposition was offered to facilitate Pinnacle Developments' proposal. I am now given to understand that the 18-hole golf course component of the development is no longer proceeding. If Darwin City Council requires the area, then a detailed submission should be lodged with my department.

On 23 February 1988, the council met and declared its position. It communicated that position to the government the next day. Three weeks later, the Chief Minister wrote to the council and offered freehold tenure over the golf course, Gardens Oval No 3 as part of the golf course, land between the casino and Myilly point for golf course purposes, and re-establishment of an oval of at least the same standard as Gardens Oval No 3. As the offer stood, there were some important moral questions. The council and government were already processing the freeholding of parks throughout Darwin. Gardens Park was one of them. What was the normal process one day became subject to conditions the next. To many people, it looks as though the government has pulled a shonky on the Darwin City Council. I am not saying that I agree that that is the case. I am saying that many to whom I have spoken believe it is the case. I have been surprised by the antagonism which people in the rural area have expressed in conversations with me at times when this subject has been hitting the headlines.

As I understand it, an agreement was reached between the Darwin City Council and the government under which the council would relinquish its leases on parks and would receive freehold tenure over them. I understand that, in all good faith, the Darwin City Council relinquished its leases and the government said that it could have all the leases back as freehold except the little bit that it wanted to keep. That is why people think the government has pulled a shonky on the Darwin City Council.

The land between the casino and Myilly Point seems to have been offered to all and sundry. In the early 1980s, the casino was supposed to beautify it but, as we all know, it never did. It was included in the Foreshore Protection Plan in 1982 as a totally protected area. Subsequently, the Territory Property Trust was offered an option on it. The Chief Minister offered it to the council on 16 March 1988 and the Minister for Lands and Housing withdrew the offer on 28 March 1988. Finally, the council would be foolish to entertain the proposal that Gardens Oval No 3 be re-established, without receiving ironclad guarantees in relation to location and money.

Mr Deputy Speaker, if this exercise reaches its expected conclusion, which seems imminent after hearing the Minister for Lands and Housing's remarks at a public meeting - and according to the Planning Act, he has the final say - there will be grave political repercussions. Good government is stable government, no matter by what political party. Instead of continuing to push an unpopular project, Pinnacle Developments could make a slight adjustment in the detail of its proposal and build the hotel on its own block rather than on parkland, and provide the same number of jobs in so doing. That would create political support and kudos instead of political antagonism in the community.

It does not cut any ice with me to say that we have plenty of parks and a gully taken from 1 park means nothing. If this attitude continues, we will run out of parks very quickly. In about 20 years, they will be at a premium. If the government gives parkland to a private hotel development and the developer owns a block of land adjacent to the park, the people will ask why, particularly given that a very large hotel was recently built without any government assistance. If the government goes ahead, people will ask - indeed they are asking now - whether the developer expects preference because he knows a member of the CLP.

I would like now to touch on the subject of overcharging. I raise it with particular reference to certain professional people in Darwin, namely doctors, lawyers and veterinarians. The case which came to my attention involved a husband and wife who found themselves unable to have children. In 1980, they

applied to adopt a child. They were not particular about the sex or ethnic origin of the child - all they wanted was a child. All the paperwork was processed by the relevant government department here. This couple, who came from Queensland, happened to be in Queensland on a holiday when they heard that a friend of a friend had an unmarried relative who was going to have a baby whom she was prepared to have adopted. This couple adopted the little girl. They consulted a lawyer in Brisbane in relation to the paperwork and were told that everything was in order. It was not until 18 months later, in 1981-82, that they discovered that the solicitor in Brisbane had not filed the paperwork with the courts and that, legally, the child still belonged to the mother.

The couple consulted a solicitor here, and this is where we come to the overcharging. About 5 or 6 weeks ago, the case was finally concluded. I will not mention the solicitor's name but everybody knows him very well. This case cost the parents \$20 000. In order to raise the money to pay the solicitor's account, the couple had to sell their house. That is greatly to be deprecated. I believe that the solicitor let the case run on unnecessarily for the sake of obtaining money without any realisation of the hardship he would cause.

The couple would like to adopt another child. Adoption agencies prefer parents to apply within a certain time, usually 2 years. Because the initial adoption had not been finalised, they applied only recently. They were told by the Chief Welfare Officer at Palmerston that a letter would be written to the welfare office to try to advance their case because they had already adopted 1 child and had had all the interviews. The gentleman at Palmerston said that, unless the adoption unit of the Department of Health and Community Services employed its own welfare officers to conduct the interviews, they would probably have to wait another 12 months because of staff shortages. Why they would have to wait that long, I do not know. These people have been interviewed ad nauseam since 1980. They are of good standing in the community. They are members of many organisations. Anybody who knows them will speak very highly of them, yet they are subjected continually to interviews.

This is a case of a loving couple who have a child and want to adopt another but have continual problems placed in their way. It appears that approval is being sought to employ more people in the adoption unit of the department so that interviews can be undertaken more expeditiously and so that people like these can adopt another child.

There are 2 problems involved: the overcharging by the solicitor and the lack of staff in the adoption unit of the Department of Health and Community Services. We hear much about child abuse and child neglect. This is a case of a fine couple who are looking forward to taking another child into their home. They do not care about the sex or ethnic origin of the child. All they want is a child but they are presented with nothing but obstacles.

To return to the issue of overcharging, I believe that it will have to be examined at some stage by the societies which deal with the professional conduct of veterinarians, doctors and lawyers. I know of individual cases of overcharging and over-servicing. People are not necessarily ignorant; they are simply not au fait with professional practice and they accept the bills and pay them. I believe they should return such accounts to the professional person and refuse to pay where they feel that they have been overcharged or subjected to over-servicing.

Mr PERRON (Industries and Development): Mr Speaker, the people running the Northern Territory Traders Association appear to have departed from their traditional role and branched out into politics. Sadly, it seems that they have directed their efforts towards the ALP. The result has been that they have provided ammunition for the Leader of the Opposition to do his demolition job on Hungerford.

Earlier, the Leader of the Opposition accused me of attempting to suppress information I received from the NTTA, the Northern Territory Traders Association, about the alleged reputation of Hungerford Refrigeration when it was a company in Queensland. What was I supposed to do with that information? What did the Leader of the Opposition expect me to do? Put it on the front page of the newspaper? Was that what I had to do, in order not to suppress the information? Instead, of course, I passed the information to the people who should be aware of it, and that was the people in the trade zone and Hungerford Refrigeration.

Of course, the Leader of the Opposition, did not do that with the information when he obtained it. His motives were different to mine. I wanted Hungerford to be successful and, if there were outstanding debts in Queensland or a reputation that was not good, the principals should be made aware of that. We are talking about the new principals of Hungerford, of course, because the company has been restructured. If the new principals were not aware of those facts they should have been told about them so that they could take appropriate action. But I wanted Hungerford to succeed and the Leader of the Opposition wanted it to fail. As the Treasurer said earlier in this adjournment debate, the Leader of the Opposition has now admitted that he succeeded in stopping some people in Darwin, some businesses, from dealing with Hungerford. That was quite apparent from the contents of the transcript which the Treasurer read from earlier.

What I find curious is the Northern Territory Traders Association's motives in feeding information about Hungerford's debts in Brisbane to the Leader of the Opposition. The information that it had collected on behalf of its members in the Northern Territory could very easily and simply have been distributed to those members. Indeed, I would expect that that would be exactly what the association would do with it. But why would it go to the Australian Labor Party with it? As I understand it, the Northern Territory Trader's Association runs a service for its members. It collects information about a company's activities, assigns a credit rating to the company and then advises its members so that they can decide what sort of actions they may care to take. I consider it highly improper for such an organisation to use that sort of information publicly, as appears to have been done in the case of Hungerford via the Leader of the Opposition.

In my view, organisations which assemble this sort of information have a very high degree of responsibility in terms of using it very carefully. If that sort of information is to be distributed, its accuracy needs to be virtually absolute. What of money that is owed because of a legitimate dispute? What of money that is owed or held against counter claims in trading between companies? What chance does a company blacklisted by the NTTF have to defend itself against the charge of being a bad credit risk when it may be quite innocent? I would imagine that it has no access to the list circulated by the NTTF. It has no opportunity to challenge the information or to try to demonstrate that it may be wrong. This leads, of course, to a potentially very dangerous situation, and the Hungerford exercise may have been a precedent. Let us hope that it was not. If it was, what company might be the next to have its details passed to people like the Leader of the Opposition?

Rather than passing it on through the proper channels, the Leader of the Opposition chose to reveal publicly the information he received. He claims that that was his responsibility and duty. I may be wrong about where he got that information. If he could demonstrate to me that his source of information on Hungerford's history in Queensland was someone other than the Northern Territory Traders Association or associated personnel, that would probably remove my suspicions about its motives in this regard. But, if I am right, the Northern Territory Traders Association has some answers to provide about its activities.

Mr HARRIS (Education): Mr Deputy Speaker, I could not help but jump to my feet tonight to respond to the ridiculous comments of the member for Stuart in relation to the establishment of the Darwin International Grammar School. At least one thing came out of this evening's debate. At last he is starting to get to what the figures are: \$1.45m over a 6-year period. I might ...

Mr Ede: Per year for a 6-year period.

Mr HARRIS: Per year for a 6-year period.

I must say that, prior to tonight, all the bleating has been about \$8.7m of up-front money. The opposition and the Northern Territory Teachers Federation Executive have been using scare tactics in an effort to beat up a storm in the community and have alleged that \$8.7m was to be paid up-front. What a load of nonsense! At last, tonight, the opposition spokesman for education is showing some signs of starting to understand the facts.

Now let us look at those facts. The amount is \$1.45m a year over 6 years, which is less than we provide to other non-government schools. I might say here that other non-government schools receive assistance over a period of 10 years. The school will open next year, and we heard the nonsensical questions. 'Why the urgency? Why do you have to do it now?' If we are going to get a school up and running to take pressure off the existing government school system, we have to start now. We have barely 6 months to build a school. We had to make our announcement in order to give the school the opportunity to be up and running.

We heard the member for Stuart's nonsense about the school population not growing. Let him go and look at Casuarina Secondary College or Darwin High School and see where the numbers are. Let him talk to the Northern Territory Teachers Federation and the people who are saying that those schools are overcrowded and that we need more student places.

We do not have to build a new school at this point in time. If we received our fair share of assistance for non-government schools based on the percentage of private-sector involvement in education in the Northern Territory, we would not have such a load on our existing system. If we can get private secondary schools up and running by the beginning of next year, then good luck! Kormilda is another one which I will come to shortly. I can certainly tell the member for Stuart that we will be assisting schools to get their secondary areas up and running.

I might say here that the Northern Territory government does not shrink in any way from the issue of choice. We want to see choice in the education system, and the member for Stuart might start to think about his party's policies. We have not heard anything about them yet. We only hear from him when something he does not agree with comes up and he says that the opposition does not agree with government policy. He does not put forward alternative

suggestions about how we might overcome very serious problems. When people are thinking of moving to an area because of a work transfer or in order to look for work, the first thing they ask about is the quality of education their children will receive in that area. There has to be choice. It is a fact of life, whether the member for Stuart likes it or not. People will always look after the education of their children and, if they consider that the educational services in a particular area will not provide their children with the education they would like them to receive, they will not move to that area. You have to look at building confidence in educational services in a particular area, and the Northern Territory government will continue to support those people who want to provide facilities that will offer choice to Territorians.

Again, look at the number of students from isolated communities who go interstate for their education. There are over 600 of them at present. The member for Stuart is always telling us that we do not think about Territory people and that this government is not interested in them. It is the member for Stuart and his opposition colleagues who are not interested in Northern Territory students. We want to give parents in isolated communities the opportunity to have their children educated in the Northern Territory. We don't want those children to have to go 3000 km away to Sydney or Melbourne. It is estimated that, each year, about \$7m flows out of the Territory to support those Territory students interstate. That money should be spent here in the Northern Territory.

There are other spin-offs. At present, we give assistance to the parents of isolated children to send their kids interstate. They know that, once opportunities exist here and boarding facilities are available in the Northern Territory, our current assistance program will have to be looked at and that they will not receive the assistance they get to send their children interstate. I have always said that initiatives like this will free up government money to allow us to maintain our very good government education system. Anyone listening to the member for Stuart would think that our government school system was the worst in Australia. I might tell you, Mr Deputy Speaker, that it is the best. Let the member for Stuart go and look at schools like the Casuarina Secondary College, Sanderson High School and Dripstone High School. Let him have a look at the primary schools. They are wonderful schools. They are well-resourced and they are well-staffed. The member for Stuart accuses us of taking money away from the government system. What a load of nonsense! Every student that comes out of that system into a private school or non-government school will save us about \$4000.

The member for Stuart knows that, for every 13 students at senior secondary level, we have to pay for a teacher. A teacher's salary costs about \$25 000 and on top of that is the oncost. The total amount is about \$40 000 per teacher, and that is where the cost of education is. It is not so much in the buildings. It is in the recurrent cost to government, and that again is something that the member for Stuart does not know anything about.

He starts talking about these figures: \$22 000 a student, \$25 000 a student or whatever. Here he is dividing the number of students into the cost of the school in 1 year. Goodness me! What am I going to do? If we build a school for \$25m, is the honourable member going to divide that by the number of students in the school for the first year, and say that is the cost per student? Those buildings last for years. He cannot work out sums in that manner. He should lift his game and start to get some facts.

I might say here that the member for Stuart has not contacted me in any way whatsoever. The same applies to the Northern Territory Teachers Federation. We hear all these comments and innuendoes about what is happening out there, but do these people try to get the facts? No way. I have tried to get on ABC Radio to contact people down the track and let them know what the facts are. But when you get on these radio stations, all the interviewers do is throw the opposition's figures at you - figures like \$22 000 a student. What a load of nonsense!

The overseas students will pay full fees and the assistance that is being given to the Darwin International Grammar School is weighted accordingly. It is expected that about 40% of the school enrolment will comprise overseas students. Only 5 years ago, ALP policy was to cut out positions for Asian students. That has changed now. The federal ALP policy is now to encourage full-fee-paying Asian students to come into the country. What are members of the opposition on about? Don't they talk to their friends down there in Canberra? Don't they know what they are doing?

I am amazed at the comments that have come from the opposition. Let me just touch on the business of not getting Commonwealth government support. Here we go again: 'I am going to make sure that they do not get Commonwealth government support'. Goodness me! The opposition knocks everything we do to try to help the Territory, whether in business, by helping students or whatever. The fact of the matter is that the federal Minister for Education has gone on record supporting the development of the school in Darwin, which will make a valuable contribution to providing overseas students with the benefits of a high-standard Australian education. I have mentioned that the federal ALP government's policy is to attract Asian students into Australia. Does the Leader of the Opposition check his facts? I have not heard anything from the Leader of the Opposition in relation to that point and I have been waiting. I have heard nothing.

There are other benefits in the project and the \$29m or thereabouts to be spent on its 3 stages. That will create jobs in itself. The 5% capital assistance relates to boarding facilities. The opposition simply does not get the facts. All the way down the line, there are mistakes and more mistakes. Ongoing jobs will be created. The opposition is always bleating about the need for permanent projects. Only recently, I remember the member for Stuart going on about the need for permanent projects to be developed. This is a permanent project, and he is trying to knock it. Apart from the jobs created during construction, there will be ongoing expenditure in relation to the servicing of the school. That expenditure will flow into the community. For example, the school will have to be supplied with food for catering purposes. Eventually, about 500 Asian students will attend that school. The amount of money that will bring into this community will be enormous. It will be in the vicinity of \$7m per year.

I believe that the ALP, through the distortions of the member for Stuart, is trying to bring down this project. It has tried to beat up a storm, as has the Executive of the Northern Territory Teachers Federation. Members of that executive have made false statements to the community and are continuing to make them.

Tonight we heard again about the 450 vacancies at Kormilda College. Kormilda College needs classrooms. Its present capacity is 250 boarding places. The Deputy Leader of the Opposition knows that, but he talks about 450 vacancies. I just wonder who members opposite have been talking to and if they have their facts straight. Kormilda College is required in the Northern

Territory as much as the Darwin International Grammar School. They will complement one another; they will not compete with one another. They will work within the system. We need to make sure that we look after the interests of traditional Aboriginal people, and the opposition should be supporting that.

I am surprised at the opposition education spokesman's complete lack of knowledge in relation to this whole exercise. Another matter he is not informed about is higher education. During the last sittings of the Assembly, he stood up and talked about the opposition's policy. It was the wrong time to do that because we were debating another issue. I wanted to know what the opposition policy was on higher education but I still do not know. I have written him a letter asking him to tell me what he was going to say in the rest of his speech because he changed the subject. The government wants to know about the opposition's policies in relation to higher education and in relation to non-government schools. I want to know, and I am sure the people of the Northern Territory want to know, about the opposition's policies in relation to non-government schools. They are part of every system in Australia. Non-government schools play a very important part in education in every Australian state and they are supported by governments. The member for Stuart's information was obviously passed on to Senator Collins who, unfortunately, got the figures wrong - although he does support non-government schools.

Mr Ede: So do I.

Mr HARRIS: So do you! You do not support choice.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I will finish here. What needs to be made very clear to the member for Stuart and the Leader of the Opposition, if they ever want to get into government, is that they must start to look at their policies instead of simply saying they do not agree with what the government is doing. They do not provide any alternatives whatsoever. It is about time the opposition started to wake up and lift its game. Members opposite will remain on the opposition benches for ever and a day unless they start thinking about Territory people. We are building a secure future for the Territory and we are offering people choice.

Mr SETTER (Jingili): Mr Speaker, tonight I would like to tell you about considerable opportunities that exist for businesses in the Northern Territory which become involved in the import and export of goods.

In reply to a question earlier today, the Minister for Industries and Development stated that he had recently put in place a joint trade working party between the Northern Territory and Indonesia. I am fortunate to be a member of that working party and tonight I would like to advise the House of some of the opportunities available to business in the Northern Territory. I certainly hope that, in the not-too-distant future, business takes advantage of those excellent opportunities.

The minister identified some guidelines for us earlier on. I would like to run quickly through some of those to refresh members' memories. He said that the responsibility of the joint working party was: 'to identify reciprocal trade opportunities, to encourage development of communication and transportation, to provide introductory and information services for business people and government representatives visiting that area, to improve efficiency relating to regulation and administration, and to promote joint ventures'. Mr Speaker, if you will allow me, I would like to work through

each of those guidelines and expand a little on them so that members will be aware of what they really mean.

The first task is to identify reciprocal trade opportunities. Let me point out some of these. Mr Speaker, you are aware that I have visited various parts of Indonesia over the last couple of years. I have noted many high-quality products which have considerable potential as imports to Australia. Let us have a look at them. In Maluku, there are timber products. I have spoken on this before but I continue to harp on it because it is so important. That region has an enormous resource in plywood. There are 9 sawn timber mills within about 500 miles of here. That is particularly important because, as a result of the pressure of the environmental groups, World Heritage listings and so on, our timber resource in Australia is being locked up. In Tasmania, in southern New South Wales, in northern New South Wales and in north Queensland hardwood forests have been locked up. Where will the timber come from? We still need timber. It will come from the nearest source, and that is within Indonesia.

The Maluku area is one of the greatest sources of spices in the world, and the early mariners identified that. It became the spice cupboard of Europe several centuries ago: cloves, nutmeg and mace. Even today, mace sells at about \$11 000 per tonne. Let me explain what it is. If you open a nutmeg by removing the husk, you find the hard spicy nut. Around the nut is a thin red skin which is peeled off and dried. That is mace, a tremendous and valuable delicacy.

Timor and Flores grow some of the best coffee in the world. If someone in Darwin could obtain a quota for the importation of coffee into Australia, he would have a fantastic business. Coffee is a highly-desired and very expensive commodity. While we may not consume a tremendous amount of it in the Northern Territory, the importer would have the opportunity to distribute it in the southern parts of Australia. That is the case with all the products I am discussing; they can be imported not only for Northern Territory consumption but for consumption in the rest of Australia.

I inspected a factory in Dili in Timor which produces oil from the roots of the sandalwood tree. That oil is produced and packaged in a small phial which sells for about \$A30. It is used as a base for perfume. The sandalwood roots are ground and mixed with water. The water carries the oil through coolers and condensers and eventually the highly-prized and expensive oil is filtered out. Rosewood is another product. It is used in top quality furniture. In Timor, those trees grow wild. There is an opportunity for another entrepreneur.

We have a firm in the TDZ at the moment producing woollen fashion garments for export to North America and Europe. In fact, the minister quoted a price of \$400 for a high-class sweater. That is the sort of price that fashion garments bring. In Kupang, I have seen first-class, high-quality ladies' fashion garments. These are all made under an Indonesian label in Surabaya in East Java. There is no reason why somebody could not import fashion garments and a whole range of other things.

Cement is made in Kupang in West Timor. Because we have our own cement factories, it is unlikely that that would attract a great amount of interest. However, when I was in East Timor, I visited a place about 30 km or 40 km east of Dili where there is a major deposit of high-quality marble. It is sitting at the side of the road. I picked up a piece and I have had it checked. It is high-quality marble. One of these days, when East Timor is accessible,

some entrepreneur could perhaps enter a joint venture to develop that resource. High-quality marble fetches top dollars around the world. It is sitting there, about 500 miles from where I am standing now.

Mr Speaker, the minister went on to reflect on the guidelines. He referred to the need to improve efficiency relating to regulation and administration. Of course, that is very important because over-regulation, particularly with regard to export and import, is a problem we have had in Australia for a very long time. Indeed, Indonesia has it as well. However, because of the downturn in the economic situation around the world, both countries are very interested in modifying their regulations and easing restrictions relating to export and import.

Administration is another important matter. We all know that bureaucracies like to push paper. It is very important to minimise that. We need to provide a service which furnishes business and government representatives with introductions and information. One can understand how important that is. If a businessman goes from the Northern Territory to a place like Ambon wanting to source timber, he needs to know the right people to talk to. Who are the industry people? Who are the government people? We have that information available, Mr Speaker. The contacts have been made and the information is there. I would urge anybody who is interested in becoming involved in this business to go along and talk to Nortrade because it has that information and is very happy to offer advice to any entrepreneur who wants to jump on the bandwagon at this early stage.

The promotion of joint ventures is vital. We are well aware that in both countries there are certain circumstances in which the only acceptable form of investment is by way of a joint venture. There are many joint ventures within Indonesia, particularly in mining. Quite a number of Australian companies are involved in joint mining ventures over there. One that comes immediately to mind is CSR, which is involved in oil exploration on Ceram, which is an island in the Maluku province just north of Ambon. CSR flies spare parts and product from Darwin to Ceram almost on a monthly basis, by way of Air North. That is happening all the time. So we should encourage joint ventures.

A month or so ago, when the Indonesian Ambassador was here from Canberra, the working party held discussions with him, as the minister said earlier. Those discussions were very constructive indeed because the ambassador was accompanied by his trade attache from Canberra and the person who heads up the Indonesian trade office in Sydney. We were able to glean a large amount of very helpful information and we provided them with substantial detail about activities in the Northern Territory and the trading potential of those for Indonesia. The opportunities are considerable, and they were most interested. An Indonesian trade delegation is coming to Australia for a trade fair in Melbourne in August. I would hope that representatives of the working party and the minister's department will have the opportunity to visit that trade fair and have discussions with the delegation because the more contacts we can develop, the better we can understand each other's systems. More confidence will be developed and it will be easier to develop firm trading relationships.

Mr Speaker, at this stage, I would like to pay tribute to the efforts of Nortrade and its predecessors. Over the last 3 or 4 years, it has put a great deal of effort into accessing the South-east Asian market. It is a long, hard road because of the cultural differences, and the minister well knows that. Because of the difference in cultures, we must persist. We must keep at it. We must have confidence in our ability to maximise the trading opportunities that these countries will doubtless provide for us in the near future.

We are involved also in a whole range of educational and technical exchanges. We have the Bahasa Indonesia curriculum project for the whole of Australia which is being developed in the Northern Territory at the moment. I was very pleased to hear from the Minister for Transport and Works that his department is becoming involved in providing technical advice for road construction projects in Indonesia. Trade with Indonesia is developing very quickly and I feel extremely confident that, in the not-too-distant future, there will be a considerable quantity of goods passing across the Darwin wharf to Indonesia with reciprocal trade from the other direction.

Motion agreed to; the Assembly adjourned.

Mr Speaker Vale took the Chair at 10 am.

MESSAGE FROM THE ADMINISTRATOR

Mr SPEAKER: Honourable members, Message No 5 has been received from His Honour the Administrator:

I, Eric Eugene Johnston, the Administrator of the Northern Territory of Australia, in pursuance of section 11 of the Northern Territory (Self-Government) Act 1978 of the Commonwealth, recommend to the Legislative Assembly a bill for an act to make interim provision for the appropriation of moneys out of the Consolidated Fund for service of the year ending 30 June 1989.

Dated 18 May 1988
E.E. Johnston
Administrator.

PETITION

Air-conditioning of Gray Preschool

Mr COULTER (Palmerston): Mr Speaker, I present a petition from 99 citizens of Gray and surrounding areas requesting the Assembly to approve the installation of air-conditioning in the Gray Preschool. 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 in parliament assembled, the humble petition of the undersigned citizens of Gray and surrounding areas do respectfully petition you to approve the installation of air-conditioning in the Gray Preschool. We make this request in the knowledge that students and teachers attending Gray Preschool operate in a premises which is excessively hot, poorly ventilated and therefore not conducive to the good health, education and welfare of our children.

STATEMENT

Filming in the Chamber

Mr SPEAKER: Honourable members, I have given permission for the ABC Television to take library footage of the sittings this morning.

TABLED PAPERS

Draft Bills Relating to Domestic Violence

Mr HATTON (Chief Minister): Mr Speaker, I lay on the table 3 draft bills for consideration as a legislative package to deal with domestic violence in the Northern Territory.

The road to the tabling of these bills in the Legislative Assembly, regrettably, has been protracted. However, having regard to the nature of the issue, and the sensitivities and complexities it involves, the long road is understandable. In March 1983, the then Minister for Community Development commissioned a report to address the issue of domestic violence between adults in the Northern Territory, to review current services and to put forward a strategy for the future. The report was prepared by Dr Peter d'Abbs, Research

Fellow of the Institute of Family Studies, Melbourne. In March 1984, the Northern Territory government authorised the release of the report.

Mr Speaker, my government is committed to the control of domestic violence in the Northern Territory and I am determined that legislation, either in the form of the tabled bills or some other form, will be in place by the end of the year. On the issue of domestic violence generally, Dr Peter d'Abbs, in his above-mentioned report noted:

Historically, the right of a man to use some form of physical coercion in order to impose his will on his wife has been socially-sanctioned for centuries. The boundaries separating acceptable from unacceptable behaviour was drawn not around acts of violence per se, but around the particular conditions under which violence was considered legitimate and the kinds of violence that could legitimately be used.

Today, Australia and other societies are moving towards the position in which male conjugal violence in any form is no longer tolerated, but it is hardly likely that all traces of centuries old patriarchal traditions will instantly disappear.

Community attitudes still have a long way to go before tacit sanctioning of spousal beating is eliminated. My government is not naive enough to believe that the passage of any legislation will eliminate domestic violence in the Northern Territory. It is my government's position that the proposed non-legislative measures referred to later will probably have a more significant impact in dealing with this problem in the Northern Territory than any legislative amendments whatever their form.

Mr Speaker, the d'Abbs Report recommended that there be a separate offence of domestic violence in the Northern Territory Criminal Code. My government is of the view that it would be inappropriate to single out violence between spouses as a separate offence but, rather, that existing criminal law offences such as assault should be given their full force and effect. However, in doing this, my government has acknowledged that the provision of the Justices Act allowing for the obtaining of orders to keep the peace do not go far enough in preventing the recurring incidence of domestic violence. My government believes that these draft bills, as tabled, overcome this criticism.

Mr Speaker, in enacting legislation to deal with domestic violence, it is necessary to finetune the interests of the victim of domestic violence with the interests of the alleged defendant. The cognate draft bills being tabled represent an attempt to finetune that balance. However, in order to ascertain whether the best possible balance has been achieved, I have decided to table the bills rather than introduce them at this stage. My government welcomes comment on the bills as tabled from members of this House, the public generally, women's groups, interested bodies and individuals.

The purpose of these draft bills is to further this government's determination to control domestic violence in the Northern Territory. Specifically, the objects of the cognate bills are to provide: for restraining orders with a power of arrest attached for breach; that the complainant can either be a member of the police force or the victim; for the provision of telephone orders; for police powers of entry where there is a belief on reasonable grounds that someone is suffering or has suffered personal injury or a breach of an order is occurring or has occurred; and that

orders take effect from the time they are made, irrespective of whether the defendant is present, but with a defence safeguard to balance any unfairness to the defendant.

In addition to legislative reform, the sum of \$70 000 has been included in the Department of the Chief Minister's 1988-89 preliminary budget estimates for the Office of Women's Affairs to take carriage of a public education program campaign relating to the legislative amendments. It is anticipated that such a campaign will have a duration of 3 months and use the electronic and print media. It will adopt a preventive approach by highlighting aspects of Territory life which contribute to stress. It is probable that the research conducted by consultants to the Office of the Status of Women of the Commonwealth Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet in relation to the national public education campaign against domestic violence will be of assistance in formulating the Northern Territory's advertising campaign. It is my government's intention that the campaign will be aimed at all sections of the Northern Territory community. Attention will be given, as far as possible, to the use of language and cultural perspectives. The Office of Women's Affairs will liaise closely with the Commissioner of Police and Crisis Line in the development of the advertising campaign.

Currently, people caught up in a domestic violence situation may seek assistance from counsellors from the Northern Territory Department of Health and Community Services and from non-government agencies such as the Marriage Guidance Council, Crisis Line or family support agencies which receive funding from the Northern Territory government. Additional funding has been provided to Crisis Line to enable the employment of a counsellor specialising in the field of domestic violence. This funding will enable people caught up in such incidents to have a next-day access to the counsellor. This post-crisis counselling will provide police with a ready reference point for individuals or couples who seek assistance. Crisis Line will also coordinate training for counsellors in other agencies involved in domestic violence counselling, particularly those in Alice Springs, Katherine and the east Arnhem region. My government is of the opinion that these non-legislative measures are central to the effective implementation of any legislative amendments concerning domestic violence.

I now turn to the specific provisions of the cognate draft bills as tabled. The draft Justices Amendment Bill seeks to repeal and substitute division 7 of part IV of the Justices Act. Draft section 99 enables a member of the police force, as well as members of the public, to make complaints to the court where: (a) a person causes personal injury or damage to property and is, unless restrained, likely to continue that personal injury; (b) where a person has threatened to cause personal injury or damage to property and is, unless restrained, likely to carry out that threat; or (c) where someone has behaved in a provocative or offensive manner which 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 matters exist, the court can make an order imposing such restraints on the defendant as are necessary or desirable to prevent the defendant from acting in the manner for which he or she was apprehended. The provisions of the tabled Justices Amendment Bill will enable such a complaint to be made by a member of the police force or a person against whom or whose property the subject of the complaint was or is likely to be directed. In making an order under the draft section 99, the court can restrain the defendant from entering premises or limit that person's access to premises but, before it makes such

an order, the court shall consider the effect of making or declining to make an order on the accommodation of, and on any children of, or in the care of, the persons affected by the proceedings. The draft Justices Amendment Bill enables the orders to be made in the absence of the defendant. In those circumstances, the defendant shall be summoned 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 the court, having considered the evidence, confirms the order.

Draft section 100 of the tabled Justices Amendment Bill enables a member of the police force to apply to a magistrate for a telephone order. Before such an application is to be made, the member of the police force is required to prepare a form of complaint and affidavit setting out the grounds on which the making of the order is sought. It is envisaged that the telephone order will operate only in those situations where it is not practicable for the member of the police force to obtain from the court an order under section 99(1). For example, the telephone order application procedure may be used in remote communities. The magistrate can make an order only where he or she is satisfied that he or she might reasonably have made the order under section 99(1) on the grounds set out in the form of complaint and affidavit.

A magistrate who deals with an application for a telephone order is required to reduce the application to writing, to note his or her reasons for making the decisions and to record the terms of the order. The terms of that order are then relayed to the member of the police force by telephone who in turn reduces it to writing. The defendant is then served with the terms of the order which contains a provision of the return date of the order. It is envisaged that such a return date will be as soon as reasonably practicable to enable the defendant to be heard on the matter. In the event that the return date is for some reason later than the defendant desires, the provisions for variation or revocation of orders under draft section 110A operate to enable the defendant to apply for an order for variation or revocation of the telephone order.

Perhaps the most significant and controversial aspect of the tabled Justices Amendment Bill is that orders are to have effect from the time they are made, irrespective of whether the defendant appeared or was heard on the making of the order. The problem is the situation of the person who knows, or ought reasonably to know, that an order has been made - if not the details of the order - but who manages to evade service of the order. This could result, for example, in a series of beatings of the spouse or the de facto, and the police, knowing the perpetrator, being unable to act because an order had not been served.

In attempting to resolve this dilemma, the draft Justices Amendment Bill makes the order effective the moment it is made with an exhortation for but without the necessity of service. In order to protect the defendant, it is a defence to a prosecution for a breach of the order that, on the balance of probabilities, the defendant did not know and had no reason to suspect that such an order had been made and was in force. The bill provides for further defences including the fact that the contravention or failure was the result of an emergency and that an ordinary person in similar circumstances would have acted in the same or similar way. A further defence is that the act complained of was reasonable and was no more than necessary to enable the defendant to exercise a right or perform a duty specifically given to or imposed on the defendant by a Commonwealth or Territory court or a court of a state or of another territory of the Commonwealth exercising Territory jurisdiction.

The draft Bail Amendment Bill seeks to insert an additional criterion for consideration when decisions are made to grant or not to 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 division 7 of part IV of the Justices Act, the likelihood of physical injury being caused or threats being made to a person for whose benefit, expressly or impliedly, the order exists.

The draft bill to amend the Police Administration Act allows a member of the police force to enter 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 division 7 of part IV 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.

Mr Speaker, as indicated earlier, in tabling these draft bills I invite discussion and comment from not only both sides of this House but also all sectors of the community. I am confident that the bills as tabled or as amended as a result of discussion and comments will make police and the courts more effective in handling domestic violence complaints and will encourage women to seek the protection of the police and the courts when faced with domestic violence situations. I commend the bills as tabled for consideration. I move that the Assembly take note of the statement.

Debate adjourned.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT Noxious Weeds

Mr PERRON (Industries and Development): Mr Speaker, I wish to make a statement on the noxious weed situation in the Northern Territory in accordance with an undertaking I made during the last Legislative Assembly sittings. Members will remember that, during the last sittings of the Assembly, I made a statement on *Mimosa pigra*. There are, however, many other weed problems in the Territory which need to be addressed.

The classical definition of a weed is 'a plant growing out of place'. Therefore, any plant may be called a weed under certain circumstances. Some useful pasture plants such as Townsville stylo, calopo and buffel grass may be regarded as weeds in home gardens, in crops, in mature parks or along fence lines. Coffee bush is an example of a plant that is a weed in one situation but not in another. In the Darwin environs, coffee bush is regarded as a weed but is not declared noxious. Private enterprise pest control operators and local government authorities are using technology developed by the Department of Industries and Development to control coffee bush in the Darwin area. At the same time, the department and cattle producers are testing coffee bush on properties as a valuable stockfeed source.

The problems caused by weeds are many and varied. It is certain, however, that weeds cause losses to the Territory's pastoral and crop industries, contaminate primary products, choke and pollute water supplies, injure and poison animals and increase the costs of production. They also degrade the natural environment and affect recreation and tourism.

The eradication and control of declared noxious weeds comes under the legislative framework of the Noxious Weeds Act. This act has a history that dates back to the 1800s. The South Australian Thistle and Burr Act of 1862 applied to the Northern Territory until 1916 when a Northern Territory Noxious Weeds Ordinance was notified in the Commonwealth Gazette. The ordinance was amended in 1959 and again in 1962. After self-government in 1978, this ordinance essentially became the Noxious Weed Act.

The act needs to be modernised to overcome its deficiencies. Revision of the act will commence in late 1988 and will include provisions to control the movement of weeds on livestock and vehicles and in seed, hay, soil and other materials. Also it will provide penalties for intentional propagation or distribution of weed species and make provision for declaration of quarantine areas. The intention is to define clearly the responsibilities of government agencies and private landholders in controlling weeds.

I wish to illustrate the magnitude of the weed problem in the Northern Territory. 14 species of plants are currently gazetted Class A noxious weeds under the act and are to be eradicated. These pose a significant threat to the productive potential of our land and waters, be it for primary industry, tourism or conservation. Included in this group are weed species such as water hyacinths, salvinia, parthenium weed, devil's claw, prickly acacia and chinee apple. Class B weeds are those whose spread is to be controlled. 32 species are included in Class B weeds. The most important species are Noogoora burr, grader grass, cassia, mission grass, parkinsonia, sida, hyptis and star burr. In addition to all Class A and Class B noxious weeds, a further 14 species of plants are included in the Class C category. It is desirable to prevent the introduction of weeds in this group into the Territory. The species of greatest concern are rubbervine, Johnson grass and Harrisia cactus. If I may, I would like to elaborate on some of those important weed species and indicate what the government is doing in relation to control and where we have achieved significant results.

Prickly acacia and parthenium are major weeds in central Queensland. There, they have taken over large tracts of land. Prickly acacia occurs on the Barkly Tableland where all known occurrences have been treated and, with continued action, eradication will be possible. The risk of new infestations is high and surveys are maintained to control outbreaks as they occur. Parthenium weed poses a major threat to our developing grain industry as a contaminant of stockfeeds. Exposure to flowering plants causes severe contact dermatitis in humans and allergic skin reactions in animals. Some landowners in Queensland have been forced to leave their properties because of the severity of reaction to this weed. It is difficult to control and will compete readily with pastures if it becomes established in an area. The only record of parthenium weed in the Northern Territory is at Eley Station. It originally covered a stretch of 8 km. An intensive 11-year program, which initially involved aerial spraying, has reduced the infestation to a level where control is now achieved by pulling out individual plants by hand.

Our extensive waterways in the Northern Territory are very susceptible to infestation by various water weeds. One of these is water hyacinth. Of 7 reported outbreaks, only 1 known outbreak of this weed still occurs. This is at Fogg Dam which is visited extensively by tourists. Control is under the supervision of the Conservation Commission of the Northern Territory. Salvinia, another serious aquatic weed, infested 10 sites in the Northern Territory. By using a combination of physical and chemical control, it has been eradicated from 5 sites and is under satisfactory biological control at the other sites.

Many weeds find our environment suitable for rapid growth. Star burr, khaki weed and caltrop occur in many high-use public areas. Seeds of these weeds become attached to vehicles and clothing and consequently are quickly spread to new areas. Spraying of camping areas and parks has led to a reduction in the incidence of these weeds, but this can be expected to be an ongoing problem in these areas.

One weed which is becoming increasingly important is sicklepod. This weed is a major problem in soya bean areas of the USA and is a significant problem in the Douglas-Daly farming area. Its ability to germinate late in the wet season and produce large amounts of seed means that it is difficult to control. It is also increasing on the fringe country behind the floodplains and so is a dangerous companion to *Mimosa pigra*, affecting pastures established for the developing buffalo industry. Chemical control methods, particularly in relation to cropping, are being developed within the crops research program.

Mission grass and grader grass are weeds that are relatively unpalatable to stock. Mission grass has now spread out of the Darwin area and has reached Adelaide River. This grass has the potential to affect the environment by remaining green until late in the dry season when it dries off. Fires at that time may cause irreparable damage to our native trees. Grader grass is easily spread by road equipment and is not considered of use by the grazing industry.

Rubbervine occurs along all major gulf rivers in Queensland and, as such, is a major threat to our native vegetation. It is able to climb over native trees and form shrubs in the open. It does not occur in the Territory and its introduction must be prevented. Fortunately, the Queensland Department of Lands has a major biological control research program on this weed. Should an outbreak occur in the Territory, biological control organisms from this program would be available to us.

I do not wish to give the impression that all is under control. Weed control in the Northern Territory does not come that easily. As all members are aware, the Territory is sparsely settled and the pastoral industry employs an extensive system of property management compared to the intensive systems used interstate. Detection and control of weeds is therefore difficult and expensive. The Territory's environment, with seasonal abundance of moisture, annual flooding, warm temperatures and high-velocity winds, is conducive to the rapid spread and growth of weeds. This, combined with the mobility of the human population and domestic, feral and native animals, means that weeds will continue to be a significant problem in the primary industry sector.

The essence of successful eradication of a weed is early detection of potential problem plants, followed by swift action, regular follow-up control and a long-term commitment to the task. Often a problem is not recognised until it is too late and this is when a weed has its greatest impact on our industries and the environment. In the case of the recent suspected outbreak of Johnson grass in the Douglas-Daly farms area, thanks to early detection and swift action, the weed was identified not as Johnson grass but as a related species which is not as aggressive.

We must be vigilant of these potential problems and we must have the foresight and capacity to do something about them before they become a major disaster. The Noxious Weeds Act delegates responsibility for noxious weed control to land managers. This applies to both public and private land. The government, through the Department of Industries and Development, provides considerable assistance to private landowners and other government agencies to

achieve this. Assistance is in the form of providing spray trailers to primary producers for ground applications of herbicides and funding of 50% of the cost of purchasing herbicides. Currently, we fund 50% of the cost of aerial application of herbicides to mimosa. It is planned to extend this assistance to aerial spraying of Noogoora burr in the Katherine area.

The government provides input into the development of policies on weed control on a national basis through its representation on the Australian Weeds Committee, a technical subcommittee of the Standing Committee on Agriculture-Plant Health. Through this liaison and through direct contact with weed control authorities in the states, the government addresses weed control projects of mutual benefit. For example, the Western Australian government was concerned at the possible spread of parkinsonia from the Victoria River area into the Ord River catchment. The department is tackling this problem by allocating extra resources to the Weeds Section based in Katherine.

In a similar way, biological control research has been enhanced by staff appointments and improvements to laboratory facilities at Berrimah Agricultural Research Centre. When completed, the improved facilities will allow testing of biological control agents against weed species and alternative hosts under Northern Territory conditions. In the past, all of this work had to be done in Queensland. This shared approach will allow more rapid testing of suitable biological control agents for mimosa, sida and hyptis. Chemical control research is also continuing on both noxious weeds and other weeds which industry perceives as potential problems.

The Northern Territory government is participating in joint research projects with the CSIRO, the Western Australian Department of Agriculture, the Queensland Department of Lands and the Australian Centre for International Agricultural Research. The department is sponsoring innovative research by the Darwin Institute of Technology and a private consultant to overcome the problem of stock poisoning by gidyea. The \$14 000 provided for this project hopefully will result in identification of a bacterium that will detoxify the poison in gidyea.

The government will continue to support the development of weed control programs on Crown, reserve, park and other land managed by government agencies. Unless adequate control is undertaken on government land, it is very difficult to insist on control of weeds on privately-owned land adjacent to government land.

To achieve our objective of supporting land-holders in weed control, a wider network of district weed teams is being progressively established. The teams will foster better public awareness of weeds, assist in preventing the introduction of new species, improve our ability to detect new outbreaks and allow for more rapid implementation of control programs. This approach will allow the department to address weed control in such places as the Victoria River and Barkly areas and on land under Aboriginal control.

I must emphasise to honourable members that weed control is not a one-off operation. Because of seed dormancy and the uncontrollable natural forces in our environment which aid the spread of weeds, the Territory government must be committed to this work in the long term. Mr Speaker, I move that the Assembly take note of the statement.

Debate adjourned.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT
Present and Future Role of Royal Darwin Hospital

Mr DALE (Health and Community Services): Mr Speaker, I make this statement about the present and future role of the Royal Darwin Hospital primarily because there is a need for those people who rely on our hospital services, the people of Darwin and the Territory, to have the facts about the situation at the hospital and what it will be in the future. Secondly, I want to force the Leader of the Opposition and his various spokesmen on health matters to face the real issues in the running of the largest service facility in the Northern Territory.

One of the first things I would like people to know is that the Royal Darwin Hospital is not the perfect, mistake-free medical facility that we would all like to have, despite the best efforts of the medical and specialist staff, technical officers and the administration. The hospital has an annual budget of more than \$50m or about \$1m per week. Its dedicated staff have successfully cared for more than 100 000 patients in the last 12 months, which represents about 2000 ill or injured Territorians and visitors every week.

Occasionally, however, an alleged case of poor or mistaken treatment will emerge in the media. One case, which was reported last week, related to a man bitten by a snake. In essence, his wife had complained that the man was not given antivenene immediately after he arrived at the Casualty Department. The wife, according to the newspaper report which contained a number of inaccuracies, alleged that this demonstrated an uncaring attitude among hospital staff. Nothing could be further from the truth. At times, people must be saved from themselves. On average, of every 11 snake bite victims rushed to hospital or doctors in Australia, only 1 will actually have toxic snake venom in his system. The rest have been bitten by non-venomous species, spiders or centipedes, sharp-edged sticks, broken bottles or, in some cases, gardening tools.

Unfortunately, an injection of antivenene can kill a person if there is no toxin in that person's system. For this reason, correct medical procedure requires that doctors be absolutely certain that antivenene is needed.

In this particular case, an initial blood test and a specific test in the wound showed no venom was present. The victim had not seen a snake, nor did he exhibit definite symptoms until the following day. It was only at this stage, when the medical staff were sure that venom was clearly present, that antivenene was administered. I can assure honourable members that the on-duty casualty staff acted in the best interests of this man at every stage of his treatment. He could not have received better medical care in any hospital in Australia. The casualty staff should have been commended rather than publicly embarrassed for their level-headed handling of incidents like this, where the wrong response to panic might be fatal.

Another recent case involved a young boy who had fallen from his pushbike and had injured his elbow. I do not wish to comment on this incident other than to say that an inquiry is being carried out to determine whether or not he was given the best care and attention possible and whether professional or mechanical constraints hindered his treatment.

I am pleased to say that, generally, the quality of care available at the Royal Darwin Hospital compares well with any of the top hospitals in Australia. There are legal and medical avenues available in genuine cases of malpractice or negligence and proven offenders will not be allowed to remain in our health services.

I say again that the Royal Darwin Hospital is not the mythical 'perfect' medical facility although it aims for that standard of excellence. In terms of the volume of patients handled, 2 stories per week in the local media about alleged cases of poor treatment would represent 0.01% of all patients treated. Even if these hypothetical stories were all true, rather than the result of patients' misunderstandings of proper medical procedure, I maintain that such a situation would say a great deal for the very high professional standards achieved by staff of the Royal Darwin Hospital 24 hours a day, every day of the year.

There is, however, a matter which overrides allegations about people having to spend too long in casualty, about an item of equipment not working, or about the incompetence of doctors, nurses, occupational therapists or hospital administrators. I am not at all concerned about dealing with these sorts of complaints as they arise. I am concerned, however, that in allowing attention to be focused on such allegations, there is a tendency to ignore the more important issues. This in turn undermines the confidence of the public in the hospital, whose success is greatly dependent on that confidence.

I recognise that the opposition would like to see that happen. It would then be able to say that the minister was incompetent. In the meantime, however, people would become worried about entering the hospital and would be desperate to travel south. The morale of the staff would decline dramatically. The opposition would be able to point to a failed hospital system and its members would be the last to be concerned at their role in creating that failure by fostering public paranoia. This will not happen.

Let me set out, in nice, simple terms, the basic issue which confronts us in providing a hospital service. First we have the people, the consumers of the service, who are seeking a high-standard service from which they are confident of receiving the best care available. They have a legitimate right to this and should receive what they seek. On the other hand, we have money or, more correctly, money in short supply. I recently negotiated, with the federal minister, an increase in the hospital services grant. The amount was increased from the old Medicare compensation grant of about \$13.5m to \$19.6m. This is heartening and, in the overall context, we did well. But it costs over \$80m to run the hospital services in the Northern Territory and over \$50m of that amount is consumed by the Royal Darwin Hospital alone.

I have to balance the legitimate needs of people against a limited amount of money. That is the basic issue and it both transcends and affects every other decision which is made in hospital administration. To strike the balance which achieves the highest possible return for every dollar which I am able to spend, it is necessary to plan, to set out times and the strategies which will achieve them, to continually evaluate the effectiveness and efficiency of services and to be prepared to change plans, strategies and policies on the basis of our evaluations.

It is often not easy to change course in midstream. It simply is not possible to build new hospitals quickly to meet unexpected demands. Only a very brave minister indeed would close a hospital ward, even when the need for it might appear to have vanished. Responsible management of scarce resources also means it is not possible to quickly upgrade equipment each time there is a new technological advance. Sometimes the community is confronted with a new medical condition which cannot be cured with the skills and technology that are available. Until 20 years ago, most people accepted that a cancer diagnosis was a death sentence. We still tolerate the common cold and influenza viruses.

More recently, health authorities have watched the spread of AIDS into western society. In the Territory, we have more than 30 people who are HIV positive. If the worst happens and those people all contract full-blown AIDS, the cost to our community could be immense. Only 5 years ago, we knew little about AIDS. It is only during the last 2 years that some of the implications relating to the care and treatment of victims have started to become known. Health authorities are still turning up new information which will impact on hospital services. Developments on the leading edge of medical science research tomorrow cannot be planned for in the establishment of a hospital today. However, our planning has to be able to be sufficiently flexible to accommodate the changes we can foresee as well as many we cannot.

Mr Speaker, let me briefly relate some history. In 1972, the Commonwealth Parliamentary Standing Committee on Public Works recognised that there was a pressing need for a new hospital in Darwin. The design of stage 1 of the Woden Valley Hospital in Canberra was adopted with some amendments to save time and design costs. It contained 503 beds, less 123 for newborn babies. That left 380 beds which could be occupied by paying patients. The reasons for many current concerns can be traced back to design faults in the building. These include fire safety measures which are currently being addressed and which will take until mid-1990 to complete at an estimated cost of \$3m. Air-conditioning plant modifications costing \$4.05m are also being implemented. In view of the then annual rate of population increase in the greater Darwin area, the parliamentary committee recommended that, in the long term, both the new hospital and the old Darwin Hospital should be developed to a capacity of 600 beds.

A second stage of the new hospital was planned so that it would become the main rehabilitation centre for the Northern Territory and comprise a total of 220 beds including provision for a rehabilitation unit, obstetrics and paediatrics. With this second stage in mind, functions located in stage 1 such as occupational therapy were intended to provide only a limited interim service. For the same reason, support services such as laboratories, radiology, laundry, catering, steam generation etc were planned to service a 600-bed institution. As a consequence, staffing, cleaning and maintenance costs will remain fixed at a high level, irrespective of under-utilisation. We are required, therefore, to manage a facility without much flexibility in many basic areas.

Since the days when the Royal Darwin Hospital was on the drawing board, there has been a significant change in demand for public hospital services, including hospital beds. Factors have included: population changes; the effects of Cyclone Tracy; age and sex composition; ethnicity; culture; education of the public, including Aboriginals, on the effects that a person's lifestyle can have on health; improved transportation; political initiatives such as Medicare; legislative amendments, such as legalising terminations of pregnancy in certain circumstances; rapidly-increasing hospital service costs, which generate a need to find alternatives to traditional hospital care; changes in medical practice, such as the widespread acceptance of surgically-implanted prostheses like hip replacements; the development of highly-sophisticated medical technology, especially in intensive care and the diagnostic areas of radiology and pathology; changing morbidity patterns such as the swing from undernutrition to obesity and attendant illness such as diabetes, high blood pressure and heart disease; and an increasing accident rate.

The most significant element affecting the role of the major hospital in the Territory is the population it serves. It follows that changes in the

population base compel hospital administrators to constantly re-evaluate their services and other related activities. In 1972, the Department of the Interior estimated 12% annual increases for future growth when the Royal Darwin Hospital was being planned. A shortfall of beds was predicted. Cyclone Tracy reduced the population and influenced the rate of development thereafter. There was a clear need to reassess the viability of keeping the old Darwin Hospital operational.

The influx of predominantly young people to the Territory has meant that there are relatively fewer elderly to care for than is the case in other parts of Australia. Of course, elderly people generally require medical and hospital care. The Northern Territory community has the youngest population profile in Australia, with an average age of 26.5 years compared with the Australian average of 33.8 years. 31% of the Northern Territory population is aged 14 or less compared with 23% nationally. People over 60 years of age represent only 4% of our population compared with the national proportion of 15% in this age group. The age structure of the Northern Territory's Aboriginal population is even more concentrated in the younger age group, with 40% aged 14 or less.

Purely on economic grounds, it was decided that the old tropical-style facility should cease to function as a hospital. Relocation of psychiatric and nursing home patients to Royal Darwin Hospital facilities into wards which were not purpose-designed for their new roles was necessary, and I am sure that many honourable members will recall the storm of protests over these moves. In August 1981, the Alcohol Dependence Treatment Unit was relocated to a building designed originally for staff accommodation on the Casuarina campus. Later on, industrial action by prison officers caused a change of plans in the care of prisoners with psychiatric problems and it became necessary to covert another staff accommodation building on the Royal Darwin Hospital grounds so that it was suitable for the care of high-security patients. A social phenomenon began at Royal Darwin Hospital which reflected a similar trend in southern hospitals, whereby employees rejected the traditional conditions of segregation and accommodation in barrack type quarters.

For those who may have raised an essential point, I have to stress that hospitals are expensive, are difficult to plan and run and are not places in which most people want to be. A reduction in the number of people who enter hospital will assist both sides of the equation which I must balance. Health education is our best hope of reducing the need for hospital beds in the long term. I provided a statement to this Assembly in the September sittings last year in which I discussed the dramatic effect which health promotion activities could have on hospitals. Development of programs such as the 'More of Less Diet', 'Bag Those Fags', Norm and Libby's 'Life Be In it' and so on, are all beginning to have an effect on the type of medical services needed.

At that time, of course, opposition members castigated me for much of that statement. They simply did not recognise any value in it. To them, it was a case of me saying nice things about people not smoking or drinking too much. The point which I was making then, and which I make again, is that, as a society and as individuals, we cannot afford to have people go to hospital when, with changes of lifestyle and attitudes, the need for many trips can be avoided.

In recent years, health promotion has been given greater emphasis by governments throughout Australia. I confidently predict that it will be given greater emphasis yet. I would be very surprised to hear of a major public

hospital in Australia which is not facing severe funding constraints. I believe my colleagues on the Australian Health Ministers Council would join me in saying that we should be prepared to look at any program that can reduce the number of people requiring hospitalisation.

Recently, the council received a report of the Health Targets and Implementation Committee chaired by Professor Stephen Leeder. In a powerful way, this report made the point that prevention is generally cheaper than treatment, although its benefits may not always accrue in the short term. I intend to say more about the introduction here of programs and directions which follow the report's recommendations but, for my purpose now, I say simply that, the more successful we are, the less cost there will be to the community in the treatment and care of the sick and injured and the less cost there will be through the loss of productivity.

In rural communities as well, Aboriginal health workers play a vital role in developing an awareness of the need for good health and the methods which can be employed to achieve it. The health workers have helped to increase general awareness of the need for good nutrition and positive changes to lifestyle. There appears to be less resistance among Aboriginal women now to accepting adequate antenatal care and, hopefully, the results will be reflected in fewer hospitalisations in the future. Although Aboriginals comprise about a quarter of the population, they occupy approximately 47% of hospital beds Territory-wide. The adoption by Aboriginals of healthier lifestyles will reduce their high admission rates and there will be less illness and injury in this sector of our population.

Again, in a statement to the House tabled in the November 1987 sittings, I discussed the absolute importance of reduction of illness among, and injury to, Aboriginals and the impact this would have on our health services and the Territory generally. Obviously, even if we were spectacularly successful in our efforts to increase the health status of our population, particularly our Aboriginal population, we would still need beds, specialists, equipment and a whole range of services which together make up a hospital. We still must work to achieve the balance between the needs of the people, the money supply and the administration of our major hospital.

The Northern Territory is not alone in facing this issue. There is the instance of a major southern hospital which has such tight funding constraints that it has not carried out basic maintenance such as window cleaning for over 5 years. That information comes from the minister in the state concerned, not his opposition. The stories of monumental waiting lists in southern public hospitals have become legend. It would, of course, be too much to ask that every now and then somebody might congratulate the Northern Territory government for having no waiting lists in our public hospital system.

In 1963-64, the Darwin Hospital cared for a daily average of 241 inpatients with an annual budget of just over \$1.2m. The Darwin population would have been approximately 17 000 and the average bed-day cost - believe it or not - was \$11.70. In 1986-87, the Royal Darwin Hospital treated a daily average of 299 patients with an annual budget of approximately \$51.3m. The Darwin population was approximately 73 000 and the average bed-day cost was \$369.58. These figures suggest that hospitals are pricing themselves out of the marketplace and, for some years now, the Royal Darwin Hospital has had to give close attention to both the efficiency and effectiveness of its services. Whereas previously patients could be kept in hospital for rest and social reasons, it is no longer reasonable to do so.

Our aim must be to make the best possible uses of our allocated resources. In some instances, the objective is to increase the diversity and quality of hospital services for a given level of resource commitment. In other situations, the objective is to rearrange the production process so that the same level of output is produced at the lowest possible cost. The use of automated machinery or private contractors are 2 examples. Sometimes it is necessary to look at alternative uses for resources so that money, staff or buildings are reallocated from areas of inefficiency into services and facilities where additional resources will achieve a greater net benefit.

In terms of these factors, what are we doing? Royal Darwin Hospital was planned as the major specialist hospital in the Northern Territory. It is the only major referral hospital in Australia for some 3000 km. Its role is twofold. Firstly, it must act as a regional hospital for the people of Darwin and the surrounding area and, secondly, it is a specialist facility providing more complex services not catered for in other regional hospitals. The provision of specialists and specialist services is an area where we must continually make decisions on the basis of cost-effectiveness. Some medical services require a population of 2 million or more to justify provision of the relevant equipment and to generate enough patients to maintain the skills of associated medical and technical staff. Nuclear medicine is one classic example. The Northern Territory government will continue to ensure that people requiring such services will be able to attend appropriate centres interstate, but we accept that Royal Darwin Hospital will never provide all the services available to medical science. There are some cases in which we should not provide services even if we were able to afford it. In those areas where the population is too small to support specialist and technical skills, we would be pouring money down the drain.

The availability of specialists prepared to come to the Territory is not high. We will continue to encourage high-quality specialists in areas of high needs to come here. We will also continue to offer them a mixture of arrangements which make the choice of the Territory more attractive. We will do this partly because further development of specialist services will have an effect on our expenditure on PATS. The Patients Assistance Travel Scheme was developed by the department to assist patients in need of specialist medical attention to travel to the nearest Northern Territory specialist or interstate if a suitable specialist was not available in the Northern Territory. The PATS scheme also allows for Royal Darwin Hospital to encourage interstate specialists to visit the Northern Territory to treat Territorians locally, thereby reducing the need for interstate travel for medical care. An advantage of this approach is that Territorians can then be treated in a familiar environment supported by the presence of family and friends. Again, we must strike the right balance, this time between the costs of flying patients south and the costs of bringing a specialist here or attracting a specialist to work here.

Even if we were so flush with cash that we could buy as many specialists as we would like, we would still have a problem to solve. The main issue is that, in many areas, it is necessary for a specialist to deal with a range of conditions and a sufficient quantity of patients to maintain a high level of skill. Even if we had the money to pay specialists, in some cases the simple truth is that, the longer their stay in the Territory, the less their value would be to patients. Many specialists depend on and require sophisticated equipment. Yet again, the money and people decision has to be made.

The cost of replacing some of Royal Darwin Hospital's ageing equipment can be around \$1m per item. An example of this cost is the angiography machine

used for studying blockages of blood vessels in some forms of strokes, heart attacks and poor blood supply to other parts of the body. Governments throughout Australia are experiencing the same problem of funding equipment programs in hospitals like Royal Darwin Hospital and attempting to keep pace with state-of-the-art medical technology. The Commonwealth's action in recently scrapping the assistance provided during the last 3 years to help hospitals to maintain the pace in purchase of capital equipment, has not helped. Another problem is that, as technology advances and better equipment comes on the market, professionals who want to stay leaders in their field apply more pressure to get hold of the latest and best. It must also be very frustrating for specialists making a diagnosis to know that there is in existence a machine which could provide the additional vital information that they require.

The government recognises the needs. We also recognise the need to make the right choice. We have only 1 major specialist hospital. Often, we have only 1 specialist in a particular field. In relying on the best advice available, we might end up with the best equipment or we might not. In most cases, we appear to make reasonable choices. This does not mean that we always select the piece of equipment that receives the blessing of other specialists who arrive on the scene a year or 2 later, armed with the wisdom of hindsight. I appreciate the view of specialists. I appreciate the feelings of patients who are ill and want the best possible services. I do not appreciate ridiculous, insensitive, scaremongering tactics such as those we have seen lately from the opposition about the radiology service. While the opposition criticises, thank God the government works.

Another major direction which we are following is to maximise the use ...

Mr BELL: A point of order, Mr Speaker! I regard blasphemy of that sort as unparliamentary. I would ask that the honourable minister withdraw it.

Mr HATTON: Mr Speaker, I would be curious to know how giving thanks to our Lord could be regarded as a blasphemy.

Mr BELL: I suggest that it was the tone of voice in which it was uttered by the Minister for Health and Community Services. Contrary to the claim made by the Chief Minister, the tone was rather less than devotional.

Mr SPEAKER: There is no point of order.

Mr DALE: I do apologise for my tone of voice, Mr Speaker.

Another major direction which we are following is to maximise the use of private medical and associated entrepreneurs. The word 'privatisation' means many things to many people and is a constant source of concern for the staff at the Royal Darwin Hospital, for unions and for other people of the Northern Territory. It has connotations of the government selling off its assets or giving private enterprise free rein to take over traditional government functions. I intend that we should privatise a service only where there is definite advantage when all factors are taken into account. Money is important, but we also need to take into proper account quality of work, staff recruitment and retention and continuity of service. In an area such as pathology, for instance, access to public health information could be of overriding concern in assessing and developing programs to control the spread of infectious diseases. Teaching of hospital staff and research by staff are 2 other things which could be lost if we even considered privatisation on the basis of cost alone. Of course, this government has no intention of doing

that. We have taken, and will continue to take, a responsible and sensible attitude to privatisation.

Those who scare staff with rumours simply reduce morale in an area where high morale is necessary for the most efficient operation. In one major area, overtures from the community led to a government policy to encourage the private sector to develop and operate a private hospital in Darwin. The aim was to give people a choice, but there were continuing worries about the economic viability of such a venture. A 120-bed Darwin Private Hospital is expected to be completed in August of this year.

An early initiative was for Darwin Private Hospital Ltd, a wholly-owned subsidiary of Health and Life Care Ltd, to commence operation by leasing the third floor of Royal Darwin Hospital as an interim facility from November 1987. This move incurred the misguided wrath of the federal Minister for Community Services and Health and was the subject of much media coverage at the time. Guaranteeing free and unfettered access to all Territorians and visitors is an example of how the federal Medicare policy has to be considered when developing Northern Territory priorities.

About one quarter of hospital bed-days throughout Australia are provided by the non-government sector. I am not ashamed to say that the government will continue to encourage private hospital development in the Northern Territory in order to redress the imbalance here and to relieve the public purse of the burden of having to fund all hospital services. Early in 1987, the Chief Minister published the government's intention to maximise private enterprise involvement in service provision by contracting work out to the private sector wherever possible. Functions which could be performed as well or better by private enterprise would not be duplicated by the public service. Offers have been received from private concerns to take over many of the functions of both radiology and pathology services in the public hospital in Darwin and elsewhere in the Northern Territory. These offers have varied from providing staff and equipment for the full array of services to provision of professional skills only, such as reporting on x-ray films.

Honourable members and the public would be well aware of the arrangement whereby a private firm leases space in the Royal Darwin Hospital and operates a CT scanning service for both public and private patients. The government has to look closely at the ramifications of the many and varied offers to provide private alternatives to services which have traditionally been the role of public hospitals in the Northern Territory, especially Royal Darwin Hospital. Some of the problems are allied to the difficulty in recruiting and retaining staff. Some relate to changes in the volume of demand as the private sector increasingly satisfies the needs of doctors in private practice. Some are connected to the economic viability of services, possibly dependent on supplying services to the new private hospital. Some are due to the state of equipment bought new for the Royal Darwin Hospital when it opened in 1980 or transferred from the old Darwin Hospital.

Before we can make any decision to privatise an area of activity, establish a further specialist service or purchase a piece of equipment, we must have available all possible information. We have recently commenced a program of evaluation of services at Royal Darwin Hospital. We will evaluate all areas of activity of the hospital against established aims and directions. Out of this will come recommendations for future action, firmly based on the best analysis which we are able to carry out. I will continue to put in place programs which can either remove the need for people to be admitted to hospital or which will have them discharged more quickly than is currently the case.

The Royal Darwin Hospital has the public bed capacity to service Darwin and outlying areas well into the next decade. The United States of America, the Netherlands and other European countries are aiming to reduce the number of beds needed for their populations to 2 beds per 1000 by the mid-1990s. The Northern Territory is working towards a similar target by the year 2000. The Northern Territory currently has 4.5 beds per 1000 for acute care, which compares well with the overall Australian figure of 5.3, based on 1985-86 statistics. Aboriginal occupancy of hospital beds is around 9 beds per 1000 whereas for non-Aboriginal, 3 beds per 1000 are required.

The need for beds in Northern Territory hospitals will be decreased by developing community health programs, especially among the Aboriginal population, increasing the availability of general medical practitioners and community health centres, the development of home nursing programs, the improvement of medical procedures, the introduction of sophisticated medical technology allowing early diagnosis and treatment, and the establishment of day surgery facilities and family support programs. All these programs will occur; all these aims will be met. The hospital has maintained a level of excellence in health care acknowledged by many Territorians and visitors alike.

The future for the hospital and the people it serves is bright. Every attempt will be made, in spite of the spiralling costs, to keep the hospital at the forefront of medical and nursing practices. Management at the Royal Darwin Hospital will keep pace with the ever-changing demands placed on the health-care industry and will ensure that the hospital service serves the population of the Territory with the high standard of excellence to which we have all become accustomed.

Mr Speaker, I move that the Assembly take note of the statement.

Mr BELL (MacDonnell): Mr Speaker, I take this statement as one of the finest compliments that has ever been paid to me in 7 years in this Assembly. I quite appreciate that the Minister for Health and Community Services has been stamped into making what can only be described as one of the most extraordinarily platitudinous statements that any frontbencher has delivered to this Assembly in the 7 years that I have been here. You appreciate the reasons for his doing so, Mr Speaker, as do I. There really is nothing to reply to in what the Minister for Health and Community Services spent 25 minutes delivering. I certainly hope he wrote it himself. If he did not, there will certainly be a few red faces among those who did, after I finish with it.

I really need go no further in that regard other than to refer to a couple of quality entries, contained in the statement, for the 1988 bicentennial SPIEL competition conducted by the Society for Prevention of Injury to the English Language. This will be one of those bicentennial projects that will be absolutely unfunded. I refer to the wonderful sentence at the end of paragraph 2 on page 2 of the minister's statement. I read it for the delectation, Mr Speaker, not only of yourself but of all honourable members. The sentence reads: 'The rest' - referring to snake bite victims - 'have been bitten by non-venomous species, spiders or centipedes, sharp-edged sticks, broken bottles or even gardening tools'.

Mr Speaker, I do not need to tell you how dangerous it is to be bitten by a sharp-edged stick or by a broken bottle. I am sure, Mr Speaker, that as a denizen of the MacDonnell trucking yards and a member of the Ghan Preservation Society, the prospect of people being bitten by gardening tools is one of deep

concern to you. The minister has clearly made a quality entry in the 1988 SPIEL competition, but more of that in the November sittings.

As I have said, the minister has given one of the most extraordinarily platitudinous statements that I have ever heard in this Assembly. It is a tribute to the energy, not only of myself but also of staff in the office of the Leader of the Opposition. It also bears out the concerns expressed by people in the health care community in Darwin in their representations to the opposition. It is a tribute to their sense of professional responsibility that they are prepared to draw attention to the problems which are occurring.

I have no intention of dealing with this statement at length because it contains so little substance. I will do the courtesy of informing the Minister for Health and Community Services that the opposition intends, either tomorrow or on Thursday, depending on further information which may come to us in relation to equipment at the Royal Darwin Hospital or elsewhere, to bring before this Assembly, as a matter of public importance, the condition of radiology equipment at the Royal Darwin Hospital. I know that the Chief Minister has been deeply embarrassed by the behaviour of several of his frontbenchers, not the least of whom is the Minister for Health and Community Services. They have sought to denigrate the efforts of many people. Those people are not only members of the opposition. Members on this side of the House can take that. Anything the Minister for Health and Community Services can toss at us is but a bagatelle by comparison with some of the issues that confront people in the Territory community as a result of not only the neglect but also the lack of objectivity that the minister brings to his portfolio.

I give the honourable minister notice that, at an appropriate time, as a matter of public importance, the opposition will be discussing issues in relation to radiology equipment at the Royal Darwin Hospital and we will be doing so elsewhere. If there is any doubt in the mind of either the Chief Minister or the Minister for Health and Community Services about the need for such a matter of public importance debate, I suggest they read the questions without notice from this morning and from Thursday.

Mr Dale interjecting.

Mr BELL: They are scraping the bottom of the barrel now. When you have them on the ropes, they ignore the substance of what they bring before this Assembly. If I were of a malign frame of mind, I would suggest that their inspiration in doing so is malicious rather than facetious. I suggest that the Minister for Health and Community Services and the whole Cabinet must have been laughing up their sleeves when they heard the idea for this statement. Perhaps they might like to indicate whether any of the others actually read the statement before it was delivered. The Chief Minister is nodding. There you go, Mr Speaker, what an extraordinary admission! Perhaps we should say that the Minister for Health and Community Services is responsible for the only conjoint entry in the SPIEL 1988 competition. Maybe we can name the Chief Minister as a co-respondent.

Mr Coulter: Enough of frivolity; get on with the substance.

Mr BELL: To answer the interjection from the Leader of Government Business, as I have said, there is so little of substance in this statement that there is hardly any need to comment on it.

Mr Hatton: If you cannot debate it now, why do you want an MPI?

Mr BELL: Mr Speaker, to indicate the seriousness with which the opposition takes the question of the Royal Darwin Hospital, I will point out that I took advantage of the Open Day at the Royal Darwin Hospital on Sunday. I believe that invitations were issued to government members. Until 3 pm on Saturday, 5 hours after the Open Day commenced, and 1 hour before it closed, I do not believe that any of them had taken advantage of that particular opportunity. I suggest to you, Mr Speaker, that, if they had done so, and if the honourable minister had done so, the statement before us might have had a little more substance.

The honourable minister gave himself a big slap on the back and indicated what a good fellow he had been in giving a copy of this statement to honourable members before he delivered it in the Assembly and, in particular, for giving a copy to the opposition. I do thank him for that. My only reservation in that regard would be that, with statements as insubstantial as this one, it probably does not matter all that much.

Mr Dale: So you don't want them in future.

Mr BELL: I did not say that at all. I am quite happy to place on record my appreciation of the way the government and the minister do their business in this Assembly in that regard. It is very useful for public debate but, of course, that is a different issue from the question of actual substance and the approach to problems in this particular statement. It is a fact that there is very little of substance in it at all. However, I do thank the honourable minister for presenting us with a copy.

The statement is probably more to be noted on the basis of what is left out of it than what is included in it. The honourable minister might like to pick this up when he sums up. I hope he has the opportunity to do that this afternoon. This statement, nonsense as it is, will not be left on the Notice Paper. You will be aware, Mr Speaker, that during last Thursday's question time and again this morning, the opposition raised serious questions about the radiology equipment at the Royal Darwin Hospital. We make no apology for that. The minister specialises in personal attacks, as one political correspondent observed in the NT News at the weekend. That sort of approach has always been eschewed, not only by myself but by all members of the opposition. The fact is that highly objective criticisms of the government are responded to only with personal abuse.

As you know, Mr Speaker, you have had to call both the Minister for Health and Community Services and the Minister for Lands and Housing to order and force them to withdraw certain remarks on a couple of occasions over the last 2 days of these sittings. I believe that that indicates the quality of public debate that both these frontbenchers promote. Their refusal ...

Mr MANZIE: A point of order, Mr Speaker! The member for MacDonnell is casting aspersions against myself and the Minister for Health and Community Services in respect of rulings that you have made in this House. He has adopted his own point of view as to why you made those rulings and he is intimating that our attitude to the business of this House is not what it should be. Mr Speaker, I ask that you request him to withdraw those remarks which impugn the character of myself and the Minister for Health and Community Services.

Mr BELL: Mr Speaker, as you would be well aware and as the honourable minister should be well aware, I merely described the record of the parliamentary sittings and the number of times that both frontbenchers have

been asked to withdraw comments that have made personal imputations against myself and other members of the opposition. I was not reflecting on the quality of those rulings. I can appreciate that there will be some degree of shame attached to these comments when honourable ministers reflect on them and read the daily Hansard. In alluding to the comments that were withdrawn, I do not believe that I was reflecting on your ruling. I believe there is no point of order.

Mr MANZIE: Mr Speaker, the member for MacDonnell is expressing his view of why you made the rulings. It is obvious that neither myself nor the member for Wanguri has reflected on the member for MacDonnell and the number of times he has been required to withdraw remarks in this House, a record which stands alone in the Parliamentary Record. I would not do so because we know that the honourable member becomes excited and cannot help himself. Regardless of the actions of the member for MacDonnell, both the member for Wanguri and I try to treat the procedures of this House with the respect they deserve. I request that you ask the member for MacDonnell not to reflect on us and to credit us with the same point of view that he has in respect of the proceedings of this House.

Mr SPEAKER: There is no point of order but I ask the member to relate his comments to the statement before the Chair.

Mr BELL: I am doing so, Mr Speaker. For the benefit of both honourable ministers, who feel so deeply aggrieved by my adverting to their extraordinary behaviour in this Chamber, the point I was making was that the number of times they have been asked to withdraw comments ...

Mr DALE: A point of order, Mr Speaker! You ruled on the point of order.

Mr BELL: There was no point of order. Sit down.

Mr DALE: The honourable member is continuing not to address the statement that is before this House.

Mr SPEAKER: I ruled that there was no point of order and again there is no point of order. Again, I ask the member for MacDonnell to relate his comments more closely to the statement before the House.

Mr BELL: I am doing so, Mr Speaker, and I appreciate that the span of concentration of both government ministers is particularly short. Let me just put it in one pithy sentence. The number of requests to withdraw comments made by both the honourable ministers is in inverse proportion to their understanding of the issues at hand and to their preparedness to address the serious questions that have been drawn to the attention of not only this Assembly but everybody in the community who has to use the Royal Darwin Hospital. I suggest ...

Mr MANZIE: A point of order, Mr Speaker. The member for MacDonnell is refusing to address the subject of the minister's statement regarding health matters in the Territory. He continues to expound on his views and attitudes towards this House. Standing orders state that matters addressed in the House should remain the subject of debate. I think that the honourable member needs to be reminded that the matter being debated is health issues and not his version of your rulings regarding members being forced to withdraw comments in this House.

Mr SPEAKER: There is no point of order.

Mr BELL: Mr Speaker, I am getting a little bit sick of these vexatious points of order.

People want to hear answers on the matters I raised last Thursday. The minister did not mention those matters in his statement. They will be, inter alia, the subject of a matter of public importance debate later in the week. The minister might first of all like to tell the House why, of 10 pieces of equipment which a 1983 report mentioned as being scheduled for replacement, only 4 have actually been replaced. He has not answered that question yet.

Mr Dale: Tell me where you got the file from.

Mr BELL: Mr Speaker, the minister is long on insulting me and accusing me of telling lies, but he is not so flash in answering questions.

I raised another question this morning. I have a copy of a report which I will pass to the minister. He did not refer to it in his statement which was all froth and bubble and fairy floss. This report is good, solid information. It refers, for example, to equipment needing replacement in the accident and emergency suite. The minister has access to this report, which comes from his own department, but he did not bother to talk about its contents in his statement. It says: 'This equipment is now more than 8 years old and has been in constant use. It utilises outdated technology. The exposure times are too long for use with trauma patients. The equipment has been unreliable in recent times. The over-table gantry is showing signs of excessive mechanical wear, due to replacement in year 1'. We heard nothing from the minister about that. What about the mobile image intensifier? The CGR optoscope is susceptible to temperature variations. 'The 2 units have been unreliable. The imaging technology is now outdated. The head on one unit has failed and, on the other, is on the way out. It is expected to fail in the next few months'.

There are further examples of how patients are actively being put at risk by this but all we get from the Minister for Health and Community Services is platitudes and nonsense. Mr Speaker, that is not to be tolerated and that is why I drew attention to the number of times members opposite have been asked to withdraw comments that they have made in this House. The opposition has been objective in the questions that it has brought to the attention of the minister and it receives fairy floss in reply.

The substantial issue I want to draw to the attention of the honourable minister, if he will concentrate on what is actually being said so that he can sum up in a sensible fashion - and I have some serious doubts as to whether he is either able to or interested in doing so - is that he is accusing the opposition of undermining the public health system and undermining confidence in the Royal Darwin Hospital. Mr Speaker, I need do no more than remind you of the actions of the honourable minister which are more redolent of the sort of behaviour that gives a minority of members of the police force a bad reputation than the sort of approach to public debate that we expect from people holding responsible positions in a parliament. I will remind him that he is the Minister for Health and Community Services and that part of that role ... It is all right, Steve, you can go out.

Mr Hatton: I am not going out.

Mr BELL: Right.

Part of the role of the opposition is to draw to the attention of the minister problems such as this, precisely in order to enhance the confidence of the public because, when members of the public know the problems are to be freely debated publicly, at least they have a degree of confidence that those problems will be addressed.

Mr HATTON: A point of order, Mr Speaker! What I have to say is very important to this Assembly. The honourable member has asserted that the report he circulated across the room was a 1983 report. It is our information that this report was prepared in either 1987 or 1988. Can the honourable member prove to this House that this was a 1983 report? This is fundamental to the particular point the honourable member is making and the truth of what he is putting to this House.

Mr SPEAKER: I do not believe there is a point of order. The question raised by the Chief Minister was whether the member for MacDonnell would be able to do that later in the debate.

Mr BELL: It really is staggering, Mr Speaker. The new boy Chief Minister, who has been in here for 4 or 5 years, might have been expected to pick up a few clues between now and then. If he wants to accuse me of misleading the Assembly, let him do so in the time that is apportioned, instead of he and his henchmen ...

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The honourable member will withdraw that and I would ask him also to address his remarks through the Chair rather than pointing a finger at individual members.

Mr BELL: Mr Speaker, first, I unreservedly withdraw the term 'henchmen' and, secondly, I will endeavour to protect the sensitive souls of the government members who feel that my finger speaks more volubly than my larynx.

Mr Speaker, you can see that this is exactly why we are forced to raise this matter of public importance. The Chief Minister has so little regard for the forms of this Assembly that he feels at liberty to leap up whenever he feels like it to raise spurious points of order. For his benefit, I have raised 2 questions in the House ...

Mr Coulter: Yes, all right. Just ignore that.

Mr BELL: It is really extraordinary the way this government behaves. I had several points that I intended to make.

Mr Dale: We haven't heard one yet.

Mr BELL: It is very difficult with you blokes leaping up and down like jacks-in-a-box. The way the Chief Minister is doing his job is quite extraordinary. I thought we had a Minister for Health and Community Services. Obviously, he needs backing from the Chief Minister because he is doing his job so poorly.

For the benefit of the Chief Minister, I have raised 2 questions in the House. I raised one on Thursday. If the Chief Minister would listen to me, what I have just provided for him is a 1988 report that refers to questions asked in the Assembly this morning. Okay? The document that I gave the Minister for Health and Community Services on Thursday was a 1983 report, and I refer to both of them.

Mr Hatton: You were wrong about this.

Mr BELL: Yes, you were quite wrong.

Mr Hatton: I was quite right.

Mr BELL: I accept the apology from the Chief Minister in that regard.

Mr Hatton: Apologise for what? You were wrong, not me.

Mr BELL: In the time that is left to me, Mr Speaker, let me say that we will be dealing with the matter of equipment replacement more appropriately in a matter of public importance discussion later in these sittings. I hasten to reassure the Minister for Health and Community Services and people in the community that we will be doing so in an objective fashion in order to further the confidence of people, in contrast to the hysterical nonsense that we get from the minister time and time again. Whether it is on television or in this Legislative Assembly, the Minister for Health and Community Services is capable only of an hysterical response. That is the only truism that bears on this particular debate.

The comment on Aboriginal people is extraordinary. In the face of the so-called mainstreaming policy, it is extraordinary how Aborigines are drawn into the debate whenever it suits the government. I will mention only one - an absolute doozy on page 24. Government members are only interested in Aborigines when the figures make their arguments look better or worse as it suits them. I refer the honourable minister to his comments on Aboriginal occupancy of hospital beds at the bottom of page 24, and I ask the Chief Minister, as well as the Minister for Health and Community Services, just how does that sit with their policy of mainstreaming?

The question of waiting lists does not bear too much examination. The question of specialists is an interesting one. I simply place on record that the Minister for Health and Community Services may be interested in the representations that I made to him. I wrote a letter to him on the basis of representations from the Royal Australian College of Surgeons and I suggest that specific issues like that need to be addressed. The question of specialists would merit an informed debate and I suggest that he would receive considerable bipartisan support if he considered such problems instead of throwing in the mishmash of politically-motivated comment that is reflected in this statement.

I refer briefly also to the question of privatisation of pathology services. That is a matter of concern to me and to people involved in what the minister refers to as the 'health industry'. There are further comments that I could make about the extraordinary philosophy of private hospitals. The philosophy appears to be that the other states have them and therefore we should have them too. That is worth half an hour by itself.

With those few comments, Mr Speaker, I think I have quite adequately established that this statement is not worth the paper that it is written on and that the opposition's approach to the provision of health care in the Northern Territory community has been objective, positive and in the best interests of the Territory community.

Mr HANRAHAN (Flynn): Mr Speaker, in replying to the Minister for Health and Community Services' statement, the member for MacDonnell damned himself when he first opened his mouth because he said that there was nothing to reply

to. Too often, after complaining bitterly about the actions of the government, the opposition is presented with information and a statement that provides it with the opportunity to debate the policies of the government, in this case the provision of particular health and community services. The honourable member used words like 'platitudinous' and told us that part of a paragraph on page 2 will be an entry for the SPIEL competition in November. I would liken the comments of the member for MacDonnell to nothing more than a bucket of verbal diarrhoea if the ministerial statement is to be referred to as 'platitudinous'.

Let us look at what the ministerial statement addresses. It addresses many issues that have been raised by honourable members opposite, not in this House but in the press, and many issues that have been of so-called 'genuine' concern to them. Recently, the NT News and various news services on the electronic media raised the matter of high health risk posed in the Top End by the movement of snakes. That is a matter of great public concern, yet all the member for MacDonnell could say was that the minister's statement was platitudinous.

Mr Speaker, I would like to raise some of the points that the member for MacDonnell could have addressed himself to. Public opinion and awareness of health matters is certainly a very important area. That was dealt with in detail in the statement. What about funding? How many times have members opposite complained about the various funding formulas and the so-called lack of activity by the honourable minister in representing the Northern Territory in Canberra. That is addressed in detail in the statement yet we did not hear a word from the member for MacDonnell about that. What about the new private hospital? The new hospital is of great importance not only to the residents of Darwin but also to the residents of Alice Springs where the possibility of a private hospital is being investigated at the moment.

AIDS was mentioned in the statement by the minister but there was not a word from the member for MacDonnell about it. The population growth, the delivery of public hospital services, psychiatric services and nursing homes were mentioned. What about health promotion? That was mentioned also but we heard not a word from the member for MacDonnell. There is a reason for that, and I will come to that later. At the very end of his comments - and I think he was grasping at straws - he mentioned some pertinent facts relating to Aboriginal health. Certainly, that is a very important issue that deserves far more detail in reply to the minister's statement than the member for MacDonnell was prepared to give. Other matters dealt with in the statement were waiting lists, the future plans for regional health throughout the Territory, Commonwealth funding, technological advances, staffing problems, particularly in respect of specialists, and the privatisation of radiology and pathology services. Not one constructive comment was heard from the member for MacDonnell, the so-called opposition spokesman on health and community services.

The government presents broad ministerial statements in this Assembly in order to encourage constructive debate. When honourable members opposite refuse to rise to their feet and address such statements in any serious manner, other than to put forward their own timetable for matters to be raised in this House, they should rightly be treated with contempt.

When the member for MacDonnell talks about raising a matter of public importance about the replacement of certain items at the Royal Darwin Hospital, I say that he has missed his chance. He just had his opportunity to raise some of those issues in more detail rather than to attempt to set his

own agenda for matters before the House. What he had to say was no more than a bucket of verbal diarrhoea. It behoves the member for MacDonnell to treat ministerial statements with a little more respect. Certainly, before he rises in future to complain that he is never presented with an opportunity to raise issues, he should read just what he had to say today. In my book, it is a clear case of missed opportunity. The government certainly should not fall into the trap of allowing the member for MacDonnell to set his own agenda in this House.

Mr COLLINS (Sadadeen): Mr Speaker, much of what the minister had to say this morning related to the cost of the provision of health services in this country. He gave some rather interesting figures on how much the cost of health care and hospitalisation has increased over a very few years. This matter is affecting the entire Australian health system. People around the country are debating the costs of health and agonising over them. Health care has great personal importance for people, particularly when a loved one becomes sick or when decisions have to be made about the proper use of extremely expensive life support systems. People right across the country are debating that issue in particular.

In fact, a couple of weeks ago, I received a phone call from the Alice Springs Hospital inviting me to take part in a seminar on the costs of health services. I asked why I was being invited in particular. I was told about a case in which \$1m was spent to revive a child who was near death as a result of dehydration. The person's mental state was not fully restored, leading to behavioural problems which affected the whole community in terms of the person being a danger to the public. In such a case, one might consider that the \$1m was not well spent. It may surprise many people to know that such huge amounts of money are spent on individuals to try to bring them back to full health. Somewhere along the line, money spent on one person is not available to be spent on another. Those are hard decisions and making them must be a very difficult job. All sorts of people are involved, including relations and friends of the patient. It is not easy. However, as medical science advances and more advanced equipment becomes available, the costs will escalate and trade-offs will have to be made somewhere along the line.

The radiology equipment at the Royal Darwin Hospital is obviously one case in point. I cannot be sure where the truth lies. On the one hand, we are told that the equipment is reasonable whilst, on the other, we hear that it is falling apart and is no longer operable. I suppose the truth lies somewhere between those extremes but I am sure that all members will realise that cost is an important factor in the replacement of outdated equipment. I am certain, of course, that the hospital would like to have the very latest and the very best.

That brings me to the situation in Alice Springs which, in many ways, is of more concern to me than that in Darwin. The Alice Springs Hospital services a large area. Many cases from Tennant Creek are transferred to Alice Springs Hospital and people from the whole centralian region as well as the north of South Australia are flown in. We also have many tourists who visit the Territory. Most of them come through the Centre, many of them driving vehicles. We well know that the Territory has a very poor record in terms of road accidents.

Mr Speaker, you will recall that I have raised the matter of radiologists in this House on many occasions. Just the other day, I referred to the present situation in Alice Springs. We have radiographers who can take the x-rays but we do not have the expert radiologists who are able to give the

necessary detailed interpretations. I am well aware that the doctors and other medical people have some training in this particular field but it is not the same as the expertise of radiologists. For some reason, we seem to have great difficulty in obtaining the services of a radiologist. At present, x-rays are shown to surgeons and frequently are sent to Darwin to be interpreted by radiologists. On most occasions, they try to send these back on the following aircraft flight, but it does not always happen. I certainly hope that the minister will be successful in obtaining the services of a radiologist in Alice Springs.

The CT scanner has been a topic of debate in this House on previous occasions. Darwin has a new one but Alice Springs still does not have one. We have heard a great deal of talk: it is going to happen and going to happen and going to happen. There is talk about a private practice opening in Alice Springs and I certainly would support that. I hope the minister is successful and I certainly would support him if he had to make some guarantees and assurances about providing space at the Alice Springs Hospital and a level of work which would make the proposition viable. It is time that the matter was taken up seriously and that people got on with the job so that we could actually see some action. The minister would have to agree that the matter has been taking a long time to resolve. I do not say that there are no problems but I am sure that, if concentrated effort were applied, some action would result and we would see some better equipment in Alice Springs.

Head injuries are a real problem in Alice Springs. We are about 1500 km from either the Royal Darwin Hospital or the Flinders Medical Centre in Adelaide. Alice Springs needs good equipment so that accurate assessments and judgments can be made. It is a mantle of safety which needs to be thrown over the tourists who come to the Centre so that they can be assured that, if they are involved in an accident, they will be treated as quickly and efficiently as elsewhere and that they will be in good hands.

I give all praise to the staff of the Alice Springs Hospital. Scathing comments are made occasionally but, in the vast majority of cases including those involving my own family, I can only say that the staff there deserve the highest praise. They are dedicated to the job but they do need the equipment so that they can do that job even better. I particularly ask the minister to pursue the matter of the CT scanner and to offer all reasonable support to any person in private practice who may be able to provide that equipment so that the people of Alice Springs can be advantaged in the same way as the people of Darwin.

Mr SETTER (Jingili): Mr Speaker, this morning we heard the minister present a very comprehensive and wide-ranging statement on the services provided by the Royal Darwin Hospital. I was absolutely appalled by the response from the shadow minister for health, the member for MacDonnell. His response was absolutely pathetic. He waffled on for 27 out of his 30 minutes, and I ask any member if he can recall what he said because I certainly cannot. In the last 3 minutes, he started to address some of the issues. He spoke about the reference to Aborigines, he referred to specialists and he talked about the privatisation of the pathology section - all in 3 minutes. I do not know what his point was. As I said, I was totally confused.

The thing that he did say earlier in his speech was that he went out to the Open Day at the hospital on Sunday and, until 3 pm, no other member had been there. Is that the limit and the level of his interest? Was the first question he asked whether any other members of the Assembly had been there that day? Obviously, he didn't ...

Mrs Padgham-Purich: Well, wouldn't you?

Mr SETTER: No, I would not, actually. I did not go because I visit the Royal Darwin Hospital regularly and, as a result, I am quite au fait with what goes on there. However, it is pathetic that the first issue raised by the member for MacDonnell was the question of what other members had attended the Open Day. He obviously went to the Open Day looking for information to use in this House. I am quite sure that he would have asked staff and others what they could tell him about the Royal Darwin Hospital, what was going wrong there, what the problems were and where the government was falling down. Quite obviously, the results were negative, because he did not raise one positive issue - not one. Yet he is supposed to be the shadow spokesperson on health. He was provided with a copy of that statement at 4 o'clock yesterday afternoon.

Mrs Padgham-Purich: He was lucky.

Mr SETTER: Quite obviously, he was more interested in running around and organising his numbers for the big push against the Leader of the Opposition later this week and ignored his job which was to research that particular statement so that he could provide a reasonable response in the Assembly today. He did not do any of those things. He was absolutely hopeless. Of course, as soon as he finished his speech, he bolted. He took off like a Bondi tram. He is probably still sorting out his numbers.

I would like to make a positive contribution, unlike the person to whom I referred a moment ago. I believe that the Royal Darwin Hospital serves the Top End community very well indeed. I refer to the 'Top End' rather than Darwin because the responsibility of the Royal Darwin Hospital is to service the whole Top End community by way of specialist services. As we all know, it has those facilities which, for example, the Katherine Hospital, the Tennant Creek Hospital, the Gove Hospital and community health centres around the Top End do not have. But the Royal Darwin Hospital has them, and therefore becomes the centre of regional health services in the Top End.

Let me take you back, Mr Speaker, to 1974. I can recall when what is now the Royal Darwin Hospital was only a great hole in the ground. It took a long time to build it. Of course, we all know that it is a clone of the Woden Valley Hospital in Canberra. I think just about everybody here has been to Canberra, driven out through Woden Valley and seen that hospital. It is almost a dead-ringer for the one here.

At Christmas 1974, of course, Cyclone Tracy struck Darwin and brought the construction of that hospital to a halt. It was late in 1975 before construction recommenced. The construction phase continued over the next 4 years, through to 1980 when the hospital was officially opened. I can recall visiting the construction site on many occasions during those years, speaking to the various subcontractors, clambering up and down, walking through the tunnels that join the service facilities and the boiler house to the main hospital site and so on.

From 1980, we had the phased transfer of hospital services from the Darwin site, where the University College is now located, to the Royal Darwin Hospital site. That process took a couple of years. In more recent times, psychiatric services and services for the elderly were transferred, making the hospital a complete unit in its own right. It services some 100 000 patients per annum or approximately 2000 per week and that is a great many people.

A staff of 1400 persons work there and I am sure they work 3 shifts a day. There are 80 doctors, 450 nurses and the remainder comprise ancillary staff. That is an enormous work force, an enormous responsibility for the hospital administration and, of course, for the department. It has a budget of some \$50m per annum and, when you consider the size of the Northern Territory budget and of the health budget within that, \$50m is quite a considerable lump out of that health budget. Those figures indicate that the Royal Darwin Hospital is the principal health facility in the Northern Territory and would take up a considerable amount of the organisational effort of the Department of Health and Community Services.

I would refer to it as virtually a self-contained township. On site, it provides all of its own services - such as pathology and cleaning services - and the boiler house, the laundry and a village of accommodation units in which a number of staff live are located nearby. In recent times, we have seen the Menzies School of Health Research located on its own site.

I am sure that all members realise that, over the last several years, we have all had to operate under considerable funding constraints. There is nothing new about that - \$100m was torn out of our budget in this current financial year. Every department suffered and the Department of Health and Community Services had to bear its share of that burden. The result was that 2 wards were closed down at that hospital and primary care clinics were also closed. That is a fact of life. Everybody had to tighten his belt. The important aspect, of course, is that the Department of Health and Community Services was able to save those funds by rationalising its services. Indeed, most other departments did the same. In hindsight, it was probably a useful exercise. We all had to think twice about the dollars before they were spent.

Mr Bell: You have never applied that to anything in your life, Rick.

Mr SETTER: Look who is here. The member for MacDonnell has returned to the House. Isn't that fascinating? He has gone out and charged himself up again. He has come back to interject for the next 10 minutes. You can count on that, Mr Speaker.

Members interjecting.

Mr SETTER: The opposition is getting all fired up. The member for MacDonnell is making his push for leadership. Maybe he was out there sharpening his knife.

Mr Speaker, it is a fact of life that any hospital receives complaints. Hospitals deal with people's lives, their fortunes, their health and their social concerns, every day of the week. With as many as 100 000 people going through the Royal Darwin Hospital every year, it is reasonable to expect some complaints. However, as the minister explained, as a proportion of the total number of people using hospital services, the number of complaints is very small indeed.

I can speak from my own experience because I have been an inmate of that hospital, as have some of my family. I spent some time there, well before I became a member of this House, and I can say to honourable members that the service I received was excellent. On another occasion, the care and attention provided to my family could not have been bettered. I have certainly not heard one complaint from any of my associates regarding the services provided at that hospital.

Members of the opposition have so far not been able to provide one constructive comment in relation to the minister's statement. Over and over again, they use the media in deliberate attempts to spread misinformation and create concern in the community. Time and time again, they do that. The member for MacDonnell earlier this afternoon foreshadowed an MPI on health services. Maybe he was trying to keep his powder dry. Who knows? We can hardly wait. Again and again, the opposition spreads misinformation. A file has been quoted from, a file that has disappeared from the department. Some documents have been quoted from and even tabled at these sittings. One wonders what the opposition's motive is. Is it the welfare of the community? Mr Speaker, I do not think so. I think it is for some short-term political gain. That is what the opposition is interested in. It is not interested in the welfare of the community. All it is interested in is politics. Members opposite would try to have us believe that they are interested in the community's welfare. They are pathetic. Let us see some of them rise and make a constructive contribution to this debate. I do not believe they will.

Mr Leo: Very well.

Mr SETTER: The member for Nhulunbuy can get up and have his say. He will have the opportunity.

Mr Leo: All right. Sit down.

Mr SETTER: Unfortunately, it is a fact of life that the media like to sensationalise comments made by people such as members of the opposition. That is shame because it creates unfounded concerns in the community, as I indicated before. The result is that confidence in the hospital is eroded and staff morale declines. The Royal Darwin Hospital has 1400 staff, all doing their utmost to provide an excellent service to the community. But what happens? The gaggle of political opportunists opposite do their best to slander them and to denigrate their efforts. That is not good enough because the community expects much better from an opposition. It is hopeless.

Mr Speaker, it is a fact that the public expects a high standard of service. We all do. Anybody who goes to the hospital expects a high standard of service. From time to time, of course, there are some problems. Some problems have been caused by the design of the hospital, which was based on the Wooden Valley Hospital. In recent times, we have identified some problems in relation to fire safety. I understand that the requirements relative to fire safety have changed since the facility was designed and constructed. We are spending \$3m to solve that problem. The air-conditioning has also required some modification and \$4.05m is being spent to carry out the necessary works. The government has an ongoing program of improving and upgrading as the need is identified and as funds become available.

The reality is, however, that the facility was not really designed to suit Northern Territory conditions. It was designed to suit cosy little Canberra but not the Northern Territory with all its varying problems. Let me cite a few of those. Our population is very young and active. The average age is about 26 years. People are engaged in all sorts of activities: fishing, 4-wheel-driving in the bush, sport and so on. Our community is different to the average Australian community which has more older people with their particular needs. In the Northern Territory, we have very few elderly people. 47% of our hospital beds are occupied by Aboriginal people. They have their own unique set of living conditions and problems which flow from living in remote communities. Because of improved communications and transportation, those people, whose problems were previously dealt with in those communities,

are now coming to the Royal Darwin Hospital. Of course, when the hospital was designed, nobody envisaged that that would be the case. It certainly does not happen in Canberra. The hospital was certainly not designed to meet the needs of those people who occupy 47% of the hospital beds.

The range of services provided at the hospital has changed dramatically with the technological development and new equipment available. Recently, we have seen the advent of the private hospital. Construction of a 120-bed private hospital has been under way for the last 12 months and I understand it will be completed in August. That will take a tremendous amount of strain off the Royal Darwin Hospital. It is an evolution in the provision of hospital services in the Northern Territory.

In closing, let me refer to the policy of the Northern Territory government on the provision of health services, in particular at the Royal Darwin Hospital. We want to provide the best possible service, given funding constraints and the range of equipment available. We have an ongoing program of replacing that equipment as funds become available. I believe that, in spite of the miserable contribution by the shadow minister for health and community services, the Royal Darwin Hospital provides an excellent and indeed an adequate service for the people of the Top End and that its staff are dedicated and hard working, and should be applauded for their efforts in providing that service.

Mr LEO (Nhulunbuy): Mr Deputy Speaker, I know that, as elected members, we are obliged to endure all sorts of excruciating and unusual torment. I am sure that you would agree that that was both unusual and excruciating torment. I intend to address my remarks to a very short section of the minister's statement: the Aboriginal bed occupancy at the Royal Darwin Hospital and the various medical facilities in the Northern Territory. As all members would be aware, it is very high. I do not doubt for a second that, if some detailed scrutiny were given to those statistics, the number of infants among that Aboriginal hospitalised population would be extremely high by Australian and even by world standards. The number of Aboriginal children in hospitals, judging from my own visual knowledge, is alarming. The cost of that hospitalisation is also alarming.

That brings me to the inevitable subject of preventive health measures in Aboriginal communities. In a statement last year, the minister spoke about the problems that health departments throughout Australia face as a consequence of nicotine abuse, alcohol abuse, petrol sniffing, kava, obesity and whatever. Those types of social predilections, with which unfortunately our collective constituents seem driven to occupy their time, inevitably force up the cost of health care within this country. However, there is a health problem which could be overcome very cheaply and for which Aboriginal people are not necessarily individually responsible. It does not relate to kava abuse, alcohol abuse or nicotine abuse.

I refer to the number of children who require hospitalisation because of medical conditions associated with infestation by parasites, be they fleas, ticks, lice, scabies or gut worm. I am sure the minister is aware that a very large number of Aboriginal children require hospitalisation, particularly during the wet season. One can never be sure that one will completely wipe out such problems, but one can certainly reduce substantially the incidence of parasitical invasion in children. One way of doing that is to remove the vectors.

The vectors for these parasites are dogs. Every member of this House who has visited Aboriginal communities will have been immediately struck by the number of canines wandering about, obviously infested with parasites. There is a product on the market that can be administered quarterly to canines and which will completely remove these parasites. The product is Avomec and it is reasonably well known. It is not a new product. I am sure the member for Victoria River would be aware of this product, as I am, because he took some interest in it when he was Minister for Primary Production.

There was a program to inject canines in a number of communities throughout Arnhem Land and throughout the Katherine region with this chemical. The results have been quite startling. The incidence of infestation by these parasites has been reduced remarkably. The one big problem is that the program is not conducted by any Northern Territory government department. It is funded, certainly in my region, by the Department of Aboriginal Affairs.

Mr Hatton: We attracted some funds for it.

Mr LEO: You attracted some funds for it.

This is a dramatically cheap way in which the department could reduce the bed occupancy by Aboriginal children within our health care system. The campaign to remove these parasites from the canine vector, in my electorate at least, is conducted by the Department of Aboriginal Affairs. The representation of that department in my electorate is much thinner on the ground than the Territory department's representation. The Department of Aboriginal Affairs does not have officers at Galiwinku or Gapuwiyak as a regular course of events. However, the Department of Health and Community Services is represented at Nhulunbuy, Yirrkala, Galiwinku and Gapuwiyak. If that department decided to take on this program of treating canines with Avomec as an ongoing project, I am sure that the dramatic effects of this drug would be felt even more readily. What has happened at the moment, because the Department of Aboriginal Affairs representation is not as ...

Mr COULTER: A point of order, Mr Deputy Speaker! Could I ask for a ruling under standing order 70? The member for Nhulunbuy is repeating himself tediously and he is speaking without relevance to the subject of the debate.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: There is a point of order. I ask the member for Nhulunbuy to direct his comments to the statement.

Mr LEO: Mr Deputy Speaker, I was directing my comments most pertinently to the statement and, if this minister is not interested in Aboriginal health and if this minister does not think that Aboriginal health is not a direct ...

Mr COULTER: A point of order, Mr Deputy Speaker! The honourable member knows full well that he must refer to honourable members in this Assembly by their correct title.

Mr LEO: I was referring to you as a minister. If you are not a minister, say so.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: I ask the member for Nhulunbuy to direct his comments through the Chair.

Mr LEO: Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker. If any member on the government benches, including the Leader of Government Business, does not believe that Aboriginal health contributes directly to the cost of running the Royal Darwin

Hospital or any other hospital in the Northern Territory, then he is off his rocker, is plainly out of his noggin and has done his marbles. As was said in the statement, Aboriginal health contributes markedly to the cost of hospitalisation in the Northern Territory. Members opposite have been asking us for some time to offer positive solutions. I am offering members opposite a positive solution to this very vexing problem, and now they do not want to hear about it. For 50¢ a beast, for 3 months you can eradicate from these animals the parasites which continue to invade Aboriginal children and put them in hospital. Mr Deputy Speaker, if that is not pertinent to this statement, I do not know what is. I would certainly like to discuss that point with the Clerk in terms of his advice to you.

Mr FINCH: A point of order, Mr Deputy Speaker! I suspect that the member for Nhulunbuy is reflecting on decisions by the Chair and I find that quite outrageous.

Mr LEO: Mr Deputy Speaker, I would like to speak to that point of order if I may. In fact, I was not reflecting on any ruling. I said that I must discuss with the Clerk the matter of his advice, and I am prepared to be advised by the Clerk either inside this Chamber or outside this Chamber on what is relevant to any debate, particularly as he is the person who advises you.

Mr DALE: Mr Deputy Speaker, in speaking to the point of order, I do not believe that, since the ruling was given on that particular issue, the honourable member has done other than make comments that reflect on the decision.

Mr LEO: This is nonsense. I have him by the short hairs and he starts to scream.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: There is no point of order.

Mr Bell: You have talked about health prevention, Don. Don't you want to hear a few details from someone who knows a bit about it?

Mr Dale: I'll show you a big paper on it, mate.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order!

Mr LEO: The ridiculousness of the comments of the people opposite exposes their extremely limited intentions in respect of health care for Aboriginal people. It exposes that most dramatically. Here is a very positive program yet the Department of Health and Community Services said that it could not do anything about it because it related to dogs. It shovelled it across to the Primary Industry Division. The people in the Primary Industry Division, quite reasonably, said that it was not a pastoral problem. It went round in a circle until finally DAA, a Commonwealth department, did something about it. However, its representation on the ground is extremely limited. Its ability to control these parasites within the canine vector is very limited. If the Department of Health and Community Services decided to adopt this program of injecting Avomec into canines, I am sure that everybody in this House would be impressed by the dramatic effects that would have on infant health within Aboriginal communities.

Mr Dale: They are doing it.

Mr LEO: They are not doing it.

Mr DALE (Health and Community Services): Mr Speaker, to get the blood pressure level of the member for Nhulunbuy down to an acceptable level, I will address the point that he made. The honourable member is quite correct in talking about what is a very effective program in the Northern Territory. My understanding is that it was an initiative of the Northern Territory government. It has been taken up on an experimental basis at this stage, through a joint agreement between the Department of Aboriginal Affairs and the Northern Territory government. It has been tried at a number of Aboriginal communities in the Northern Territory and it has been having some success.

To go a step further on that point, I mentioned in my statement today that members opposite reacted in a rather flippant manner when I talked about health promotion and preventive health in a ministerial statement on 22 September 1987. They will also recall a very large statement which I tabled in this Assembly, relating to services provided for Aborigines. They have apparently taken little interest in it, perhaps because of the size of the document. Most of the services referred to in that statement were health services but it also described other services which the Department of Health and Community Services is delivering to Aboriginal communities. It referred to the need for cooperation from the Aboriginal people themselves and a slight change in attitude in their approach to some of the things that are necessary before we can obtain benefit from some of the programs that are in place.

Mr Leo: Oh, Don! You have Aboriginal health workers out there who break their backs for you, and that is the best you can come up with. You are despicable.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The member for Nhulunbuy will withdraw that comment.

Mr Leo: I withdraw, Mr Speaker, unreservedly.

Mr DALE: Perhaps it is not his blood pressure that needs looking at, Mr Speaker. He is obviously very agitated, although I cannot understand why, other than the display of absolute ...

Mr Leo interjecting.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The member for Nhulunbuy will withdraw that remark also.

Mr Leo: Yes, Mr Speaker, I withdraw that remark.

Mr DALE: Mr Speaker, I will not insult the man any more.

Let us go back to the contribution of honourable members opposite in this debate today. It certainly has been a sad day, not only for this Assembly but for the people of the Northern Territory. I do not think that there has been a more graphic illustration of what an impotent opposition we have in the Northern Territory and, quite honestly, that saddens me. In this House over the last few days, we have talked about the way opposition members have been criticising industry and health services in the Northern Territory in a deliberate attempt to demean the contribution of those industries and health services to Northern Territory people. They tried to lower the confidence of the public in the Northern Territory in Hungerford Refrigeration and, by means of public exposure of certain cases, they have been trying to undermine confidence in the provision of health services, particularly those offered at the Royal Darwin Hospital.

In the opening paragraph of my statement today, I indicated that I wanted to force the Leader of the Opposition and his various spokesmen on health matters to face the real issues in the running of the largest service facility in the Northern Territory. The one thing that we have proven today is that the opposition has no criticism whatsoever of any of the matters which I presented in my statement. Members opposite have had every opportunity of informing this House of any criticisms they may have. They have threatened us with a matter of public importance debate, either tomorrow or Thursday, in relation to some of the subjects raised in my statement. I suggest to the Leader of Government Business that, if such a matter of public importance is raised, he should gag debate on it because today has proven that the opposition has absolutely nothing to talk about.

Mr Speaker, I will clarify a couple of issues relating to the management of the radiology section of the Royal Darwin Hospital. It seems that the only thing that the opposition has been able to rely on has been stolen property. The member for MacDonnell said in this House last week ...

Mr BELL: A point of order, Mr Speaker! The minister has made the imputation that the documents which I tabled in this Assembly were stolen. Mr Speaker, I suggest that the minister either withdraw that imputation forthwith or seek to lay charges.

Mr DALE: Mr Speaker, let us study a few facts in relation to the documents tabled by the member for MacDonnell. He referred to a missing file and said that he had documents from that file in his possession, which he was about to table. I have subsequently made inquiries. I find that the file is missing and that the documents he tabled are copies of papers within that file. As far as I am concerned, Mr Speaker, that file has been stolen.

Mr SPEAKER: If the minister is making allegations that the member for MacDonnell has stolen the file, he should do so by way of substantive motion. He has referred, however, to a stolen file. He has not stated that the member for MacDonnell stole it. There is no point of order.

Mr DALE: Mr Speaker, I would like to expand on that point. At no time have I insinuated that the member for MacDonnell or any other member of the opposition has stolen anything. I simply said that he had documents from the missing file. I do not wish it to be thought that I was insinuating that the member had stolen anything.

The member for MacDonnell tabled some other documents today. He did not say whether they came from a file or not. However, once again, he relied on a document to provide the sole basis for his comments in this debate. As I said, this is one of the most pathetic performances by an opposition in any parliament in Australia.

Mr Speaker, let me clarify the situation in the radiology section and how it relates to arguments put forward by members opposite. Since becoming Minister for Health and Community Services, I have put in place an evaluation system to review the operations, not only of the radiology services in the Royal Darwin Hospital but of all services provided by the hospital. I said this in answer to a question from the member from MacDonnell this morning. Notice of the review was given some 12 months ago. Terms of reference for the review, which will take about 3 months to complete in the radiology section, have been widely circulated to staff, unions and other interested parties. Staff have been kept informed because we are aware of their disquiet. I wonder why it exists. Last Friday, a meeting was held between the head of the

review team and the staff of the radiology section. The review will be carried out with total consultation and all submissions will be accepted. It will seek to set out a plan for staffing, equipment purchase and replacement, and general management and operation for the next 5 years. I have the terms of reference for that particular evaluation.

Let me refer again to the documents tabled by the member for MacDonnell which are his only basis for criticism of the services at the Royal Darwin Hospital, including those offered by the radiology section. The documents he tabled last week from the missing file, the stolen file, relate to a 1983 exercise where an initiative of the hospital management aimed to put forward a 5-year plan relating to all areas of the hospital. It covered the pharmacy, pathology, dental equipment, the kitchen, yard management and so on. What happened was that each section made an initial bid in respect of its equipment requirements over the next 5 years. The document from the stolen file that the member for MacDonnell had in his possession and tabled last week relates to the bid from the radiology section - a bid which was not accepted by the management at that time. In 1983-84, the equipment was only 3 or 4 years old and was still functioning fairly well as far as management was concerned.

We now come to 1985. From 8 to 12 August 1985 inclusive, a Dr M.C. Schieb, a consultant radiologist from the Department of Veterans Affairs reviewed the x-ray department at the Royal Darwin Hospital and advised that the equipment was in good condition and of good design. However, the head CT scanning unit had reached the end of its useful life. As a consequence of that ...

Mr BELL: A point of order, Mr Speaker! I ask the minister to table the document from which he is reading.

Mr DALE: Which particular document?

Mr SPEAKER: Is the minister quoting from a document or notes?

Mr DALE: I am quoting from personal notes, Mr Speaker. I have even quoted from the Notice Paper.

Mr SPEAKER: There is no point of order.

Mr DALE: Mr Speaker, a result of that advice from the independent consultant was that, in 1986, discussions took place between the then Minister for Health, the member for Port Darwin, and a Dr Robert Morgan and associates. The consequence was the CT scanning service that we now have in place in the Northern Territory.

The second document tabled today by the member for MacDonnell is a document which I believe was put together by Mr Phil Thorburn, the medical engineer at the Royal Darwin Hospital. He is in charge of the maintenance of all of the hi-tech equipment there, including the x-ray facilities. That document was called for by the management of the Royal Darwin Hospital. It was subsequently discussed, together with a document put forward by Dr Sutton, by management and a senior radiographer at the Royal Darwin Hospital. As a consequence, I now have a 5-year replacement and maintenance policy on equipment at the Royal Darwin Hospital. Recommendations for the next 12 months cover the replacement of equipment at a total cost of about \$1.4m. That amount of money will, of course, be considered in the normal budgetary deliberations and will be dealt with by Cabinet over the next few months.

Mr Speaker, it is clear from this that the government has in place a policy which is all about the proper management of the Royal Darwin Hospital and, in particular, the management of the radiology section. It is true that hi-tech equipment breaks down from time to time. After a number of years and constant use, hi-tech equipment approaches the end of its useful life. Much of the equipment installed since the opening of the Royal Darwin Hospital is now at that stage. You do not have to be half smart to pick a piece of equipment that might be down at a particular time and run around the town blackguarding about the lack of services and equipment in the Royal Darwin Hospital and putting terror into the minds of the people who, in the near future, may have to use those facilities or have their children use those facilities. It is absolutely wrong and immoral for any person to be running around the town using cases relating to small children to create a lack of confidence in the services provided at the Royal Darwin Hospital.

The member for Sadadeen mentioned the services being provided in Alice Springs. There is a private operator setting up there who is examining the possibility of providing a CT scanner. At the same time, I have had expressions of interest from practitioners in a wider field and I certainly want to see what they propose. I am very confident that we will be upgrading all services, not only those in the radiology section, and we have called for expressions of interest for a private hospital in Alice Springs.

Mr Speaker, I have kept an open mind in trying to provide the opposition with any information it wants about the provision of services by my department. When the member for MacDonnell wanted to inspect the radiology section recently, I went to great lengths to make the time available for him to do so. I gave him a copy of the statement at about 4.30 last night so that he would have a chance to read it and make constructive criticism of the provision of health services at the Royal Darwin Hospital. Today's debate has satisfied me of one thing: that the opposition has absolutely no facts whatsoever to put to this House with which it could substantiate a lack of service at the Royal Darwin Hospital. It is vital that every one of the 1400 people who work at the Royal Darwin Hospital in a very dedicated manner in providing services to some 100 000 patients a year see a copy of exactly what the shadow spokesman on health had to say about that hospital. I do not intend to address any MPI that the honourable member opposite may like to raise on this particular subject in the next 2 days.

Motion agreed to.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

Mr BELL (MacDonnell)(by leave): Mr Speaker, in the extraordinary diatribe that we have just listened to, the Minister for Health and Community Services said and I quote: 'He' - meaning myself - 'had documents from the stolen file'. He quoted me as having said in question time on Thursday that I had documents from the stolen file. When the honourable minister checks the Hansard, he will find that is word for word what he said today. For the benefit of the honourable minister, let me read into Hansard what I actually said in question time on Thursday:

Will the minister confirm that the file on radiography equipment in the administrative section in the Royal Darwin Hospital is missing? What action has the minister or his department taken to locate that file? Can I assist the minister by providing him with this schedule - which I trust would be part of a file - which indicates that the previous answer given by the minister this morning is quite

wrong. The replacement dates of 4 out of the 10 pieces of equipment has been passed long ago.

Mr Speaker, the idea of the theft of this file is entirely a figment of the imagination of the Minister for Health and Community Services engendered by his deep embarrassment over this issue. The fact that the file is missing has been corroborated by the minister today. Let me make it quite clear to all members of this Assembly that I am more concerned than the minister about that missing file, action on which the minister appears extremely loth to take.

SUPPLY BILL 1988-89
(Serial 116)

Bill presented and read a first time.

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

The authority to spend moneys under the 1987-88 Appropriation Act lapses on 30 June 1988. Therefore, legislation is necessary before that date to provide for expenditure between then and the passage of the Appropriation Bill 1988-89. The Supply Bill provides for expenditure during the first 5 months in the financial year with sufficient funds being provided to ensure the continuation of capital works programs, roadworks and the normal service of government. It does not foreshadow the budget for 1988-89 although the manner of calculation of the provisions made in the Supply Bill must have regard to the estimated cost of ongoing services in the first 5 months.

The bill provides for a total expenditure of \$588.937m allocated by provision and subdivision to the various departments and authorities. The significant items include: capital works sponsored by departments - \$40.8m; repairs and maintenance, including roads, highways and buildings - \$25.3m; education, including colleges - \$107.5m; and health and community services - \$97.3m. In addition, the bill contains an appropriation of \$40m entitled 'Advance to the Treasurer' from which the Treasurer may allocate funds for the purposes specified in the bill, including provision for the cost of inflation. I commend the bill to honourable members.

Debate adjourned.

COMMISSION OF INQUIRY (DEATHS IN CUSTODY) AMENDMENT BILL
(Serial 111)

Bill presented and read a first time.

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

When the Commonwealth announced the creation of the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody, the death toll stood at about 44. It was initially contemplated that Commissioner Muirhead would be required to report by 30 June 1988. Subsequently, this was extended to 31 December 1988. Since that time, the number of deaths for investigation has risen to 103.

Another complication arose in that deaths in hospitals, particularly mental institutions where custody is involved, could possibly come within the terms of reference of the inquiry. The inclusion of such cases would expand

the work of the commission even further. It has also become apparent that the hearings in some cases will be very prolonged. The first case investigated was the South Australian matter of Kingsley Dixon. The hearings of evidence in that case took several months and more than 100 witnesses were called. Commissioner Muirhead estimated that it could take him up to 6 years to complete his report. As a result of these developments, Commissioner Muirhead recommended that the terms of reference be amended to permit the appointment of additional commissioners, and to exclude deaths in hospitals.

General state and Territory support was received for Commissioner Muirhead's proposal and the Commonwealth has now issued amended letters patent under the Royal Commissions Act 1902. The Commonwealth has, in consultation with the states and the Territory, now selected 3 additional commissioners to operate under the new letters patent. The new commissioners have been allocated responsibility to investigate cases in particular jurisdictions. However, Commissioner Muirhead is empowered to require the new commissioners to investigate certain cases in jurisdictions other than those allocated as he thinks fit. The new commissioner for the Northern Territory, South Australia and Western Australia will be Mr Elliott Johnston QC, a former judge of the South Australian Supreme Court and a foundation member and first President of the Aboriginal Legal Rights Movement in South Australia. Mr Johnston retired from the Supreme Court earlier this year. He is 69 years of age.

For New South Wales, Victoria and Tasmania the new commissioner will be Hon John Wootten QC, a former judge of the New South Wales Supreme Court, a former Chairman of the New South Wales Law Reform Commission and a former President of the Aboriginal Legal Service. Mr Wootten retired from the Supreme Court in 1983. He is 65 years of age.

For Queensland, the new commissioner will be Mr Lewis Wyvill QC, a Brisbane barrister who is 62 years of age. He was admitted in Queensland in 1956. Mr Wyvill has an extensive general practice in Queensland and the Northern Territory and, on a number of occasions, has represented Aboriginal clients. He took silk in 1983.

Commissioner Muirhead supports these appointments. Commissioner Muirhead will consult with the additional commissioners in order to establish a uniform approach to the inquiry. Commissioner Muirhead will have regard to the reports of the additional commissioners on their individual inquiries in the preparation of his overall report and recommendations.

The Commonwealth has undertaken to pick up the cost of the salaries for the 3 additional commissioners and for the additional counsel assisting. In addition to providing for the 3 extra commissioners, the letters patent make other variations to the terms of reference of the inquiry. A significant change is the exclusion of deaths in hospitals, mental institutions, medical treatment centres and the like, save where they resulted from injuries originating in police or prison custody. A further amendment is an authorisation for the commission, for the purposes of reporting on any underlying issues associated with the deaths, to take into account relevant social, cultural and legal factors. No particular significance appears to attach to this amendment. The former letters patent did not preclude such matters being taken into account and the commission has been seeking evidence in this regard from the outset.

Finally, the term of the inquiry has been extended from the end of 1988 to the end of 1989 or such later date as may be fixed. Honourable members will be aware that the Northern Territory does not have a royal commissions act.

The practice to date has been to pass specific legislation to facilitate the work of particular royal commissions in the Territory. The Commission of Inquiry (Deaths in Custody) Act was based on the letters patent issued to Commissioner Muirhead on 16 October 1987 by the Commonwealth. The act contemplated that additional commissioners might be appointed. However, as the act now stands, the terms of reference of the additional commissioners would be limited to Commissioner Muirhead's original letters patent. Therefore, it will be necessary to amend the act to take into account the variations to the letters patent.

Mr Speaker, the bill now before the Assembly amends the act to conform with the changes that I have just outlined. The appointment of the additional commissioners will be effected in due course by His Honour the Administrator, on the advice of the Executive Council. I also foreshadow that I will later be moving a motion that this bill pass through all stages during these sittings. It is anticipated that interlocutory proceedings will be brought before 1 or more of the commissioners during July and that the hearings proper may commence in the Territory in August. Therefore, it will be necessary that the bill pass through all stages during these sittings to ensure that Territory legislative arrangements are in place for the proper functioning of the commission. I commend the bill to honourable members.

Debate adjourned.

METEORITES BILL
(Serial 68)

Continued from 24 February, 1988.

Mr BELL (MacDonnell): Mr Deputy Speaker, it is with great pleasure that I rise to make some pertinent comments and to congratulate the Attorney-General and the government on its perspicacious approach to the question of the legislation before the Assembly, to wit, vesting in the Crown in right of the Northern Territory every meteorite on the surface of the Northern Territory and attached thereto. It also gives me great pleasure to report to the Assembly that, after due deliberation within the opposition and subsequent negotiations with the government, we have before us a bill and an amendment schedule that are the fruits of those negotiations.

On the surface, the proposal to vest the ownership of meteorites in the Territory is unexceptionable. From memory, I believe the honourable minister adverted in his second-reading speech to the persistent souveniring of meteorites and tektites. The purpose of the legislation was not only to enhance the possibilities for scientific study by ensuring that, as far as possible, these objects remain in situ, but also to stop them being souveniried at the present horrendous rate. I am aware that they have become of great interest for use in jewellery and I can report that my household still contains a boat-shaped tektite that has been used as a ashtray for some 20 years. It is a small ashtray, about 2-butts size. I was relieved to learn that the legislation will not have retrospective effect and that we will therefore be allowed to keep our ashtray.

There were 3 issues of concern to the opposition and, for the benefit of honourable members, I will draw those to their attention. I wrote to the Attorney-General indicating our concerns to him. Firstly, to what extent would the bill apply to land held under Commonwealth title? Clause 3(1) refers to 'all meteorites in the Territory' and that caused some concern, not only about meteorites and tektites that were on Aboriginal land but also those

on land in military installations such as Pine Gap or wherever. We believed that concern had to be addressed. The response was that the Attorney-General had sought advice on that aspect and it was clear that the laws of the Territory would apply to the extent that they were not repugnant to Commonwealth laws. The degree of application would depend on the facts in any given circumstance. He pointed out that this question was well settled and there was no necessity to acknowledge this in this bill or, indeed, in any other law of the Territory. The opposition was prepared to accept that.

The second issue that I drew to the attention of the Attorney-General was definitional. Honourable members will be aware of the Mining Act and the definitions of 'extractive mineral' and 'mineral' in that act. My reading of the interpretation section of the Mining Act was such that there was potentially some overlap there. I appreciate the advice of the Attorney-General that that concern had been taken on board and the amendment schedule indicates quite clearly that 'the property in a meteorite does not pass under or by virtue of a law of the Territory relating to mining' which indicates that the Meteorites Bill is regarded as having greater force than the Mining Act in that respect. I very much appreciate the approach of the minister in that regard.

A third area of concern was the question of the interrelationship between the proposed meteorites legislation and the existing Aboriginal Sacred Sites Act and the Native and Historical Objects and Areas Preservation Act. I drew to the minister's attention the fact that many of these objects or 'tjukurrpa', as they are called in Pitjantjatjara, are associated with creation beliefs amongst Aboriginal people.

Mr Collins: Especially at Henbury.

Mr BELL: To pick up the interjection from the member for Sadadeen, I am not very familiar with the tjukurrpa associated with Henbury. I am a little better informed about those associated with Gosse Bluff or Anarula, which will be known to many members of the Assembly. There is a meteorite crater just to the south of Anarula. I believe that it was formed by a tektite. My understanding of tektites has been somewhat enhanced by my study of this bill. I will confess that, when I first heard the word 'tektite' in the honourable minister's speech, it was a closed book to me. I carried out a little research in our excellent parliamentary library and discovered that tektites are glass-like substances. I actually obtained a copy of the definition of 'tektite'. I was more familiar with meteorites. The distinction between meteors and meteorites is well known. Meteors are still up there whereas meteorites are down here, as it were.

To return to my point about the associations with creation beliefs, the tektite to the south of Gosse Bluff is known in a story of the people of that region as Watinyumpu, the man with a limp. Those associations are obviously important to people and should be recognised in this particular bill. I am very pleased that the Attorney-General has included a clause 8 in the amendment schedule. The intention of that clause is to ensure that nothing in the act will derogate from the Aboriginal Sacred Sites Act or the Native and Historical Objects and Areas Preservation Act.

I carried out some further research and I have before me a paper from the records of the South Australian Museum. Unfortunately, it is not dated but I will table it for the benefit of honourable members who are interested in this issue. I must admit that, when I first read this bill and the minister's second-reading speech, I did not consider this to be one of the more gripping

pieces of legislation I had encountered. After further reflection and research, however, it did become of interest. This paper, entitled 'Australites used for Aboriginal Implements in South Australia' was prepared by Robert Edwards, the Curator of Anthropology at the South Australian Museum. It indicates quite clearly that australites are a subset of the set of tektites. All australites are tektites but not all tektites are australites.

Mr Collins: Australites have fallen in Australia. There is a big band of them.

Mr BELL: I look forward to hearing from the member for Sadadeen. This is probably one of the few areas of human knowledge in which I would be prepared to bow to his greater wisdom.

Mr Speaker, the Edwards article refers to the use of australites in healing practices within the electorate of the member for Stuart. These were observed at Yuendumu in 1965 which means that the article must have been written subsequently and is therefore relatively recent. It refers to australites being black in colour, frequently having a distinctive pitted posterior surface, being usually 'round, oval, boat-shaped, canoe-shaped or dumbbell in form'. It goes on to say that 'These special features must have attracted the attention of the Aboriginals who made use of australites in magic, ceremony and medicine over a wide area of southern and central Australia'. It then gives an example.

In closing, the article says that 'the use of australites in mythology is widespread, as the comparative rarity and distinctive appearance of australites would have made them highly desirable for this purpose'. Edwards goes on to refer to the 'recognised fracture quality of australites'. I would not mind the member for Sadadeen informing me what the 'recognised fracture quality of australites' actually is. I presume that it relates to some physical attribute. Edwards says: 'It seems likely that, apart from the recognised fracture quality of australites as a material for use as small implements, the main factor in its attractiveness to the Aboriginal was similar to that of modern man - as unusual terrestrial objects and material'. Therein lies the nub of the bill before us: the interest in these objects as items for scientific study, as objets d'art and as part of the creation beliefs of many of my constituents.

It is important that the new clause 8 be inserted and I would like to express my appreciation to the government for its action in bringing in these amendments. I close by indicating the opposition's support for the principle of the bill and its recognition of the government's rare tractability in this instance.

Mr PALMER (Karama): Mr Speaker, like the member for MacDonnell, I support the bill. I commend the minister for bringing such a serious problem to the attention of this House and for introducing such a momentous piece of legislation.

I have a number of criticisms or constructive comments in relation to this bill. It has been of concern to me for some time that, with the growing body of legislation we have in the Northern Territory, the average Joe Citizen should be able to glean the intent of an act merely by looking at its title. This bill is for a Meteorites Act which merely tells us that it is about meteorites. It does not, however, give the casual reader or observer any indication of its specific connection with meteorites. I believe that a more descriptive title would be: Act Controlling Removal of Newly-Yielded Meteorites or ACRONYM for short.

This bill places all meteorites and tektites under the control of the Museums and Art Galleries Board. In view of the importance which the government places on the protection of those meteorites and tektites and in view of the support that the opposition espouses, I believe that the government should allow the Museums and Art Galleries Board to set up a separate operational division, perhaps a branch, with responsibility for the care and control of the Northern Territory's meteorites and tektites. In keeping with the spirit of the title I have proposed for the legislation and in keeping with the principle of ease of recognition, I suggest that this administrative division be known as the Branch Limiting All Meteorite Exportation - or BLAME. Obviously, BLAME would require a branch head who, in the administrative sense, would be known as the Meteorite Expert or ME. His full title, therefore, would be BLAME ME.

Clause 7 of the bill empowers the board to take such steps as it thinks fit to preserve meteorites in situ or in such other places as it thinks fit. One of the dangers inherent in this legislation is that it could make a criminal out of the unwitting collector of interesting rocks. In order to avoid this problem, the sites of meteorites or tektites should be declared by notice in the gazette and each meteorite or tektite site should be clearly signposted. Such signs could be known as Meteorite Information Signs Indicating Newly-Found or Recent Meteorite and Tektite Impactions Otherwise Notified or, for short, MISINFORMATIONS.

Mr Speaker, I now turn to clause 6 of the bill, which provides for offences against the legislation and contains the penalty provisions. Offences committed in contravention of this section could be known as Violations of Meteorite Including Tektite Sites or VOMITS. Such VOMITS, Mr Speaker, should include MISINFORMATIONS.

Mr Speaker, as I have said previously, too much legislation enacted by this House is foisted on an unsuspecting public without any effort being made to educate them on the effect of that legislation. Following the passage of this bill, I am sure the minister will embark on a public awareness campaign so that all Territorians are made aware of the provisions of this legislation. I suspect that many a member of the press gallery, even though there are none here at the moment, would be fully familiar with both VOMITS and MISINFORMATIONS and may care to lend their undoubted talents and vast resources to such a campaign. Most successful public relations campaigns rely on a slogan. The Whitlam campaign of 1972 had the 'It's Time' slogan which worked very well. A slogan which would be suited to this campaign and which, at the same time, could embody the intention of the legislation as amended - and I am sure the minister will take on board my suggestions and amend the legislation - could be: 'BLAME ME for VOMITS and MISINFORMATIONS'. Mr Speaker, I support the bill.

Mr COLLINS (Sadadeen): Mr Speaker, meteorites, are extraterrestrial solid objects which have reached the earth's surface without burning up. They come in 2 main varieties. Firstly, there is the iron-nickel type which is believed to have originated from the depths of a planet or star which has exploded. Secondly, there are glass or silicon-based materials which are commonly known as tektites. These are very similar in nature to volcanic glass. The australites referred to by the member for MacDonnell are tektites found across Australia. There is a very wide band that extends across the country from the south-west to the north-east where these objects are found. It is postulated that they are related to a time when possibly the moon was joined to the earth and a collision occurred whereby the moon went into orbit. Others have suggested that they could have resulted from volcanic showers from the moon.

Friction generated by the material hitting the atmosphere caused the material to melt and quite large lumps of glass broke into smaller particles. The aerodynamic shapes related to the effect on the molten glass of moving through the atmosphere. These are of considerable interest. Aborigines found these objects over thousands of years and were very interested in them. I suggest that there are not too many people who are not interested in such objects.

The Territory has a number of meteorite sites. Some of the most famous are at Henbury where there are 7 or more large sites and some small impact craters resulting from an impact which is supposed to have occurred not that long ago. I am rather surprised that the member for MacDonnell did not refer to stories. Even today, Aborigines tend to shy away from the Henbury area because it is understood that this may have occurred within the last 5000 years. The Aboriginal people would remember the story of a very frightening event. I have been told that the impact needed to create the main crater would be similar to the explosion of a small nuclear device. One can well imagine that it would leave an indelible impression on the memory of anybody who was living in the area. The story has been passed down from year to year.

I believe that quite a large iron-nickel meteorite was discovered at Huckitta and taken to Adelaide. I will say a bit more about that shortly. I am reminded that Gosse Bluff, a magnificent impact crater west of Hermannsburg, was caused by a meteorite. After looking at photographs of materials brought back from the moon and even by looking at the moon through a telescope, it is clear that the crater was caused by impact, although no traces of iron-nickel meteorite material nor silicon or glass tektite material have been found. One theory that I have seen in a Conservation Commission booklet is that it was caused by the impact of an ice comet. It must have been a very huge impact indeed; it would certainly dwarf the Henbury site. Because no debris is left, it is believed to have been caused by a comet because comets are believed to consist of water ice, methane ice and certain gases which would evaporate without trace. It is a superb sight, when you come out of the western MacDonnell Ranges, to see the magnificent crater of Gosse Bluff on the plain before you.

The member for MacDonnell asked about the recognised fracture quality of australites. The explanation is that, because these glass meteorites heated up and cooled down very quickly, they did not have a chance to achieve a crystalline structure. Large crystals occur only when there is very slow cooling. When the glass material hit the earth or even when it was slowing down in the lower atmosphere, it cooled and was congealed very quickly. The type of fracture in such material is known as a conchoidal or shell-like fracture which gives sharp edges. If you hit a tektite, it will crack into long sharp edges. These would be useful as cutting tools for the Aboriginal people.

I raised the matter of meteorites in this Assembly some 5 or 6 years ago when I asked the then Chief Minister whether he would investigate the meteorite at Adelaide University. It is an iron nickel meteorite which is close to 3 ft across. It has been cut in half and the surface has been etched to show the very large crystals in the metal. It has been polished. It is one of the outstanding exhibits in the Adelaide University. It is just inside the door as you enter from North Terrace. I was under the mistaken belief that it had come from Henbury, but I was corrected. I believe it came from the Huckitta site.

The point I put to the Chief Minister at that time was that they have one half of it there and the other half may be sitting gathering dust somewhere. Of course, they may have flogged it off to another university or a museum, but I think it would be very nice indeed if we could get part of it back. I do not think we can legislate retrospectively and tell them to give it back but, even if the other half has gone, it would be an excellent idea if we could persuade the museum in South Australia to give us part of it, maybe a cut-off from the back side. We could have that polished and exhibit it in the Territory. It is a lovely meteorite and it is worth making an effort in relation to it. I ask the minister to take that on board and consider whether a deal cannot be done to obtain at least part of that meteorite for the Territory.

The bill vests ownership of all newly-found meteorites in the Crown and I think most people would support that view. If it is assessed that someone has made a very important discovery, I note that nothing precludes the government from paying reasonable compensation to discoverers because such objects are of interest to our tourist visitors and to Territorians alike, and I would commend the government for that attitude.

There are many meteorites to be discovered in the Territory, judging by the number discovered in Australia and around the world. The indications are that many more will be discovered. I wonder whether satellite mapping might not be used to help discover some more. It has been used in the mining industry where certain radiation occurs in a particular area of known mineralisation. The computer can be fed with that data and, by looking for similar places, one might discover other meteorites by using the satellites. Some years ago, I was shown a possible meteorite site at Neutral Junction between Tennant Creek and Alice Springs. At first glance, it looked as though somebody could have been digging some material out of the ground but, on looking at it from a different angle, it looked as though there could have been a glancing impact. That is something that could be investigated.

Like the member for MacDonnell, I am glad that current ownership of meteorites and tektites is to be upheld although the onus will be on people to prove that they had them before this legislation was passed. I would like to register in Hansard, if nowhere else, that I have a handful of australites and 1 small piece of an iron meteorite. The australites were given to me some time ago by a friend, Yami Lester, and I value them as I value his friendship. They were very useful to me as teaching aids and I treasure them. The piece of iron meteorite was given to me by an American citizen who had found it at Henbury with a metal detector. It is about the size of a 20c piece. It is rusty and one small corner has been polished to show its particular nature. They are interesting objects from a teacher's point of view and I am glad that current ownership will be upheld.

I am glad also that the government will consider granting reasonable compensation to discoverers because, if these objects can be found, that will benefit the Territory and the tourist industry. I hope the government will not be niggardly with anybody who makes a discovery. Of course, it is one thing to pass legislation and another thing when someone discovers something and realises it could bring a nice sum if sold in the right circles. The temptation can be reduced if the government is reasonable when discoveries are made. All in all, I believe this is a timely piece of legislation. I would ask the minister to see if anything can be done to retrieve for the Territory part of the meteorite at the South Australian Museum. With those few words, I support the bill.

Mr McCARTHY (Victoria River): Mr Speaker, with the possible exception of the member for Sadadeen, it was fairly obvious to me that there were very few people in the House who knew very much about meteorites and tektites, and I am no exception. I shall not be speaking for 20 minutes. I found it very interesting when this bill came to the House because, only a matter of a couple of weeks before, I was given a little book to read by a children's author. He asked me to read this because he was hopeful of having it published and wanted to know what I thought of it. Obviously, he thought that I would be able to give him a good idea of what children like to read.

I first came across a tektite some 20 years or more ago on Bathurst Island. Tektites were moved around the Territory by Aboriginal people and were attributed with having enormous powers. In fact, they were feared in many places, particularly where they were not common. In such places, they were commonly used to wield power over people. I have seen what was purported to be the power of tektites in causing the death of a young man some years ago.

The little book I was asked to read was written by a schoolteacher from Batchelor by the name of Geoff O'Callaghan. He wrote a story which was basically about a mining town in the Northern Territory, a mining engineer and his family. The younger son of the family had been injured in a bicycle accident and was left with impaired abilities. The mining engineer brought home a tektite and gave it to his son. The son was cured and, in fact, was given powers beyond the normal. I read the book from start to finish and enjoyed it. Film rights for the book have been sold in the United States and I hope that it will be filmed in the Northern Territory. It is obvious that the Northern Territory is keen to attract film projects. I know that the Minister for Industries and Development is doing a great deal to attract the film industry into the Northern Territory. It is obvious that tektites have a very real value in the Northern Territory, not only to those of us who are in this House, but to Aboriginal people and also to tourists, scientists and, indeed, to science fiction writers.

I realise that these few remarks do not add a great deal to the debate but it is interesting that tektites have been used in the Northern Territory in this way and that, in the very near future, a film will be made - hopefully in the Northern Territory - on this very issue. I support the bill and I agree that we need to protect meteorites and tektites in the Northern Territory. I am pleased also that current ownership is to be protected.

Mr MANZIE (Attorney-General): Mr Speaker, I rise to thank honourable members for their support for this bill. To honourable members who wish to obtain further information about meteorites and tektites of the Territory, I recommend that they look at the magnificent display at Gillen and Spencer Museum in Alice Springs which shows some prime examples of the different types of meteorites that are found in the Territory and also provides information on their formation, location etc.

There is an amendment schedule to the bill which is designed to achieve 3 aims. The first is to avoid any possible doubt regarding the definition of a 'meteorite'. The second is to give the museum board permission for meteorites to be dealt with should it prove necessary. An example of that might be the removal of some overburden which contains meteorites in the process of mining. The third is to ensure that there is an understanding that nothing in the act contravenes the provisions of the Aboriginal Sacred Sites Act.

Motion agreed to; bill read a second time.

See Minutes for amendments agreed to in committee without debate.

Bill passed remaining stages without debate.

MOTION

Noting Statement on New Procedures and Guidelines for Government Purchasing and Tendering

Continued from 25 November 1987.

Mr EDE (Stuart): Mr Deputy Speaker, as mentioned by the Leader of the Opposition, there are a number of matters relating to these amendments with which we have no problems and which could result in more business for the Territory and more tenders granted to Territory companies. However, I wish to speak on one particular aspect of the amendments as reflected in the Treasurer's Directions. I have an extract from a memorandum A3/88 to departments from the Treasury. The title is 'Changes to Treasury Regulations and Treasurer's Directions Section 20'. It states that Cabinet has recently approved changes to the government's tendering and purchasing procedures which are required because of amendments to Treasury Regulations and Treasurer's Directions, section 20. It goes on to state that appendix A of new section 20 of Treasury Regulations encloses Appendix B, while the new Treasury Regulations appear in Appendix C.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I wish to address my remarks to Appendix B which details classes of supplies which are exempt from the requirements for quotations to be invited publicly. It begins with agricultural scientists, accountants, and acoustic and environmental consultants. The category which I wish to discuss is advertising agents and media. I do so because, in a debate of this nature, we must consider possible and even hypothetical situations which may arise and which may lead to or indicate abuses of the freedom in tendering procedures set out under Appendix B. It is a matter of concern to me because I can envisage certain circumstances in which a particular issue may arise very rapidly. It is necessary for the government to be able to make decisions quickly in such a situation and perhaps to place advertisements explaining what is occurring. The minister can make that sort of decision and I can appreciate that a lengthy tendering process in respect of such advertising would probably negate the whole purpose of the exercise.

What would happen, however, if the need for advertising did not relate to a matter which had arisen suddenly? What if it happened to be something like the celebration of 10 years of self-government, not something which had cropped up? What if it were something as predictable as that, with a date known 10 years in advance? The tenth anniversary of self-government is not something like the school council regulations amendments which resulted in the Minister for Education spending huge amounts of money on advertisements attempting to put over a furphy. The anniversary is a highly predictable event. However, what if a minister, using Appendix B, were to issue a contract for, say, \$300 000 worth of media advertising to promote the anniversary and were not prepared to go to tender? Such a situation would apparently be quite permissible under the amendments before us.

What if the situation were compounded by problems in the minister's party and the minister was having some problems in keeping various elements of his party together and, indeed, finding that certain very powerful people within his party were starting to drift away and move their support in other

directions? What if he felt the need to bring those people back by offering some financial incentive? What if a situation like that were to occur? I am told that it would possibly be quite legal for the minister to use his powers under Appendix B to provide those individuals with a contract. I am told that that could be done within the law. The amendment to Treasury Regulations would not only allow for there to be no tenders but for there to be no requirement for the government to canvass with various advertising agencies the question of how they would handle such a brief.

A formal tendering process might create problems if the government chose not to take the lowest tender because it felt that the agency did not have the capability to, or would not, portray the event as the minister wanted it portrayed. One would think, however, that if formal tenders were dispensed with, there would be a requirement on the government to approach various agencies to see whether they were prepared to put a presentation together and give a broad indication of the cost involved. But, what if that were not done either? I am told that that is quite possible within the terms of Appendix B. Surely, Mr Deputy Speaker, if you became aware of such a situation, you would turn on the minister responsible, as would all other honourable ministers. You would very rightly state that the responsible minister had used his powers in a way that was completely at odds with the views of Cabinet and should be disciplined accordingly.

I have said that the scenario I have described is hypothetical. However, a number of people have told the opposition that that is in fact what did occur. It may be that an intermediary was interposed between the minister and the members of his political party who required some favours. What is absolutely definite, however, is that no tendering process occurred even though the date of the tenth anniversary of self-government was known many years in advance. It is also definite that many people in this town, who would have been interested in taking on the project, were not advised that it was coming up. All sorts of misinformation was circulated to the effect that it was to be subsumed within a general statehood promotional exercise. I would suggest that, prima facie, there has been total abuse of the freedom of the minister as set out in Appendix B.

I would also like to talk about another possibility. The Minister for Mines and Energy, for example, might decide to organise a mining expo which would require a great deal of promotion and publicity. One would think that, in such a case, various people around the Territory would be approached, even if there was no formal tendering process, to see whether they would be willing to propose ideas on how such a promotion might be handled. One would think that, once those ideas had been put forward, there would be an assessment of whether local firms were capable of handling the project or whether somebody from outside had more capability. I am told, however, that did not occur with the recent Mining Expo. Local people were not asked whether they were interested in promoting the expo and, in fact, the contract was awarded to a woman from the Gold Coast who said that she had substantial experience in promoting expos and had lists of contracts. We have seen in the press the comments of various people stating that the Mining Expo was a disaster. We also know that the organisers of Expo NT had asked that the date of the Mining Expo be set back so that the events could be combined to take advantage of the very substantial crowds which normally attend Expo NT. We know that that would probably have been a better option.

Mr Deputy Speaker, imagine our surprise when we found out that, in fact, the lady carrying out the promotion had no experience in running expos. Her lists were simply lists that any person can obtain by asking for a particular

publication setting out who is in the mining game. The lists can then be typed up on a computer. That, in fact, was the sum total of the lady's experience in promoting mining expos.

When the Treasurer amends directions like those brought to this House by the Minister for Industries and Development and when the Treasurer issues Treasury circulars which implement those directions, we expect there to be safeguards which ensure that the amendments do not open the system to wholesale abuse, that do not open the system to cronyism and do not open the system to brown paper bags in an effort to gain some political support for an untenable position in a particular political party which is disintegrating or falling apart at the seams.

We do not expect that that will be the result. However, the amendments have been in place for only 4 months and we have already had 2 quite grotesque abuses of the powers provided to ministers. In both cases, not only were tenders not called but there was no request for local businesses to submit proposals for consideration. Both were provided on a favoured-son basis to various individuals - one was from interstate and the other had very close and very clear connections with the Chief Minister's party.

It is not a pretty scene that I am painting. Unless it is responded to satisfactorily, it indicates that ministers in the Northern Territory government have abused the intention, if not the letter, of the Treasury Directions. I hope that we will see another amendment to the Treasury Directions which will tighten this up and make it impossible for such a situation to occur again. There are promotional companies in the Northern Territory which find it very hard to keep going throughout the year and which hope to obtain work when it comes on stream. They do not like to see it being granted to interstate companies. They do not like the suggestion that it might be granted in return for political favours. That is what is giving the smell of corruption to this government.

Mr Hatton: If you make the allegations, prove them.

Mr EDE: That is what can occur under the Treasury Directions. I call on the minister to reply or, hopefully, the Treasurer will rise and say that he intends to ...

Mr Hatton: You justify those spurious allegations, you gutless wonder!

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! The Chief Minister will withdraw that remark.

Mr Hatton: I withdraw the remark, Mr Deputy Speaker.

Mr EDE: A point of order, Mr Deputy Speaker! The Chief Minister will rise to his feet when addressing the Chair.

Mr FINCH: A point of order, Mr Deputy Speaker! I believe that you are in the Chair, Mr Deputy Speaker, not the member for Stuart. The member for Stuart should resume his seat while I am raising a point of order.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: I understand that I was listening to a point of order from the member for Stuart at the time.

Mr EDE: May I continue with my point of order, Mr Deputy Speaker?

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: You may.

Mr EDE: Mr Deputy Speaker, it is accepted practice in this parliament that honourable members will rise to their feet when addressing the Chair. As the Chief Minister did not do that when he made his apology, he has shown considerable disrespect for yourself and for this House. You should ask him to rise to his feet and repeat his apology for the remark that he made.

Mr HATTON: Mr Deputy Speaker, I certainly have no disrespect for you or the Chair. I am afraid I cannot say the same for the honourable member opposite. I will stand, Mr Deputy Speaker, and withdraw my remarks.

Mr EDE: Mr Deputy Speaker, members of the business community do not relish being confronted with unfair competition of the type which is quite possible under Appendix B of the Treasurer's Directions. It does not increase their confidence in this government or in their own ability to continue doing business in the Northern Territory. They know that a number of these contracts have been let without their having been given the chance to be involved in them. This has been discussed at length by the Confederation of Industry and Commerce and its various sub-groups. I hope that the government will close this loophole by the introduction of an amendment which will ensure that people are able to retain some confidence that there is an environment in the Northern Territory within which they can do business in a fair manner.

Mr HATTON (Chief Minister): Mr Deputy Speaker, that was the most despicable load of nonsense this House has ever been subjected to. If the honourable member has one definitive allegation that he can prove against this government, let him stand up and do so. Otherwise, he should retract the filthy allegations he made in this House today. That is the sort of classic nonsense that members opposite like to try to spread through the community. There is no truth in any of those allegations. The nonsense about brown bags is the sort of smarmy garbage that the member opposite delights in using in an effort to denigrate the government and the Northern Territory community. There is no truth in it. I deny that there is any impropriety in any contracts being let.

Suddenly, we have this Central Australian Aboriginal Congress delegate-cum-member of the Assembly trying to speak on behalf of the business community and saying: 'We must consult with the business community about this and we must consult with the business community about that'. Those tendering procedures were drafted by a committee which included the Executive Director of the Northern Territory Confederation of Industry and Commerce and the Executive Director of the Master Builders Association of the Northern Territory. It was set up specifically to ensure that there was a high level of private sector involvement in the drafting of those regulations. In fact, on the Supply and Tender Board, there is an officer appointed by the private sector through the Industrial Supplies Office which is operated by a company jointly owned by the Master Builders Association.

Mr Ede: It does not get to tender. It is Appendix B.

Mr HATTON: That person sits on the Supply and Tender Board to deal with any policy matters that arise. These procedures have closed many loopholes. Mr Deputy Speaker, in your previous capacity as a business manager I know that you were aware of the multitude of loopholes that were being used to deny the local business community an opportunity to obtain business. You would be pleased to know that, in recent discussions, the small business community took the time to compliment my government for the efforts it has made to increase the level of local business participation in government work. I have thanked them for that, Mr Deputy Speaker. Unlike members opposite, they are prepared

to look rationally and logically at what is occurring with the supply and tendering procedures.

Mr Ede: Your were 6 months late.

Mr HATTON: Rubbish! Mr Deputy Speaker, I will give you a run-down on how this whole matter of the opposition's ISO initiatives started. It started at a meeting in late 1985. That meeting was attended by the present Minister for Transport and Works representing the then Minister for Transport and Works, the member for Casuarina. It was a meeting of ministers for industry. One of the items discussed related to industrial supplies offices. The member for Wagaman, representing the then Minister for Transport and Works, rang the minister and asked for his endorsement for an indication of this government's support for the ISO concept. He gained that approval and, following his return to Darwin, the government made a public announcement in November or December of 1985 ...

Mr Ede: 5 months after we raised it.

Mr HATTON: I have news for you.

Mr Deputy Speaker, we announced our support for the concept of an industrial supplies office. In February 1986, the Leader of the Opposition, who had been tipped off about this new initiative by his Labor mates interstate, jumped on the bandwagon. In February 1986, he announced that he had come up with this new idea of creating an industrial supplies office. He then promoted it.

We have had enough of this carry-on, Mr Deputy Speaker. We do not care who suggested it first or who did not but the reality is that this government introduced it. Not only have we introduced an industrial supplies office; we have done it in a different way. We have put the control and direction of the Industrial Supplies Office in the hands of private enterprise business organisations which are not under the control and direction of government. The government provides annual funding to the joint venture company and the officer responsible for the office reports to the boards of the 2 organisations involved, the Master Builders Association and the Confederation of Industry and Commerce. To give it some teeth, the officer in charge of the Industrial Supplies Office sits on the General Tender Board and the tender board for the Power and Water Authority. This is to ensure that there is an input from the private sector into our purchasing and tendering procedures and practices and in the drafting of tender documents to maximise the chances of local business involvement in government tendering.

To go one step further, the Industrial Supplies Office has been doing an excellent job in getting out into the community and providing advance warning of opportunities for our local business community. It is helping local businesses to organise so that they have the best possible chance of winning business contracts. The one thing we cannot do is to offer price preference. We cannot do that because federal Labor governments have made it illegal. However, we have made it administratively very difficult to award tenders interstate for local projects. That extends as far as requiring specific approvals for the advertising of contracts interstate or for receiving applications from interstate. The specific approval of the Supply and Tender Board is required for acceptance of any interstate tender.

Mr Ede: This does not get to the Supply and Tender Board.

Mr HATTON: Mr Deputy Speaker, I do not intend to debate individual circumstances nor do I claim that the system and the procedures will operate perfectly. What I will say is that there has been a clear demonstration of this government's absolute determination to maximise opportunities for the local business community to participate in government tendering. I am pleased to say that that is at least being recognised by people in the business community even though members opposite, who are concerned because we are actually helping business and undermining their campaign of denigration, are trying to destroy even this initiative.

Mr PERRON (Industries and Development): Mr Deputy Speaker, in closing debate, I wish to refer to a comment made by the Leader of the Opposition during his contribution to it. He said: 'I am not 100% convinced that we will satisfy everyone's concerns with any system which we put in place'. I think that is a pretty fair assumption.

The Northern Territory government spends a total of about \$1500m per year. If we hive off salaries and various committed payments, that still leaves between \$700 and \$1000m which the government pays for goods and services during the course of the year. Of course, an enormous number of transactions are involved in that expenditure and the occasional one may cause concern to people in a particular industry or to members of the opposition. No doubt, such matters will boil up from time to time.

One of the problems relates to areas in which it is difficult to define exactly what it is you are purchasing. Indeed, you may be purchasing the artistic expertise of individuals. All honourable members would be aware that there is very considerable variation in the talents involved in various companies. The public relations field is an example which happens to be topical today. There are others. Architecture is one. The government is not particularly involved in it in terms of letting contracts but the principle is the same: the expertise and abilities of an individual is purchased to be exercised on one's behalf. The field of public relations is one of those in which, at times, firms are selected by departments on the basis of their history and known expertise. I cannot see how any tender system would completely avoid a requirement, from time to time, for persons to make individual judgments on such matters.

Notwithstanding that we may never have a totally perfect system immune from all criticism, the procedures outlined in my statement demonstrate, as the Chief Minister said, that the government is prepared to listen to private enterprise in relation to devising a system which it believes is just. We have been prepared to bend to its wishes considerably in developing a system which pushes the decision-making process down the line to departmental officers who are accountable and who are vested with delegations from the secretary of the department in each case. That is where we believe decisions should be made in many of these cases so that the government can work quickly with a minimum of red tape. I believe that this system, which we will no doubt review and finetune from time to time, achieves that. I thank honourable members for their contributions, with the exception of the member for Stuart.

Motion agreed to.

ADJOURNMENT

Mr HATTON (Chief Minister): Mr Deputy Speaker, I move that the Assembly do now adjourn.

Tonight, I want to pay tribute to Ted Hayes, the centralian pastoralist who died in Alice Springs in March this year. It is difficult not to talk in cliches when you talk about Ted Hayes: a pioneer from a pioneering family, a legend in his own time and a man ahead of his time. Ted Hayes was all of those things. There is no other way to truly describe the life and times of this larger-than-life Territory pioneer.

Ted's grandparents, Bill and Mary Hayes, arrived in the Territory in 1884 to work on Maryvale Station. That was 104 years ago and Maryvale Station was then known as Mount Burrell. In fact, in those days, Alice Springs was known as Stuart and had a far smaller population than the old gold town of Arltunga, now a ghost town and tourist attraction but then the commercial capital of central Australia.

The original Hayes family have a number of claims to fame in Territory history. Bill Hayes first worked for Sir Thomas Elder, the founding member of the stock and station agency, Elder, Goldsborough, Mort. He then worked on the Overland Telegraph line replacing the wooden poles used by Sir Charles Todd with the steel poles which served their purpose from 1872 to recent times. The Hayes family, all 5 generations of it, have been associated with some of the best known stations in this country: Owen Springs, Undoolya, Deepwell and Maryvale.

The Ted Hayes I pay tribute to tonight was born in Alice Springs on Anzac Day 1914 - 12 months to the day before the Anzacs landed. His father, Ted Hayes senior, had taken up the Undoolya lease. Even in his school days, young Ted was something of a pioneer. He attended classes run by Ida Standly, the first schoolteacher in Alice Springs, a formidable lady who insisted from day one that white and Aboriginal children should be educated together in her rudimentary classroom. Ted married Jean Bloomfield, herself the daughter of Territory pioneering stock, in October of 1937 and went off to manage Owen Springs for 2 years before he returned to the family property of Undoolya in 1939.

Ted Hayes did not just believe in living off the land. He was a long way ahead of his time in improving his country, taking a practical interest in its flora and fauna and in its revegetation. He took a similar interest in his horses and cattle. He was a very tough man and a born horseman. Thoroughbred horses from Undoolya, from the stock bred up by Ted Hayes, are today much-prized in racing circles both in the Territory and interstate. Ted also set up the Poll Hereford stud at Undoolya, which is regarded as one of the best in the country. The cattle from this stud are sought and bought by cattle breeders right around Australia. Each year, horse and cattle buyers come to Undoolya for the big sales, an event which is traditionally officially opened by my colleague the Speaker, Mr Roger Vale, a close personal friend of Ted and Jean Hayes and family members.

Ted always believed in putting back into life what he got out of it and his community involvement shows that. Ted Hayes was involved in the Cattlemen's Association, the NT Bushfires Council, the Alice Springs Racing Club, MacDonnell Range Racing Club and the Harts Range Racing Club. He served as President of the Beef Breeders Association, was a life member of the Central Australian Show Society, the Alice Springs Police Club and the Stockman's Hall of Fame. He was a member of the NT Development Corporation and was the first pastoralist in central Australia to ship live cattle to Korea by air. Ted Hayes worked in his chosen vocation on the last day of his life. The day he died, he had helped his son on a cattle muster and then attended a social function with his close friends at the Elders office in Alice Springs.

There is no doubt we have lost a great Territorian and a great friend, but the Hayes family lives on in the Territory. Ted is survived by his wife Jean, sons Bill, Jimmy and Mickey, daughter Julie and a healthy number of grandsons and grand-daughters. On a happier note, Ted Hayes' son Bill and his wife, Jan, recently purchased Maryvale Station which, under the name of Mount Burrell, was where the original Bill Hayes started work in the Territory in 1884. Mr Speaker, I am pleased to report to the Assembly that the Hayes family has really come home.

Mr PERRON (Industries and Development): Mr Speaker, I also wish to pay tribute to the famous centralian pastoralist, Ted Hayes, who died on Friday 4 March 1988 at the age of 73 years. Ted was one of our most renowned pastoralists and widely respected by Territorians and cattlemen, not only in the Territory but throughout Australia. Ted Hayes came from a pioneering pastoral family. His grandparents came to the Territory in 1884, under contract to Sir Thomas Elder, to construct fencing and sink dams on Mount Burrell, now called Maryvale, and Owen Springs Stations. They were soon to take up Deep Well Station which remains in the family to this day. The family was later to take up Undoolya Station and Owen Springs Station, which are the oldest continuously worked properties in the Northern Territory, and they are also owned and managed by the family. The connection with Maryvale has been re-established, with Ted's son Bill purchasing this property recently.

The Hayes family have been in central Australia for 104 years. Ted was a third-generation Territorian. A number of his grandchildren, who are fifth generation Territorians, live in central Australia. In October 1987, Ted and his wife Jean celebrated their golden wedding anniversary at Undoolya. The Hayes family battled, persevered and eventually prospered in the very harsh and isolated environment of the Centre where the large pastoral companies arrived, failed and departed. Ted never forgot his pioneer origins and the difficulties of harshness and isolation in the land that he loved and respected. He remained one of nature's gentlemen, a man of simple tastes and needs to the end of his life. He was still actively working his cattle property, Undoolya, up until the time of his death.

The pastoral industry in central Australia was richer for his involvement. He was active in the Northern Territory Cattlemen's Association, the Southern Region Pastoral Industry Advisory Committee, the Alice Springs Show Society, the Turf Club and with various government advisory bodies from time to time. Ted was always able to contribute and ask the right questions based on a lifetime's knowledge, experience and shrewd observation in the cattle industry. Ted was a pastoralist who could accept new ideas where he saw merit and put them into place to improve his properties. As early as 1954, Ted was an advocate of buffel grass to improve the country and to see Alice Springs now after rain is to see how successful this was. He also introduced new cattle trapping systems and feed supplements to utilise to the best advantage the spinifex and scrub country so common throughout the Centre. Ted had the added advantage of being able to question the theoretical where his vast practical experience and acute powers of observation told him that the theoretical was impractical.

Ted Hayes could be abrupt and gruff at times, but this was a measure of his basic honesty which would not allow him to suffer fools or foolishness. He was rarely wrong in his assessment of people or ideas but, where he was, he was quick to recognise it and make a reassessment. By the same token, Ted was a kind and gentle person with a great interest in teaching young people. Many sons of pastoralists in the Territory were sent to Undoolya to learn the Ted Hayes style of station management and stockmanship, in which he excelled.

The fine Poll Hereford herd on Undoolya and Deep Well was a credit to Ted Hayes, not only because of their fine breeding and type but because they were so quiet and well handled. Cattle from this stud are sought and bought by stud masters around Australia. Ted believed that it was necessary to handle cattle often. In the days of helicopters, 4-wheel-drives and motorbikes, he firmly believed that there was a place for the horse, for horsemanship and for stockmanship. The Undoolya herd is a credit to his philosophy and the young and not-so-young men and women he has taught are fine examples of what station managers and workers should aim to be.

Despite the sad loss to the Territory of Ted Hayes, his family will carry on the proud tradition of the Hayes family in the Centre. He is survived by his wife Jean, nee Bloomfield, herself a member of another pioneer Australian family, and daughter Julie, sons Billy, Jimmy and Mickey and a number of grandsons and grand-daughters. The Hayes dynasty, established in 1884, will continue.

Ted Hayes set his name firmly into the history books in central Australia. He was a leading Australian pastoralist and a legend in his own lifetime. He took an intense and practical interest in the country, flora and fauna, and revegetation. He had an extremely close relationship with Aborigines in central Australia. He was extremely interested in the history of central Australia and was always willing to pass his knowledge on to others. Ted Hayes created the impression that he was indestructible and, on the day of his death, he worked in a stock camp and that evening attended a social function at Elders. He was one of the most distinguished and impressive sons of central Australia. He was a true Territorian and will be sadly missed by the pastoral industry around Australia, his many friends and associates in the Territory and those elsewhere in Australia.

Mr Speaker, I take the opportunity in the adjournment tonight to touch briefly on another matter which is of concern to me. Earlier during these sittings, the member for Stuart made a disgusting and cowardly reference to a man who has contributed significantly to the development of Darwin over the past 8 or 9 years. I refer to Mr Koh, whom honourable members are aware has been connected with a number of major construction projects in Darwin. Among those projects was the Beaufort Hotel, the Raffles Plaza, accommodation at Gardens Hill and the clay-brick factory at Hudson Creek. It is unfortunately true that 2 of those projects, the Beaufort Hotel and Raffles Plaza, faced financial difficulties during the construction period or after they were completed. The reasons for those difficulties are the subject of legal action and I rightly make no further reference to that subject.

The point I make is that the irresponsible reference by the member for Stuart that ordinary businessmen have lost significantly from Mr Koh's involvement in those projects is a completely unsubstantiated statement. The projects I mentioned have benefited many local companies and individuals substantially, and continue to do so. As a result of Mr Koh's enthusiasm for the potential of Territory development, he has contributed to construction work to the value of some \$80m, probably providing more than 300 permanent jobs in Darwin.

I ask the member for Stuart to name a single individual, outside politics, who could claim to have attracted more capital to the Northern Territory. The member for Stuart is unlikely to contribute one hundredth of those figures in his entire lifetime. It is obvious that there is no way the honourable member would be prepared to repeat outside this House, where action could be taken against him, the references to Mr Koh which he made last Tuesday. The member

has abused the responsibility vested in him as a member of this Assembly and he owes the man concerned an apology.

Mr FIRMIN (Ludmilla): Mr Speaker, this evening I would like to touch on a couple of matters. Firstly, I would like to put on record and pay tribute to the officers and men and women of the Royal Australian Air Force, from both the Darwin and Edinburgh bases, who participated in running over 3000 km from Darwin to Adelaide in a fundraising exercise which, I am led to believe, raised in excess of \$100 000.

Some years ago, I was involved in a run over a slightly different distance. It was a project initiated by members of the Apex Clubs of Australia in 1970 and involved running around Australia to raise over \$1m in funds for a foundation to conduct research into the problems of autistic children. As part of that project, I was involved in running the section from Dunmarra to Elliott in the middle of summer. Having driven for a considerable number of hours to reach the starting point early in the morning, and having run right throughout the day until late that evening and then returning to Darwin, I have a very clear concept of just what it takes to pound down the Stuart Highway over long distances. I take my hat off to these fellows for their fitness and for the big effort that they made, firstly in breaking the record and secondly in raising the funds.

A member: And the girls, too?

Mr FIRMIN: Yes, I think there were some girls in the team.

The second matter that I would like to touch on this evening arises from several things which have occurred in this last week. During these sittings, the 1986-87 Annual Report of the Valuer-General was tabled in this House. I would like to mention a couple of sections in that before I refer to the other part of my problem.

On page 6, as part of the general comments in respect of Darwin area residential land, towns of Darwin, Nightcliff and Sanderson, the statement is made that the average price of R1 zoned land in the Darwin municipality showed an insignificant increase of only 4% from the previous financial year 1985-86. On another page the report says, in respect of commercial land:

The industrial market, following closely on the footsteps of the residential market in Darwin, weakened somewhat during the past financial year. Sales of improved property were only steady and slightly higher returns on investments were evident.

The reason I draw the Assembly's attention to that is because some honourable members will recently have received notices of valuation from the Valuer-General in respect of properties which they may own within the Darwin region. Some honourable members may have been quite surprised to find that, in fact, rather than reflecting what the Valuer-General has said on pages 6 and 9, much to their regret, there have been substantial increases in valuations. I made an effort over the last couple of days to examine a wide range of areas and pick up a few examples. In Fannie Bay, for example, an 1100 m² property was valued in 1982 at \$48 300. The triennial revaluation in 1985 was \$59 000 and the triennial revaluation in 1988 was \$64 500.

Another example is that, in Nightcliff, a 1370 m² R1 residential property was valued at \$32 000 in 1982, \$35 000 in 1985 and \$36 750 in 1988. In the commercial area, I have an example given to me by one of my constituents. It

is an R5 block right on the boundary of the Darwin municipal area. In 1985, this 1.34 ha site was valued at \$65 000. In 1985, it was revalued at \$95 000. This year, 3 years later, in complete contrast to what has been said in the Valuer-General's report in respect of commercial property, it has risen to the massive value of \$160 000. That is an 87% increase.

The effect of these increases will be a very large increase in rates. I would like to put the Darwin City Council on notice that it should not hide behind its rating structure, as it has done in the past and particularly in the last couple of years, by saying it will only increase the rate to meet inflation. It will receive a very fortuitous windfall if it adopts that stance. In 1986, its base rate was 1.166c in the dollar for valuation purposes and, in 1987, it was 1.22430c. If the council strikes a rate reflecting the inflation rate only, the effect on the commercial property that I spoke about would be an increase of \$1000. The rates on the 2 residential sites would increase by \$120. I put the council on notice that it should not increase the rate in next year's budget but should maintain the rate at its current level.

Mr BELL (MacDonnell): Mr Speaker, there are a number of matters I want to raise in this evening's adjournment debate. Firstly, I wish to endorse the comments made by previous speakers in relation to the sad passing of Ted Hayes of Undoolya. There were a number of articles in the Weekend Australian that were of interest to me. One of the finest was an article in the Weekend Magazine entitled 'The Black and White Bond'. It portrayed an attitude to race relations that Ted Hayes symbolised in many ways. It is an attitude to race relations between black and whites in the Territory that is a very positive one. I will come to Ted as a cattleman in a minute but I think that anybody who saw that article in the Weekend Australian, knowing the man and knowing the people involved, would say that he was a great Territorian, a great member of the central Australian community and that we are all diminished by his passing.

I was unable to attend Ted's funeral and I was very sorry about that. My wife attended Ted's funeral and she described to me the Aboriginal people who were present. She works with Aboriginal people who carry Ted's name and I think I can probably pay no better tribute to Ted's stature in the whole central Australian community than to mention a comment from one of the Aranda people who knew him: 'We were proud to carry their name. They were happy for us to use it and we were proud to do so'. On an occasion like this, comments like that are worth placing on the record of the Assembly.

I commend that particular article. It includes comments from people like Ted Egan who is well known to all of us through his music which expresses the same sort of realistic, honest approach to race relations in the Territory which Ted Hayes personified. I have a fair idea of how much the presence of those people at Ted's funeral meant to his immediate family. I think it was an impressive indication of how positive race relations can be. Often we are confronted with 2 extremes in race relations. We are confronted with ugly racism that seeks to dehumanise and not treat Aboriginal people as people. A more subtle form of that is to insist on Aboriginal people measuring up to white standards time and time again by becoming white fellows. The other extreme is the romantic view, the museum view, of traditional Aboriginal culture. That, in some cases, can be just as dehumanising as the other end of the spectrum. Ted Hayes had a sensible view, and I like to think that I share it, which treats Aboriginal people as having aspirations that may not necessarily be well understood by everybody in Australia and recognises the effort of coming to terms with them as a worthwhile occupation.

Members on the government benches may be surprised to realise that, on a number of occasions, I discussed issues of concern to the cattle industry with Ted. He had some carefully considered views on drought relief policy, the application of the BTEC program and so on. We were probably on opposite sides of the political fence in terms of party allegiance but, at times like this, it is worth placing on the record the common ground we shared. It was not only in respect of racial relations but also a concern for the cattle industry. Because I represent an electorate that includes stations like Undoolya, it was important for me to develop an understanding of issues of concern to ordinary cattlemen. Ted Hayes was certainly one person who helped me in that regard. The failings I may have in that regard are certainly not his, I hasten to add.

I also commend to honourable members 2 other articles in the Weekend Australian. I refer to a review of a book recently launched called 'Wildbird Dreaming' written by Nadine Amadio and Richard Kimber. Richard is well known around the Centre as Dick Kimber. Mr Speaker, he would perhaps be better known to you for his exploits on the football field than for his Australia-wide reputation as a student of Aboriginal affairs and Aboriginal culture. I commend this book. His co-author, Nadine Amadio, may not be personally known to members here. She is not personally known to me, but her family in Alice Springs, John and Janet Amadio, will be well known to you, Mr Speaker, as to other centralian members of this Assembly.

The book is a great work. In fact, I have been provided with a copy by Papunya Tula Pty Ltd to present to the parliamentary library and I will be doing so in due course. I have had a chance to look through it, if not to read it in detail at this stage, and I am sure that it will make a welcome addition to our library. For anybody who is interested in Western Desert art, I am sure it will provide a mine of information and increase understanding of what has become arguably the most popular form of Australian art throughout the world in the 1980s. I could discourse on that subject at length but I will leave that for a later date.

Another article which appeared in the Weekend Australian caused me some pain. It was, of course, the article that appeared on the front page. They always stick the good news down the back and leave the rubbish at the front. I intend writing to The Australian to express my point of view in relation to the article headed 'The Australian Finds Scandal in Aboriginal Art - Tradition Trampled in a Rush for Riches'. It is a terrific, gory headline but there is very little in the article itself to justify its placement on the front page of the paper.

The fact is that there is a relatively orderly marketing process for Western Desert art. There are 3 companies involved. One is Papunya Tula Pty Ltd, which is an artists' cooperative with, from memory, 43 members, all of whom are practising artists, and 6 directors, all of whom are residents either of the Papunya or Kintore areas. Another organisation is the CAAMA shop which is an offshoot of the Central Australian Aboriginal Media Association and is involved in marketing Western Desert art. In addition, there is the older Centre for Aboriginal Artists.

Because of the high popularity of the art, many people are interested in obtaining work. I am sure that some are buying directly from the artists themselves. Quite obviously, as with any type of product, some items are better than others. It is a free market, Mr Speaker. I commend the 3 organisations to anybody seeking to buy Western Desert art. I believe that they can rely on the product which is sold in those outlets and that they can

rely on getting quality work at the right price. To suggest that there is some sort of scandal is just so wrong as to be totally misleading and, as I have said, I intend writing to The Australian in that regard.

The final matter I wish to discuss in the adjournment concerns the problem of the Yulara ambulance. It has been drawn to my attention that, once again, the ambulance at Yulara has broken down. I mention for the benefit of the Minister for Health and Community Services that a snake-bite victim had to be picked up on the Docker River Road last Friday. Because of perpetual problems with a leaking fuel cap, together with the use of oxygen, there was a lethal mixture in the ambulance cabin which led to 2 of the 3 occupants becoming violently ill and vomiting. I am reliably informed that, the following day, a Yulara Corporation employee drove the ambulance in the direction of Curtin Springs and it broke down and had to be towed back into Yulara. I ask you, Mr Speaker, to contemplate what would have happened if there had been an emergency at that time. This ambulance must be replaced forthwith.

Mr COLLINS (Sadadeen): Mr Speaker, the name Ted Hayes was one that I had heard around Alice Springs for something like 10 years before I actually met him. I dare say that we just did not mix in the same circles. I had certainly seen him around but had never known who he was. During the 1980 election campaign, Sam Calder introduced me to Ted at a function at Blatherskite Park. I was reminded of that occasion when the Minister for Industries and Development said that Ted had a basic honesty about him. When Sam introduced us, Ted looked me in the eye and said: 'I am against you'. I said: 'Why, Mr Hayes?'. He said: 'Firstly, you have never come out to see me'. I must confess that I thought that was a little bit hard because he did not live in the electorate for which I was standing. His other reason was that I was a teacher. Ted had fairly strong views about teachers. We spent some time yarning, particularly in relation to that point. I think I was able to convince him that, knowing the teaching game from the inside, his views and mine had a certain degree of commonality. From that time on, Ted and I got on very well on those occasions when we met. I came to admire him for his honesty, bluntness and forthrightness. He was a true Territorian - one to be looked up to and admired.

We met on numerous occasions, often just to say good day or to talk about the weather or cattle. I do recall, however, that the Housing Commission once asked me to put forward some names of Alice Springs identities after whom blocks of flats and units could be named. I proposed the name of Ted Hayes and was then asked to justify the choice with some background information. When I got hold of Ted, he was not particularly interested in being remembered. He was far more interested in commemorating his father and previous Hayes generations. That is the sort of fellow that he was. I learnt much about the family and it is extremely interesting history. Regrettably, I was overseas when the member for Flynn had the honour of opening the building which bore the Hayes name.

Ted was very active right up to his last days. I recall him attending the art auction at which many of Father Summerhayes' paintings of central Australia were auctioned. He bought a couple of them including, I believe, one of Mount Undoolya, which is a prominent mountain which can be seen from his station homestead. He was generous in his support of Father Summerhayes' trip overseas for the exhibition of his paintings at the Tourist Commission Office in Japan.

The last time I saw Ted was at the inaugural meeting of the Australian Conservation Foundation branch in Alice Springs. Several other pastoralists,

together with the member for MacDonnell and myself, were in attendance. Had Mr Hayes lived on, I am sure that he would have joined that group. I have been along to a couple of their meetings since and find that there are some very well-meaning people there together with some who are quite off the beaten track in relation to conservation. They certainly have no monopoly on expertise in relation to it. Ted and his family certainly had an interest in looking after the countryside which they have done very well at Undoolya, Owen Springs Station and Deep Well. They know where their livelihood comes from and they have a real interest in ensuring that the country is looked after properly. I am sure that Ted, like the other pastoralists who continue to attend those meetings, would have put a degree of sanity and experience into the proceedings.

Ted was not backward in saying what he felt. I recall a very pithy letter being published in the Centralian Advocate in which he got stuck into the government over the Undoolya satellite city. Somebody along the line had neglected to have the courtesy of even talking to Ted and the people at Undoolya. Having said his piece, however, when he received a request in connection with a valedictory dinner for Bernie Kilgariff at which John Howard was to be the guest speaker, Ted and Jean very generously opened up their station for a wonderful evening. That is the sort of person he was. One of the last things he did on the political scene was to attack the CSIRO over some allegations which appeared in the Centralian Advocate regarding land degradation. He put the story in terms of his experience at Undoolya. Since then, I have met some CSIRO officers and discussed their program. They freely admitted to me that Ted knew his areas and his station a darn sight better than they did.

Ted was a man's man and a humble man in very many ways, as has been said. In his relationship with the Aboriginal people, he treated them like any other people, as did the whole family. I refer members to the article in the Weekend Australian the other day. A fair bit of journalese was employed but, by and large, the story and relationship of the Hayes family and Aboriginal people is well told. It is a pleasant change to find journalists writing about cooperation and respect in relationships between white people and Aboriginal people.

The member for MacDonnell mentioned Ted's funeral. I felt deep regret that I was unable to attend. I had commitments down south which I could not cancel and for personal reasons now, with hindsight, I am very glad that I did go south. Mr Speaker, you may understand what I am alluding to there. I called on Ted's sister, Lizzie, and spoke with his daughter and a couple of his sons. I expressed my deep regret at his very untimely passing. He was struck down when he seemed to be in full flight, very capable and able and with much to offer. Ted Hayes will be remembered with great affection by those who knew him. He was a fine man and a true Territorian and I pass my condolences on to Jean and the family.

In the week before these sittings started, whilst I was down south, I was able to travel from Adelaide to Melbourne to attend a valedictory dinner for one C.R. 'Bert' Kelly. Bert Kelly was a member of the federal parliament for some 19 years, from the late 1950s until 1977. He is well-known to many as the writer in the Bulletin of the Modest Member and, once he lost his preselection, he wrote as the Modest Farmer. His very pithy, very humorous essays on economics, tariffs and quotas etc will be remembered by many people. He wrote books such as 'Economics Made Easy', and he had a great capacity to use humour, often humour turned on himself, to get his points across, where a more ponderous person would turn people off.

He may not have set the world alight in some ways, in his parliamentary days, but his writings as the Modest Member and the Modest Farmer have had an impact around Australia. In the great hall of the Victorian Arts Centre, there were some 350 people at the dinner to pay tribute to Bert, to hear the speeches and, of course, to hear vintage Bert Kelly deliver, in his own magical style, his story of what his life had been all about. It is interesting to note that people right across the political spectrum are beginning to realise that protectionism and tariff barriers, in the end, hurt the country which erects them not the country against which they are erected. He was keen, in most humorous ways, to expose the weaknesses in our system and the people who want to jump onto a featherbed and to have an easy life which, of course, must always occur at the expense of someone else.

Bert Kelly is a great Australian. He had a great deal to do with the Territory long before I came here. He paid many a visit to the Territory and had a deep love for it and a greater understanding of it than most federal politicians. Certainly, he is a man whom I have come to hold in the highest regard.

At that dinner, the master of ceremonies quoted a piece of verse that was written specially for the occasion by another Australian who is doing his bit for the country, one Viv Forbes of Taxpayers United. It pointed out the waste of money by governments around the country. I would like to read into the record this short piece of poetry as a tribute to Bert Kelly from Viv Forbes. It goes like this:

He Showed the Way

When tariffs have been slaughtered
And the quotas are all gone,
When all the featherbeds have sunk
And taxes have been shorn,
When Eccles runs the Treasury
And free trade rules the waves,
T'is then we'll say, with gratitude,
T'was Bert who showed the way.

Bert Kelly is a great Australian. I trust he will have a very enjoyable retirement from writing, and may his efforts politically on the Australian scene echo for many years to come.

Mr POOLE (Araruen): Mr Speaker, I rise to join parliamentary colleagues in paying tribute to Ted Hayes. Ted was born in Alice Springs on 25 April 1914 to Jane Anne and Edward Hayes. He did his schooling at Undoolya and in Alice Springs with Mrs Standly. Even though I am a late-term resident of Alice Springs, I am aware that Ida Standly faced a lot of resistance in the town because of her determination to teach white and Aboriginal children together. Nevertheless, she succeeded. It was due to her determination to remain in Alice Springs that most of the older residents in the town learned to read and write. From that basic beginning, Ted continued to educate himself throughout his life and in this he succeeded far beyond many who had greater opportunities. I believe we should honour Ted for the way he overcame the difficulties of his time and of physical and social isolation and developed his high standard of business competence, his sensitivity in land management and for the work he did to develop the fine Poll Hereford cattle property and his own string of racing thoroughbreds.

Ted started working with his father on Undoolya when he completed grade 7 and, on his marriage to Jean Bloomfield from Love Creek Station on 17 October 1937, he went on to manage Owen Springs Station for 2 years before returning to Undoolya. Ted and Jean purchased Undoolya from Ted's parents in 1953 and later, in 1960, they purchased Deep Well Station.

Ted was involved in many associations and councils etc in Alice Springs, and I will not go through that list again. Last year, Ted and Jean celebrated their golden wedding at Undoolya Station. He was a long-term Territorian and a number of his grandchildren, fifth-generation Australians, live in central Australia. Obviously, the Hayes name will continue to be part of central Australia's history. Ted was the sort of man who was always willing to pass on his knowledge to others. He took a keen interest in other people. I think he has been described as a rough, tough Territorian and he looked very much part of the land in which he was born. They tell me that, when he rode a horse, it seemed as though the horse and he were one.

He was a true Territorian and he will be sadly missed by all Territorians. I attended his funeral and it was very interesting. I noticed the comments of the member for MacDonnell about Ted's attitude to race relations. A large percentage of the people at his funeral were Aboriginal. I think his would be undoubtedly one of the biggest funerals that have ever taken place in central Australia, if not the biggest. At that funeral, I noticed a constituent of mine, Ken Stuart, an old Aboriginal man who lives fairly close to my home. After the funeral, I was talking to Ken and, when I asked him if he knew Ted very well, he said, 'Oh, I have known him a long, long time. He was a fine man, a good man!' I think that is how Ted Hayes will be remembered by all Territorians.

Mr TUXWORTH (Barkly): Mr Speaker, I too rise to make a few comments about Ted Hayes. Many gracious things have been said about him this evening and they are all true and well-deserved, and I lend my support to what has been said. But, there are a couple of important things that I would like to say. Ted Hayes was a lucky man. Ted Hayes had 3 main wishes in life: he never wanted to retire, he always wanted to live on Undoolya, and he wanted to die a peaceful death without ever having been a burden to his family in his last years. In those 3 things, Ted Hayes was a successful man. He had his wish or his dream, and good luck to him for it and, for the great contribution he made to the Territory, may he never be forgotten.

I was interested in the remark made a moment ago when an honourable member commented that Ted Hayes attended the first meeting of the Conservation Foundation to be held in Alice Springs. I would not be the least bit surprised about that at all, because Ted Hayes was practising conservation 40 or 50 years before anybody else had even invented the word. He knew that his survival was based on a balanced use of the land and it has been the hallmark of the family over all the years that they have been operating on stations in the centre and that, in itself, speaks remarkably well for the man.

Mr Speaker, I have 2 other items that I would like to raise tonight as matters of importance. The first is for the benefit of the Minister for Labour, Administrative Services and Local Government, and I refer to the dispute that has been going on between the Tennant Creek Town Council and Teillac for close to 12 months. It really has reached scandalous proportions and I say to the minister that, if the events of the next 24 hours do not see some resolution between the parties, as recommended by the Ombudsman, I really believe he should use his power under the act to intervene and see that the matter is resolved.

The dispute between Teilact and the Tennant Creek Town Council is well-documented. It was investigated by the Ombudsman who found that the council was liable. He recommended that an arbitrator be appointed and that the arbitrator's job be no more than to decide the quantum of compensation that should be paid to Teilact. As I understand it, even up until today, the recommendation of the Ombudsman has not been accepted by the council and it is looking for the arbitrator to determine whether there was liability.

I do not know what the council's game is, but it is outrageous and something ought to be done to bring the matter to a head. There is no way that we can continue to do the things to these business people that are being done and expect to maintain investor confidence within the community as a whole. I ask the minister to keep a close eye on that. The deadline for the 2 parties to have accepted the Ombudsman's decision is tomorrow and, if that is not done, I invite the minister to do something positive about it and to do it post haste.

The other matter that I would raise is for the benefit of the Minister for Education. I had the good fortune this week to attend the annual eisteddfod in Darwin. I have to say that it has become so successful that the venue being used is an acute embarrassment to the organisers and a disadvantage to everybody who wants to be involved. I went to see the primary school choirs. There were probably 300 or 400 children sitting on the floor, 200 parents seated, another 50 or 80 parents standing around the walls and another 300 children in the corridors of the Casuarina Shopping Square waiting for their turn to come in. I raise this because I appreciate the problem of the Eisteddfod Council needing to move to a venue that can adequately accommodate this choir display but not having the funds to pay for it. I say to the Minister for Education that this is one of those occasions where a ministerial decision to support the Eisteddfod Council to enable it to hire the Darwin Performing Arts Centre would be a very constructive proposition.

Mr Collins: Don't we pay enough taxes now?

Mr TUXWORTH: My reply to the honourable member is that we do but what I am saying is that this is a very important part of children's education and somehow we should provide for it in the education budget. If you train school choirs and other contestants to do their best and then provide them with a venue where it is well nigh impossible for them to perform, it is grossly unfair on the teachers, the children and all the people who would like to watch, let alone on the people who did not even get in the door to see their children participating in the eisteddfod.

There is one other aspect that is very important. To compete in the eisteddfod, children come from all over the Territory - from Santa Teresa, Alice Springs, Jabiru, Gove and so on. If children, parents and teachers go to all the trouble of travelling 1000 km or 1500 km to compete in an eisteddfod with 40 or 50 other schools, the least we can do is provide a venue that brings out the best in everybody and gives the children a fair go.

Judging by what I saw, the running of the eisteddfod was superb. The organisers and the people involved were really dealing with very difficult conditions and, under the circumstances, the behaviour of all the children was exemplary. You can imagine all those children backed up in the corridors at the Casuarina Shopping Square yet there was no trouble. They were really well behaved.

The minister should be prepared to give a year's notice to the Eisteddfod Council that, for next year's competition, some way will be found of making the Darwin Performing Arts Centre available for those parts of the eisteddfod which require the use of such a facility. In closing, let me compliment again all of the people involved in the eisteddfod. From what I can see, it has been an outstanding success.

Mr EDE (Stuart): Mr Speaker, in opening, I would like to add my contribution to the tributes that have been paid tonight to Mr Ted Hayes. Ted Hayes could be described as a great cattleman, a great centralian and a great Territorian. He was a man who had a real love for the country. One of the things that distinguished him from a number of others is that he had the basic knowledge that he was living and working in a semi-arid zone. He did not put that point aside and say, 'There will be some good times and, hopefully, everything will come good after the bad times'. His management practices were worked around the basic fact that he was living in a semi-arid zone. The way that he ran his cattle station fitted in with the area in which he lived and worked.

Other members have spoken about the great respect that existed between himself and Aboriginal people. There is very little that I can add to that except to say that my experience and the things that people have said to me about Ted Hayes back that up to the full. He was a prolific correspondent to the Centralian Advocate. Whilst all the people who read what he said did not always agree with him on every issue, he certainly made a lot of good sense. I will certainly say of Ted Hayes that he was a practical man, a man of sense and a great Territorian. We are sorry to see him go and wonder when we will see the likes of him again.

Mr Speaker, the main point that I wish to raise tonight is the attitude of this side of the Assembly to post-secondary education. I raised this in debate at the last sittings. The minister did not seem to have listened at that time because he certainly interjected a great deal. Luckily, his staff listened because much of what we had to say in that debate is now coming to fruition. I wish to set out our attitude again so there can be no doubt. This side of the Assembly does not see education as something that exists in primary and secondary school and then is discarded as one moves into the work force. We regard education as something that is part and parcel of the normal process of life. It is something which people must be able to move into and out of as part of their normal life. Part of their education may relate to self-fulfilment and the achievement of personal goals and a large part will relate to the acquisition of skills that will ensure that the Northern Territory has a highly-skilled and highly-effective work force.

People should be able to follow different streams. Some may leave school in order to undertake an apprenticeship, work in a trade for a while and then return to study for a diploma or a degree. Others may leave school early and later wish to return to upgrade their skills. We must design a system of education which will allow that to occur with a minimum of fuss and without obstacles being put in people's way.

One of the limitations in the past has been problems with accreditation. With the vast numbers of institutions and the various courses that exist, institutions have often found that, for their own reasons, they did not want to accredit work that had been undertaken in another institution. A method of overcoming that problem - and a system which is uniquely suited to us in the Northern Territory - is a unitary system of post-secondary education. We propose and we continue to propose - and I am glad to see that the government

appears to be moving towards if not already committed to this proposal - that the University College and the TAFE sector be combined into a University of the Northern Territory.

We go further in that we believe this should be set up in a multi-campus institution. Campuses like the Alice Springs College of TAFE will become a campus of the University of the Northern Territory. Whilst a large part of its offerings will continue to be in the TAFE area, it will improve its delivery in assisting people in doing at least the first year of university, possibly full-time, and then to link in with various external courses enabling people to obtain advanced education or degree qualifications.

I might mention that the Batchelor College would be excluded from this arrangement. I do not have sufficient time tonight to explain our proposal for Batchelor College although I hope to be able to cover it in tomorrow night's adjournment debate.

One of the arguments which has been put to me is that a unitary system, such as that which I have proposed, encompassing people from the various levels of advanced education, will somehow have a lower status and this will result in an inability to attract top-quality staff. I dispute that. I believe we have to develop our research links. I have proposed already that direct links be made with centres of excellence such as the Menzies School of Health Research and AZRI. These could be moved fairly rapidly into the university as centres of research. I believe that we can also organise links with bodies such as NARU. It could be carrying out independent research whilst also doing research in conjunction with people in our university. Similar arrangements could be made with CSIRO and the Office of the Supervising Scientist. I believe that we could give our university a very strong research component by utilising those skills which are already here in the Territory.

In determining which areas of research we should be involved in, I believe that we should concentrate on what is most applicable to the Northern Territory. Just as the James Cook University very quickly made a reputation in marine biology because of its proximity to the Great Barrier Reef, we could be involved in marine biology in our own region and in research into the arid and semi-arid zones. The Northern Territory should be in the forefront of that research. We should be looking at how we can make that large part of the Territory productive and how we can develop technology for export to that very large part of the world which falls within the arid and semi-arid zone. Not only could we set up a major export industry for ourselves but we could also do a great deal to assist in alleviating the hunger and poverty which is endemic to such regions around the globe.

Mr Speaker, it has been said that there would be a need for some protection of the trades area. I believe that may be necessary within the system we have proposed. I have talked previously about the possibility of a school of trades being incorporated into the institution. A mechanism could be put in place to ensure that funds did not move from the trades areas into what might be seen as the more highfalutin areas.

It appears to me that the government is accepting the model outlined by the opposition and I congratulate the minister for that. He has had the courage to overturn what appeared to be the direction of his predecessor and I give him full praise for that. The government now needs to address the issue of the legislation required to set up this new body. If we are to attract good people into the university, it must allow the degree of academic freedom

which people are accustomed to having elsewhere in Australia. If the new university is seen to be dominated by the government, through the minister's cronies or lackeys, we will simply not attract staff of the quality needed to make the university a success.

My final point relates to negotiation, which will be the main task of the minister during the next couple of months. There will need to be full consultation and negotiations with the 2 major unions involved. The student organisations must be involved. The government will have to demonstrate that all parties are involved fully in decisions. It will be a difficult and demanding process. University and DIT staff are used to very different terms and conditions of employment and a good deal of wisdom and patience will be needed to bring the groups together so that people do not end up walking out on the process on the basis that they are not being fully involved and consulted.

I am quite prepared to offer the minister a copy of a paper which I have. He may have a copy already but I will table it anyway. It is called 'The Institutional Amalgamations Principles' and was put out by FAUSA and UACA. It sets out a number of eminently sensible principles which should be taken on board in the course of the difficult process which we now face. Some of it is not relevant because it relates to much larger institutions. However, where it touches on regional institutions and smaller stand-alone institutions, it makes a lot of sense. Mr Speaker, I table that document.

We are about to take a very important step for the Northern Territory. We have to reach a situation in which the Northern Territory is known for the skills its people possess in fields which are relevant to our region and our development. If we can achieve that, we will have come a long way in overcoming the problems which now confront us. The model which I have described, and which the minister appears to be following, is the right way to achieve that.

Mr SPEAKER: Honourable members, I have listened to remarks made by a number of you concerning the late Ted Hayes. I can truly say that this is one occasion when I wish that I was more able to participate fully in the adjournment debate. I am unable to do that. I would like, however, to take this opportunity to associate the Chair with the remarks of honourable members by saying simply that, whilst the phrase 'true Territorian' or 'typical Territorian' has been used on many occasions, it could not be applied more accurately and honestly to any man than one whom I have known for many years in central Australia: the late Ted Hayes. If I was asked to sum up my feelings about him in a few words, I would say simply that he was indestructible. He was one of the most unforgettable characters I have ever met.

Mr COULTER (Treasurer): Mr Speaker, this Assembly heard a great deal from the opposition last week, particularly the Leader of the Opposition, in relation to the role of the Territory Insurance Office in the development of Territory businesses, particularly Hungerford Refrigeration.

Mr Speaker, I would like to bring to the attention of yourself and honourable members an incident which has occurred in Victoria. Mr Speaker, being a poultry man and a Victorian from way back, you would appreciate this. On page 4 of the Melbourne Sun of 24 May 1988, there is reference to 'a state government-backed poultry and tourism enterprise'. The financial commitment to this tourist enterprise, which now finds itself in difficulties, amounts to some \$15m. In fact, the name of the enterprise is Fantasy Farms and it has

properties throughout Victoria and south-east South Australia. It is in receivership after the government-administered Victorian Economic Development Corporation poured some \$12m into it. The story in The Sun says:

The receivers will seek expressions of interest in the business if pressure mounts from creditors to put it into liquidation. The financial crisis has thrown into doubt more than 300 jobs at the company's headquarters at Warrandyte. The Musgrove family, which runs Fantasy Farms, yesterday refused to comment on the farm's financial situation but a family member conceded it was upsetting. The state opposition last night attacked the government saying Fantasy Farms had been a bad investment and a disgraceful use of public money. The opposition leader, Mr Kennett, called for a full disclosure of the government's involvement in the venture. However, one of the receivers, Mr John Spark of Arthur Anderson and Co, said that the Development Corporation borrowed from the commercial market and did not use taxpayers' money.

The Musgrove family have farms at Bridgewater, Great Western, the Mornington Peninsula, the Bellarine Peninsula, Warrandyte and parts of south-east South Australia. About 2½ years ago, the Development Corporation gave the family the first of 2 loans which totalled \$12m.

Mr Speaker, as you would well know, being an ex-Victorian and a chook farmer, you can buy a lot of chooks for \$12m.

Senior industry sources say the money was to establish a Victorian-based processor of chicken meat and producer of laying hens to compete with the giant Ingham chain which had its headquarters in Sydney but supplied throughout Australia. The Fantasy Farm at Warrandyte was also open to tourists, with an eating place and counter service. About 40 small farmers around Victoria were contracted to grow chickens for Fantasy Farms for processing, but industry sources say the Musgroves found it almost impossible to compete with Inghams. The sources say that, as a result, the enterprise steadily lost large amounts of money and was forced into receivership late last month. Mr Kennett told The Sun: 'It is not only a bad investment, it is a disgraceful use of the public's money'.

The development corporation set up under the Liberal government in 1981 was restructured under Labor in 1984 to become the principal agency for the provision of loan and equity funds to companies in line with the government's economic strategy. The Industry, Technology and Resources Minister, Mr Fordham, said last night that the corporation was considering a number of options to recoup the loan funds, including selling the business.

Mr Speaker, I bring that to the attention of honourable members so that they can understand that it is simply a fact of life that state government insurance offices throughout Australia provide venture capital to some projects and take on risks. I understand that Suncorp invested some \$5 to \$6m in the Evans Deakin shipyard in Queensland, and the State Government Insurance Office in Western Australia has lost some \$300m as a result of the stock market crash and other investments.

We are not involved in chook farms to the extent that the Victorian government is. It does not have a considerable stake in this area although

the Minister for Industries and Development, with his portfolio responsibilities for primary industry, may come up with certain ideas along those lines. Indeed, I can think of one just now.

In view of the Leader of the Opposition's criticism of Hungerford Refrigeration, which relates to a decision that the Territory Insurance Office took last year, some facts about the company that eventually won the Tindal contract are timely. The company is Lasala Pty Ltd and it is very interesting indeed. I do not want to get into the type of muck-throwing that the Leader of the Opposition indulges in but, since he has raised this type of issue from time to time, I would like to inform honourable members about Lasala Pty Ltd, the company that is trading as Airite Industries and that has won the government contract at Tindal over Hungerford.

The Leader of the Opposition and Mrs Lee Rosenwax of the Darwin Traders Association have referred to Hungerford Refrigeration as a \$2 company and implied that, because of this, it was unfit for selection to carry on business in the Trade Development Zone. They will be very interested to know that Lasala Pty Ltd is also a \$2 company. It has 2 shareholders, each holding a \$1 share. They are Thomas Courtenay and Valerie Courtenay. Between April and June 1987, the Leader of the Opposition made constant reference to the various court actions and judgments involving Hungerford Refrigeration. He claimed that these proved that the company was unable to pay its debts and was about to go into liquidation. Attempts were made at the time to explain to him that court summonses and judgments did not always mean that a company was insolvent or about to become so. They can result from legitimate disputes such as contested accounts etc.

In the light of his earlier accusations, the Leader of the Opposition will be very interested to know that there have been several notices, summonses and judgments against Lasala Pty Ltd and these include: 3 final notices for amounts of \$700, \$4800 and \$4800, the plaintiff being Boral Insulwool; a county court summons for an amount of \$10 000, the plaintiff being Access Control Systems Australia, for moneys owing; a county court judgment of \$2800, the plaintiff being Steelmark; and a county court summons for an amount of \$2500, the plaintiff being the New Zealand Insurance Company. These cases are not mentioned to suggest, as the Leader of the Opposition did with Hungerford Refrigeration, that Lasala is insolvent or about to go into liquidation. They are mentioned to show that many companies experience temporary liquidity pressures which cause problems or find themselves involved in commercial disputes which are settled in the courts.

What I am trying to point out to members of the opposition - and it is interesting to note that not one of them is present during this adjournment debate - is that such things are simply a fact of commercial life. If the Northern Territory gets to a stage where it is not prepared to take risks, where it is not prepared to get on with the job of developing this one-sixth of Australia that has been neglected by the Commonwealth government for the last 70 years, we might as well give it all away and go home now. We have no intention of doing that, and we will take the risks. The Territory was built by the great risk-takers such as Hon Paul Everingham, who took the risk of building Yulara and took the rubbishing about contingent liabilities from the then Leader of the Opposition leader, now Senator Bob Collins. It was the previous Leader of the Opposition who introduced that term 'contingent liabilities' to the Northern Territory. He went about his scaremongering tactics and campaign to kill the Yulara development. Today, we are entering into a \$17m expansion on that development and you would be lucky to get a room next year, Mr Speaker. That is a great credit to people like Hon Paul Everingham who took the risks in those days and got on with the job.

The Hungerford exercise will not slow down the Northern Territory government. It will not slow down the commitment of the Territory Insurance Office to such venture capital organisations and, as has been mentioned in the paper, I will be making some announcements about the venture capital company which is considered essential now in light of the continuing criticism from the Leader of the Opposition. The government intends to get on with the job of providing employment. 'Jobs, jobs, jobs' is still the catchcry of the Northern Territory government. That is what we are about: providing meaningful full-time employment and committing venture capital to companies to ensure development.

It is interesting to note that, before the end of the week, I will be meeting with 6 people who are considering buying into Hungerford Refrigeration. The technology is right; it can work. The judgments which influenced the Territory Insurance Office decision to enter into the venture in the first place are still correct today. The technology is correct, but it has been condemned by Terry the Terminator. We will not buckle under that kind of pressure and we will continue to seek out companies that can make a worthwhile contribution to Northern Territory development and assure them that there is a place in the Northern Territory for them.

All these points that I have brought to the attention of honourable members tonight do not mean that Lasala is on the verge of going into liquidation, as was so treacherously claimed by the Leader of the Opposition in the case of Hungerford. The opposition benches are full of people who have not committed themselves to any Northern Territory development. They have not contributed to 1 project in the Northern Territory. They do not understand the frustrations, the commercial reality, the risks and the venture capital that are involved in achieving anything. All they understand is how to knock projects and how to stop things from happening, and they are becoming very expert in that particular skill. However, it is a negative skill which the people of the Northern Territory will not tolerate, and neither will members on this side of the Assembly. Tonight, I have pointed out that there are risks involved.

I am not suggesting that we would go into a \$15m chook venture such as Fantasy Farms, but risks have to be taken from time to time. The information that was available to us about Hungerfords is still correct today. I believe that its technology and its product have a chance of succeeding. I hope that it is only in receivership. It is not dead yet. Terry the Terminator has not finished it off. It does have the opportunity under the receiver perhaps to restructure and be able to bring its product back into the marketplace. I wish the company all success in that particular venture.

Mr REED (Katherine): Mr Speaker, tonight I wish to reflect on part of the Territory's history and also a new national park which, as I understand it, is to be established on the Roper River. The Conservation Commission has acquired some 130 km² of land on the Roper River in that area which is bounded in the west by the Mataranka Pool Nature Park and in the east by Elsey Station and Elsey Creek. That area includes a beautiful section of the Roper River, along which occur a series of springs and a very interesting limestone formation. Given the history of the area, I propose that it would be appropriate for the park to be named after Dr J.R. Elsey and be known as the Elsey National Park. Indeed, I have written to the Minister for Conservation on this matter, and I thought it might be timely for me to speak about it tonight.

Dr J.R. Elsey was a surgeon-naturalist on Augustus Charles Gregory's North Australian Exploration Expedition which primarily explored the area of the Victoria River in 1855 and 1856. The expedition left Sydney in 1855 and sailed up the east coast, across the north coast and around to the Victoria River in 2 vessels which carried the 18 members of that expedition. The party consisted of the following people: Augustus Charles Gregory, commander; his brother, H.C. Gregory, assistant commander; J.S. Wilson, geologist; J. Bains, artist and storekeeper; Dr J.R. Elsey, surgeon and naturalist; F. Mueller, botanist; J. Flood, collector and preserver; G. Fibbs, overseer; and C. Humphries, R. Bowen, C. Dean, J. Melville, W. Dawson, W. Shewel, W. Selby, S. Macdonald, H. Richards and J. Faye, stockmen. The livestock comprised 50 horses and 200 sheep and it was no mean feat, I guess, to convey those animals around the coast of Australia at that time.

The expedition explored the Victoria River to its source, to the headwaters just across the border in Western Australia to the west of Victorian River Downs. Following some months at a camp site near the present township of Timber Creek, the expedition travelled across country to the Roper River, the Gulf of Carpentaria and down through Queensland to Moreton Bay. En route, on 15 July 1856, the expedition camped at Elsey Creek at the point where it joins the Roper River. For the benefit of honourable members, I will read into Hansard the comments of A.C. Gregory in his journal on 15 July 1856:

Leaving our camp at 7.10 am, we steered north till 9 o'clock over level country which appeared to be very swampy in the rainy season. Altered course to 10° and crossed a small, dry watercourse which proved to be a continuation of Elsey Creek. At 11 o'clock, turned 60° and shortly came on a bank of a fine river with banks 30 to 40 ft high and fine reaches of water 50 to 80 yards wide. At 11.45, camped at the junction of Elsey Creek and the river which appears to be the Roper of Dr Leichhardt.

Mr Speaker, this area was to become the crossroads of exploration in the Top End for it was here that Leichhardt first passed through in 1845 whilst travelling along the Roper River on his way to Cobourg Peninsula. Secondly, Gregory and his party of 18, including J.R. Elsey, passed through in 1855 and 1856 when travelling from the Victoria River region to the Roper and across the Gulf to Moreton Bay. They were followed by John McDouall Stuart in 1862, when he passed through that area whilst crossing from Adelaide to the north coast and Point Stuart. Finally, the Overland Telegraph crossed the Roper River near that point. It is fortuitous that this area, where Elsey and A.C. Gregory's expedition camped, was to become the crossroads of northern exploration.

J.R. Elsey made significant contributions to the natural history of Australia. He first observed and collected a number of species of birds and animals which he was later to describe. Those birds included the lilac-crowned wren which is one of the prettiest of the fairy wren family, scientifically known as *malurus coronatus*. It is worthy of note that the work which J.R. Elsey undertook in this field was recognised and praised by experts of high renown in that field, including John Gould, Mr Mueller - the well-known botanist - and Alex Chisolm, a well-known Australian naturalist.

For the benefit of honourable members, I will read into Hansard some of the comments by those people in relation to J.R. Elsey. Mr A.H. Chisolm, in delivering the C.T. White Memorial Lecture for 1963-64, was recorded in the Queensland Naturalist of June 1964 as saying:

The name Elsey is moderately familiar throughout Australia because it attaches to a pastoral property in the Northern Territory that forms that background of the late Mrs Gunn's popular story 'We of the Never Never'. On the other hand, few people knew anything of the man for whom Elsey Station, which was named through the medium of Elsey Creek, took its name. There is no awareness of the fact that he was a competent young surgeon, explorer, ornithologist and general naturalist who died at the age of only 24 years.

Mr Speaker, another reference appears in the records of the American and Australian Scientific Expedition to Arnhem Land which took place in 1948. Volume 4 records some of the work of that expedition and makes reference to the contribution of J.R. Elsey. It says: 'The north Australian expedition contributed a few species of mammals to the British Museum, most of them being collected by Dr J.R. Elsey around 1856 near the mouth of the Victoria River'.

The national park to be established on the Roper River will form a great tourist attraction. It would be most appropriate for it to be named after this great naturalist. The name Elsey is synonymous with the region and is recognised nationally, due largely to the reference by Mrs Gunn in her famous book, 'We of the Never Never'. Further, the existing national awareness of the name would be of considerable benefit in promoting the Territory's national parks and the tourism industry. Apart from the obvious historical significance, naming the park in honour of Elsey would formally recognise the work of this competent young surgeon, explorer, ornithologist and naturalist who made a considerable contribution to the natural history of Australia and the recording of various species. His achievements in this field can be directly related to the ideals of the Conservation Commission.

Further, I believe naming the park after Elsey would gain popular support throughout the Territory, particularly in the Mataranka and Katherine areas. It would be fitting to name this national park to perpetuate the memory of Joseph Ravenscroft Elsey FRJS, surgeon and naturalist, who contributed to an impressive documentation of birds and other animals during his short life in Australia. He died at St Kitts in the Leeward Islands on the 31 December 1857 on his return journey to England. I thank honourable members for their attention to this short look at our history.

Mr McCARTHY (Victoria River): Mr Deputy Speaker, I want to respond briefly to the member for Barkly's comments regarding a dispute between the Tennant Creek Town Council and Teilact Pty Ltd. A number of people have approached me seeking my intervention in this matter and my response has been that there is a due process that should be adhered to in relation to such matters. While the Tennant Creek Town Council has accepted the Ombudsman's opinion in this matter, there is a dispute with regard to the amount of money owing to Teilact. Whilst Teilact is not prepared to accept the sum offered by the Tennant Creek Town Council, the council is bound by the fact that its auditors and its solicitor tells it that it should not pay more than it has offered. To do so would be to invite questioning from the auditor when the council's annual accounts are audited. I have refused to intervene because there is a due process which specifies that, if no agreement can be reached on a figure, the matter should go before an independent arbitrator. That is now happening. The Tennant Creek Town Council has said that it will accept the decision of the arbitrator. I certainly hope that Teilact will do the same and that the matter will rest there. I see no reason for intervening whilst this process is taking place even though it has taken a long time to reach this stage.

Mr Deputy Speaker, whilst I am on my feet I would like to register my support for the comments in relation to the area of land on the Roper River which is about to become a national park. I am particularly familiar with it. I was aware of that piece of land being made available to the Conservation Commission a couple of years ago. After hearing your very enlightening comments about J.R. Elsey, I believe that it would be very appropriate for the park to be named after him.

I also want to speak briefly about the condition of a couple of roads in my electorate. The Minister for Transport and Works might wish to take note of my comments. One of those roads is the Daly River Road. I saw some figures today which indicate that the Daly River Recreational Reserve could expect about 15 000 visitors this year. Whilst that is quite remarkable, it is not only the visitors I am concerned about. The people who live in the area constantly have to travel over 40 km on a road which has a very poor surface. I hope that consideration will be given this year to bituminising the entire length of that road. The unsurfaced stretches are dangerous and it is certainly high time that the problem was rectified.

The other road I wish to mention is the Lake Bennett Road which I have mentioned before. Since the redevelopment of Lake Bennett, this road is used by a large number of people on weekends, mainly from Darwin. Having travelled on the road a number of times during the last few months, particularly against the flow of exiting traffic on a Sunday afternoon, I know that it is extremely dangerous. Quite clearly, there is a need for some work on that road. I recommend that both roads be considered carefully in the budget deliberations of the Department of Transport and Works this year.

Mr SMITH (Millner): Mr Speaker, I had not intended to rise in the adjournment debate tonight but I cannot allow the Treasurer's disgraceful attack on a perfectly innocent Victorian company to go unnoticed. I am not talking about Fantasy Farms which, quite clearly, is a legitimate target for attack. I am sure that, if I were a Leader of the Opposition in Victoria, I would be in full flight on that particular matter.

For the Treasurer to pick on an innocent Victorian company which had sufficient faith and confidence in the future of the Northern Territory to apply for and win a contract here, and to do so for a selfish political motive, is to drop to the bottom of a very deep hole indeed. That is what the Treasurer has done. The Victorian company has tendered for and won a contract in the Northern Territory, in fair and open competition. What does it get for its pains? In the course of saying that it has done nothing wrong or unusual, the Treasurer of the Northern Territory says in this House that the company has a history of bad debts and court cases.

Mr Coulter: Do you deny that?

Mr SMITH: I do not deny it.

In the same breath, he went on to say that there is nothing unusual about this. Let it be on the head of the Treasurer if this company has problems in the Northern Territory with suppliers because of his comments in this House tonight.

I must say that there are a significant number of differences between the position which this innocent company finds itself in and that which Hungerford Refrigeration finds itself in. The first difference is that this Victorian company does not have \$1.4m of semi-government money invested in it. It does

not have debts of \$400 000, discovered since being taken over by a semi-government instrumentality. This company is not in the hands of a receiver in the Northern Territory, in Victoria or anywhere else. It is a trading company, minding its own business and putting its best foot forward until, for no reason at all, it is stabbed in the back by the Treasurer. That is the situation.

The other difference is that in 1987 Hungerford Refrigeration was the subject of 2 petitions to the courts in Queensland requesting that it be wound up. That is not the case with this company, and that is the difference. That is why the Treasurer's attack on the Victorian company is an absolute disgrace. Members opposite wonder why, when they talk to business people in the Northern Territory, they are told that business has no confidence in the operations of the government because people in business never know when it will turn on them. That is how this government operates. When things go wrong, it does not take the blame. The Commonwealth is blamed, the Commissioner of Police is sent out to defend the Police Administration Amendment Bill and Phil Temple is sent out to defend Hungerford Refrigeration when it is the minister's fault.

That is what happens: the government always blames somebody else for the mistakes that it makes and the holes that it falls into. That is the problem we have in the Northern Territory. That is why Mr Stone, the Acting President of the Country Liberal Party, says that the parliamentary wing of his party is not performing. He says that the parliamentary wing in the Country Liberal Party has lost the confidence of business in the Northern Territory. It is prepared to sacrifice business houses. A potential future Northern Territory business has been stabbed in the back by the Treasurer opposite tonight for his own selfish, political reasons. I hope that that company and other companies which might wish to come to the Territory are prepared to disregard the damage that the Treasurer opposite has done to their chances tonight and are prepared to see that the Northern Territory has a bright and a prosperous future.

Mr Speaker, on a slightly more positive note, I was encouraged to hear from the Treasurer that up to 6 people had expressed an interest in buying into Hungerfords. That is good news because it is the only way Hungerford Refrigeration will survive. I have no doubt that, if the TIO remains the controlling partner in Hungerford Refrigeration and if Phil Temple, the Chairman of the TIO Board, continues to call the shots, that company will never get a proper chance in the commercial world because it is clear that the TIO does not understand commercial realities.

To give an example, why did the directors of the TIO refuse to provide directors' guarantees last year? It is normal commercial practice in the business world for directors to provide directors' guarantees against losses. We have the member for Jingili saying that it is a socialist philosophy for the directors of companies to provide directors' guarantees. If it is a socialist philosophy, all I can say is that the business world has accepted that socialist philosophy and we are further along the track than we thought we would be.

It is normal commercial procedure for directors of companies to provide guarantees to potential traders with that company. In the case of the TIO and Hungerford Refrigeration, those guarantees were refused. Local business people, the Northern Territory Traders Association and others, went to Hungerford Refrigeration and said to its board of directors: 'If you provide us with directors' guarantees, we will be prepared to provide you with normal

trading and credit terms'. What a great expression of confidence the TIO could have given to those firms and to that organisation if it had provided directors' guarantees! For reasons that I do not understand, the directors of the TIO refused to provide directors' guarantees. That is one of the prime reasons why credit was not extended to Hungerford Refrigeration and, according to the government, one of the reasons why Hungerford Refrigeration has its present difficulties.

Mr Speaker, it is not very often that I seek to deny credit that others wish to extend to me. In this case, the credit was for pointing out that we had a company that was not operating effectively. We had a company that, unfortunately, has ended up in receivership. I make the point again that companies make their own commercial decisions on the information available to them. Information was not supplied by me. It was easily obtained from records in Queensland and it was evident in stupid actions like the refusal of the directors of the TIO to provide directors' guarantees. That is one of the prime reasons for Hungerford Refrigeration being in the trouble that it is in at present. To conclude where I began, it is absolutely disgraceful - and I hope it is not a practice that the Treasurer will undertake in future - to draw into arguments like this, for his own political reasons, the fate of companies who wish to start trading in the Northern Territory.

Mr Speaker, may I ask one other question in passing? The annual return of Hungerford Refrigeration dated 30 June 1987 states that the address of the registered office of Hungerford Refrigeration is 9 Beenleigh Road, Coopers Plains, Queensland. Can I ask the Treasurer to inform this House, perhaps in the adjournment debate tomorrow, whether this so-called local company has yet taken the trouble of changing its registered office to the Northern Territory so that it is a Northern Territory company and is not still a registered company in Queensland?

Mr SETTER (Jingili): Mr Speaker, we have just had a lesson in Smithsonian economics. The Leader of the Opposition's ...

Mr Finch: He has gone.

Mr Coulter: He has hit and run.

Mr SETTER: That was my big chance. The limit of the Leader of the Opposition's experience in economics would be operating the local tuckshop at the primary school. That is a fact; that is the limit of his business experience.

The Leader of the Opposition said that the lack of directors' guarantees by the TIO directors meant that the company could not obtain credit and that this showed that the TIO was unwilling to back the company. The real situation is that the TIO directors acted on the board of Hungerford Refrigeration as representatives or nominees for the Territory Insurance Office. It would have been inappropriate in that capacity for them to give personal guarantees. These are normally given where the directors are involved personally as shareholders in the company. Furthermore, functions and powers of the TIO do not include the granting of general guarantees unconnected with its business as an insurer. In any event, the fact that the TIO was a 49% shareholder and had initially made a loan of \$627 500 to Hungerford Refrigeration would have been evidence enough of the TIO's full backing for that company. Anybody who had any knowledge at all of business operations would know that. But, of course, not so the Leader of the Opposition.

Mr Speaker, what I would like to speak to you about this evening is a recent trip that I was fortunate to undertake out to the Sedco 708 rig in the middle of the Timor Sea. Before I do that, I would like to say to honourable members that BHP Petroleum has pioneered offshore petroleum and gas development in the Timor Sea adjacent to Darwin. Since 1983, it has developed the Jabiru and the Challis fields. It has identified those fields as being oil producing and has gone a long way to making those fields and that exploration area one of the greatest in Australia. BHP Petroleum has an exploration permit area of something like 120 000 km².

I mentioned 1983 but, of course, interest in oil and gas exploration in the Timor Sea goes back as far as the 1960s. That is when the interest was first created there, and it took a long time - 20-odd years - before we finally spudded a well there. In August 1983, the first well in the Jabiru field was spudded. Since then, 28 wells have been drilled and that involves a great deal of money because those wells cost between \$3m and \$12m each to drill. I did a few sums and averaged that out and it amounted to something between \$200m and \$250m. The majority of that money has passed through the Port of Darwin. BHP is to be congratulated for having the confidence to invest that sum in the oil and gas field there.

In about 1982, it set up a small office in Winnellie with about 6 employees. Today, at Pruen Road in Berrimah, it has an investment of something like \$4.2m in a magnificent office complex, with a huge yard where it stores the gas pipes and all its other equipment. The staff that it employs in the Northern Territory now totals about 90 people. From that, we can see that BHP Petroleum is prepared to put its money where its mouth is. There is no doubt about that. In February 1985, the Chief Minister opened that facility in Berrimah.

Mr Coulter: I opened an extension out there since then.

Mr SETTER: There we go, the honourable minister opened the extension there more recently. Late in 1983, BHP Petroleum established a depot at Troughton Island which is some 500 km west-south-west of Darwin. It is a small island. I was there only a fortnight ago. It is a little coral cay, just long enough to land a light aircraft. It does not have a tree on it. It has about half-a-dozen demountables, one permanent shed, a radio tower and that is about it. It is a most unattractive place, but I hear the fishing is not too bad.

About 14 persons are permanently stationed on Troughton Island. They include radio operators, cooks and the crews of the helicopters that fly regularly out to the rig. There are 2 fixed-wing aircraft and 3 helicopters currently based on Troughton Island and 3 supply boats also operate to and from there. I saw them operating around the rig. Some of them are like huge tugs buzzing around, and there are 2 standby service boats.

At present, BHP Petroleum has 2 rigs on station. The one I visited, Sedco 708, was actually some 4 km or 5 km from the Jabiru Venture site where the oil comes to the surface to a huge buoy. You could actually see it from the rig. However, the day after I was there, that rig was moved to a completely new site well away from there. That was a fortnight ago. If you flew in a direct line from here to Troughton Island, the other rig would be about 20 km or 30 km north of that line; we could see it on the return flight.

A further rig will arrive in June and another one in August and, therefore, there will be 4 major rigs operating in that area of the Timor Sea

by the end of the year. I understand that the minister said the other day, and he can correct me if I am wrong, that BHP will drill some 30 holes this year.

Mr Coulter: 15.

Mr SETTER: 15 holes this year.

As well as that, the Jabiru Venture is normally located at the buoy I mentioned on the Jabiru field. The huge buoy is anchored in about 60 m of water. The buoy is fed by several different wells within that immediate vicinity. Using flexible lines that lie on the seabed and then feed into the buoy, the Jabiru Venture comes along and locks onto the buoy. The Jabiru Venture swivels around with the tide, of course, and has the capacity to disengage and travel off in the event of a cyclone. In fact, it has been in Singapore for the last several months being modified because additional wells will be attached into that system and the Jabiru Venture will require greater capacity.

The Jabiru Venture is a huge tanker which is used as a storage vessel. Other tankers hook up behind it. The oil is pumped from the Jabiru Venture into them and is then shipped to the refineries. It is a tremendous system which has been developed especially for the Timor Sea.

Mr Dondas: Have you seen the video on it?

Mr SETTER: I have not seen the video but I have seen the site. It is in a cyclonic area and the idea is that, in the event of a cyclone, the vessel can disengage and travel to safer areas, returning after the cyclone has passed. I am told by the BHP people that it is a unique concept and design. The important thing is that those rigs and the Jabiru Venture are all serviced through the Port of Darwin. I only hope that our wharf and port costs can be kept at a level which will not allow that business to be attracted by ports in Western Australia which might well be vying for it.

The Jabiru field, where the Jabiru Venture is located, was established at a cost of about \$68m. Production to date is 12.5 million barrels of high-quality crude oil. I understand that BHP intends to develop a second similar production facility to be located on the Challis Field. It has located 4 wells which have the potential to be profitably developed.

In the final moments available to me, I want to mention the Sedco 708. Sedco operates dozens of oil rigs around the world. Any company such as BHP Petroleum which wants to drill wells offshore would subcontract to a company such as Sedco. Sedco would come along with its rig and its team, and about 75 men work on that rig, over 2 shifts a day. They work for 14 days straight and then have 14 days on shore. However, this huge rig is anchored in 60 m of water. 8 anchor chains are run out for the best part of a kilometre and, on the end of every chain, there is a 15 t anchor. That rig is anchored; you can hardly tell that it is moving at all. The day we were there, the wind was blowing at 30 to 40 knots and quite a heavy sea was running. In spite of that, you could feel hardly any movement on the rig.

On that particular occasion, the rig was 128 km north of Troughton Island and it took 1½ hours to fly to it in a helicopter. Yet, when we landed on that rig, we came down like a feather. We could not tell that there was a 30-knot breeze blowing outside. I give full marks to the skill of the helicopter pilots who took us up there on that occasion. The rig itself is

quite a huge piece of machinery which has several levels. One of the interesting things that I saw there was a robot which is dropped down through the centre of the platform. It has an umbilical cord which directs messages back to a television screen. A fellow sits there with a little joystick and he actually drives this machine from inside the rig. It goes right down to the seabed and is able to film what is happening there. It can weld, bolt and unbolt, pick up machinery and perform a multitude of other tasks. It is quite an incredible sight.

The staff on the rig includes geologists and oil rig workers, a whole range of people, but there is one thing that needs to happen as a result of all of this. It is not happening at the moment but I hope that it will happen when we gain statehood. I refer to the fact that the Northern Territory receives no royalties from those rigs.

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

Motion agreed to; the Assembly adjourned.

Mr Speaker Vale took the Chair at 10 am.

MESSAGE FROM THE ADMINISTRATOR

Mr SPEAKER: Honourable members, Message No 6 has been received from His Honour the Administrator:

I, Eric Eugene Johnston, the Administrator of the Northern Territory of Australia, in pursuance of section 11 of the Northern Territory (Self-Government) Act 1978 of the Commonwealth, recommend to the Legislative Assembly a bill entitled the Adult Guardianship Bill 1988 which, in part, appropriates money from the Consolidated Fund for the purpose of paying the cost and expenses of or relating to the performance of a function or the exercise of a power pursuant to this bill by the executive officer or guardianship panel.

Dated 19 May 1988.

E.E. Johnston,
Administrator.

DISTINGUISHED VISITORS
Rotary Exchange Study Group

Mr SPEAKER: Honourable members, I draw your attention to the presence in the gallery of a Rotary exchange study group from South India. On behalf of honourable members, I extend to our distinguished visitors a warm welcome and hope that their visit to the Territory is both informative and enjoyable.

Members: Hear, hear!

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT
Prospects for the Territory's Nuclear Industry

Mr COULTER (Mines and Energy): Mr Speaker, some people have suggested that I am a political warhorse for the uranium industry. If that is true, it is heartening to note that more and more converts are being won to the cause, even some from amongst the ranks of our political opponents. I remain supremely optimistic about the future of the Northern Territory as a centre for a high-technology nuclear industry.

We will not achieve our goals next week. There has already been a long campaign to counter the national nuclear weakness of the 1970s and the early 1980s and there still is a fair way to go. Certainly, the immediate prospects for national decision-making on Australia's involvement in the nuclear industry do not look bright but, in the medium and longer term, there are promising political and economic signs that Australia's blinkered attitude is changing and that we will begin, at last, to catch up with the rest of the world.

The topic of uranium is currently high on the agenda of national debate. That is a very satisfactory situation because, the more the matter is discussed, the sooner Australia will come to its senses about nuclear energy and the greater the benefits it will be able to provide to the Australian electricity consumer and the Australian economy. I say that with confidence and without fear of the contribution of the antinuclear lobby. I welcome public comment from that lobby because the more it talks the more it exposes the instability of its cause.

Recent key contributors to the debate include the federal left-wing backbencher Peter Milton, the author of a comical report designed to convince his ALP colleagues that uranium is bad stuff and that we are all wasting our time mining it because nobody wants to buy it. Senator Bob Collins has just produced a formal paper, not in itself designed to promote uranium mining but to destroy the Milton document, which it does very impressively. The federal Minister for Primary Industries and Energy, Mr John Kerin, has circulated a disappointing paper which argues a case for the status quo in ALP policy on the uranium industry. The emergence of these 3 documents coincides with the imminent ALP National Conference, which starts in Hobart on 9 June.

Unfortunately, a prospective key player in the uranium debate at this forum has not kept faith with his public utterances. The left-wing federal member for the Northern Territory, Mr Warren Snowdon, promised in September last year that he would produce a paper supporting uranium mining on Aboriginal land where traditional owners wanted it to happen. I spoke to him soon afterwards and assured him of the full cooperation and resources of the Department of Mines and Energy, an offer he was grateful for at the time but apparently unable to accept subsequently. His paper has been awaited with great interest and it will be a great pity if it fails to appear.

Other recent important contributions to the national uranium debate have included the NUEXCO Services analysis of future prospects for Australian uranium. This Colorado firm is recognised by the uranium industry as the leading authority in the field. Another contribution is a report from the Department of Mines and Energy on the technology of the nuclear fuel cycle, prepared by the distinguished Professor of Nuclear Engineering at the University of New South Wales, Dr Leslie Kemeny. The week-long meeting in Darwin of distinguished scientists in the field of radiation protection at an international nuclear workshop demonstrated the enthusiasm of those scientists for the Territory's nuclear prospects. The visit to the Territory and the Ranger Mine by the United States Secretary for Energy, Mr John Herrington, expressed his support for the Territory's energy policies and, by careful inference, his lack of support for Commonwealth energy policies. Another contribution to the debate came from the Territory visit and inspection tour by Dr Maurice Rosin, the Vienna-based Director of the Nuclear Safety Division of the International Atomic Energy Authority, who expressed his support for a nuclear industry in the Territory.

Honourable members will be aware of my enthusiasm for the future establishment of a nuclear fuel industry in the Territory. That impressive list of contributors to the nuclear energy debate in the Territory demonstrates that I am not alone in my optimism. This statement reports on the continuing progress of the Northern Territory government towards the inevitable establishment, in Australia and the Territory, of an industry which does much more than dig up our naturally occurring uranium resources. It is timely that we consider the issue this week in the lead-up to the ALP National Conference which will be deciding the immediate future of the uranium industry in Australia.

Another important forum is AMEC, the annual conference of the Australian Ministers for Mining and Energy, which will be held in Adelaide on Friday of this week. At that conference, I will be presenting to the federal energy minister and to the state ministers the Northern Territory's submission to the Commonwealth on prospects for Australian involvement in the nuclear fuel cycle. This paper has been completed recently and it spells out in considerable detail the Territory's case, which I am outlining here today. For the benefit and information of honourable members, I table this submission.

Mr Speaker, those of us who argue for a sensible and rational approach to uranium mining hope for a significant shift towards a greater capacity for Australian uranium mines, particularly those in the Territory, to meet the demands of the world market. I wish I could be confident that events in Hobart or, indeed, Adelaide, will result in such a shift, but the Commonwealth mood seems to favour the status quo. Unfortunately, that situation is beyond our direct control. Nevertheless, we must press ahead with what we regard as being in the best interests of the Territory. Therefore, today I wish to advise honourable members about the government's nuclear strategy and the progress achieved as we move towards a certain nuclear future.

A review of recent overseas developments in the nuclear industry by the Department of Mines and Energy, utilising a wide variety of sources, publications, reports and documents, suggests that market prospects exist in all stages of the nuclear fuel cycle. I believe Australia can gain a substantial foothold in those markets through aggressive marketing and competitive prices. Cumulative uncommitted demand for uranium in the year 1997 is estimated at 175 000 t, an average of 17 500 t a year over the next 10 years. Australia could secure a large proportion of that uncommitted demand and it could supply 15 000 t of uranium per year by the mid-1990s. This would represent a further \$1000m a year in export earnings.

Let us turn now to uranium enrichment. Cumulative uncommitted demand for uranium enrichment over the next 10 years is estimated to be 37 million separative work units, also known as SWU. The US Department of Energy, with three-quarters of the western world's enrichment capacity, has lost half of the world's enrichment market since 1975 and one-third of the US domestic market since 1985. The door is wide open for Australia to develop competitive enrichment. A 1 million SWU a year capacity enrichment plant could be developed initially and its capacity incremented to 6 million SWU per year. We are talking very big dollars here. Enrichment increases the export value of uranium by about 2½ times and that represents a further \$3500m per year in export earnings.

There is little doubt that firm markets for the back end of the fuel cycle could be secured readily. The western world faces a serious shortage of reprocessing, solidification and waste disposal facilities. By 1995, the reprocessing capacity will amount to 4000 t of heavy metal per year when processing demand will be around 7000 t of heavy metal per year. What opportunities does this present to Australia and, in particular, the Northern Territory? The answer is none, unless Australia gets its act together.

Let us look at what could happen. A facility capable of reprocessing 1500 t of reactor fuel per year could be constructed. A plant of this size could accept waste generated annually by about 50 overseas nuclear power plants. The high-level nuclear wastage from a reprocessing plant could be converted into synroc for deep burial. All this could bring Australia a further \$2000m in export earnings.

Uranium is Australia's greatest untapped source of revenue. Already, over the past decade, we have lost more than \$4000m in revenue from uranium exports. Currently, uranium earns Australia about \$370m per year in exports but, of course, the potential exists to increase this figure dramatically. The Australian economy is burdened with a massive foreign debt and we are not taking advantage of our resources to wipe it away. Our balance of payments situation will deteriorate further if we have to increase oil imports as the Bass Strait reserves diminish. Continued inaction on nuclear energy will result in Australia missing out completely on a legitimate and highly

profitable industry. It is not as if something new and untried were being proposed. The nuclear industry is growing rapidly on a global basis while Australia goes to sleep.

The Territory government's substantial submission to the Commonwealth on the establishment of a nuclear fuel industry is for facilities to develop all stages of the nuclear fuel cycle which could increase the value of uranium sixfold. Instead of exporting uranium as yellowcake, Australia would export fuel elements which could be leased to overseas nuclear utilities. The spent fuel would be returned to Australia for processing and deep geological disposal. Such a scheme would solve Australia's balance of payments problems. Significantly, it would also ensure Australia's uranium was used strictly for non-military purposes. The Territory is a logical place for the establishment of an integrated nuclear fuel cycle industry. It has 2 producing uranium mines, 2 more ready to proceed, a population which is 80% in favour of uranium mining, proximity to foreign ports, and it needs to develop a self-supporting economy. The Territory also has a government with the will to pursue such a course.

One motivation, and a most important element, is the employment factor. Territory involvement in the front-end and back-end of the nuclear fuel cycle would mean 10 000 to 15 000 jobs during the construction phase, 3000 to 5000 jobs in operating the industry and a further 20 000 in support industries. That is the magnitude of this industry in non-technological terms, to which ordinary Territorians can relate. That is how big it is and honourable members can easily come to terms with the effect of all that employment and business on the Territory economy.

The antinuclear lobby persists with the claim that uranium supply outstrips demand to such a degree that mining uranium in Australia is unnecessary. Let me now address that issue. In a recent joint publication, the International Atomic Energy Agency and the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development, more commonly known as OECD, predicted that current uranium production capacity will not be sufficient to meet the lifetime requirements of nuclear power plants in operation, under construction and on order up to the year 2000. The joint study says that low-cost uranium resources, which are recoverable at a cost of up to \$US80 per kilogram, reach a total of 2.5 million tonnes. Of that total, 70% occurs in only 4 countries - Australia, Canada, South Africa and Niger. On the production capability of existing mines and mills, uranium supplies are forecast to peak at about 45 000 t in 1990 before declining to 42 500 t in 1995 and 34 000 t in the year 2000. There is a firm and growing market for uranium worldwide. The United States market is by far the largest and, traditionally, Canada has supplied about 60% of the US imports while Australia has completely dislodged South Africa as the second-largest source.

Apart from the United States, substantial potential markets exist in Japan, West Germany, Sweden and Britain with a growing potential in South Korea and Taiwan. It is highly likely that Japan and West Germany will want to replace their supplies from South Africa with uranium from other sources as existing contracts wind down.

In the western world, 319 nuclear power plants are in operation, 78 are under construction, 36 are planned or expected to be operational by the year 2000 and 24 are due for shutdown. This leaves 409 operating nuclear power plants by the year 2000, an increase of 28% over 1988. The lead times in the nuclear power industry are long. Development periods for new reactor construction are from 7 to 10 years. Uranium contracts are negotiated with

about a 5-year lead time as subsequent enrichment requires 1 or 2 years before actual delivery to the reactor takes place.

Australia has reasonably assured resources of 470 000 t of U-3-0-8 in the low-cost recovery range and this represents 25% of the western world's resource. Further, Australia has an estimated additional resource of 267 000 t in the low-cost range. There is a 75% probability of potential undiscovered resources of 2.6 million tonnes and a 50% probability that undiscovered resources may exceed 3.9 million tonnes. That massive uranium resource can be swelled by 56 000 t in the higher-cost recovery range and an estimated 127 000 t in this range.

What all these figures mean is that Australia has the uranium resources to be the world's dominant producer. In short, we can call the shots if we want to. The US Secretary of State for Energy, Mr John Herrington, said in Darwin recently that Australia could play the uranium role in the world that Saudi Arabia has played so dominantly with oil. That is what we could do, and what we should have done. Instead, we went into a coma and allowed Canada to take our position from us. In doing so, we passed up the opportunity to be the world's premier watchdog on nuclear safeguards. We had the chance to be the keeper of the keys and we fluffed it.

It is supremely ironic that, in 1988, Australia still listens to silly people who say we should set an example to the world, be responsible and leave uranium in the ground. By leaving the bulk of our superior uranium resources in the ground, we have allowed others with far less international scruples to mine their inferior resources and undermine our rightful role as the international peacekeeper. It is still not too late for Australia to take up a leading international role as a reliable, large-scale supplier of uranium. But, we must not dither for much longer. It was explained to me recently that you do not wait for marketing windows to open; you punch holes in walls. That is what we must do.

Fortunately, we have 2 mines in the Territory essentially ready to start operations - Jabiluka and Koongarra. All they need is approval to export from the federal government and they can be in a position, relatively quickly, to meet the big uranium demands of the 1990s. Canada has one-third of Australia's uranium resources yet, in the past decade, it has captured an export market worth around \$1000m a year compared with Australia's effort of around \$370m a year. Markets now opening up present Australia with great opportunities to boost significantly our present 10% share of world demand.

The member for Barkly and the member for Fannie Bay have shared with me the experience of holding the Mines and Energy portfolio in the Northern Territory. They have also shared the utter frustration of political ownership of the world's best uranium deposits without the political authority to do anything with them. I believe future generations of Australians will condemn the inaction of the Fraser and Hawke governments in this regard because there is no doubt that Australia will mine its uranium and that it will develop a nuclear fuel industry. What we have lost is precious time and the dominant position as world producer and world peacekeeper.

At the opening of the National Mining Petroleum Suppliers Conference in Darwin a fortnight ago, I announced publicly the intention of the Northern Territory government to pursue the establishment of a school of nuclear studies at the Northern Territory University College. Government departments are now building a submission to that effect which we will put to the federal government. I was grateful that the Prime Minister told the Chief Minister and I at the Premiers Conference that he would receive and consider it.

This is in no way a frivolous endeavour. We will propose that a school of nuclear studies would conduct valuable applied research into all matters connected with nuclear energy. The activities of the school could follow these lines. In industry-related fields, it could: provide state-of-the-art reports on government policies in the field of the nuclear fuel cycle; carry out research in certain areas of the nuclear fuel cycle for government and industry; carry out the Department of Mines and Energy check radiation monitoring program for the uranium mining industry; and perform personal radiation dosimetry for the uranium and sandmining industry, hospitals, the Territory government and the countries of South-east Asia. In academic-related fields, it could: teach radiation protection, radiation dosimetry, interactions of nuclear radiation, health physics and basic nuclear physics; act as the Territory body responsible for standardisation of radiation protection instrumentation for mining, hospitals and industry; and educate the community in areas of radiation protection and the nuclear fuel cycle.

The school of nuclear studies programs would be linked with the programs of high-level institutes and universities overseas, in countries like the United States, Canada, West Germany, Austria and France, and with the programs of the International Atomic Energy Commission and the United Nations. The school could adopt an important role in food irradiation research which could save large amounts of food from being wasted through unsatisfactory refrigeration in the underdeveloped countries to our immediate north. It could also assist the countries of South-east Asia in their nuclear programs. Indonesia, Bangladesh, Malaysia, Thailand, Singapore and the Philippines are all building or considering building a nuclear power industry and a school of nuclear studies, strategically located in Darwin, could play a valuable role, with the involvement of the International Atomic Energy Commission, in providing advice in areas like safeguards and training.

Quite clearly, the establishment of such an institution, under the authority of the Northern Territory University College, is a highly-desirable target. While the Territory would enthusiastically provide resources to such a school, it would require full Commonwealth cooperation and participation to set it up in the manner we envisage. We are suggesting to the Commonwealth that the Office of the Supervising Scientist would provide a ready means for that participation. The OSS was established after recommendations by the Fox Commission, with a supervisory, coordinating and research role in the protection of the environment of the Alligator Rivers region from the effects of the mining operations. It has grown in a manner never envisaged by Mr Justice Fox. In 1988, the OSS had a staff of 70, one-third of them working from the OSS head office in, of all places, Bondi, in the eastern suburbs of Sydney.

The cumulative cost of running the OSS between 1978 and 1987 has been \$36.5m, with costs rising at about 10% per year. Funding is met by the Commonwealth but, since 1980, it has been provided partially through a uranium export levy paid by the Territory's 2 uranium mining companies. In the current financial year, the uranium levy will raise about \$3.7m, more than half the OSS 1987-88 budget of just over \$6m.

There are 2 issues here. First, the uranium levy, which has increased from 11¢ per kilogram of yellowcake to \$1.02 per kilogram. It is a significant burden on the uranium industry and its ability to operate freely in the international market. Secondly, the uranium industry has the right to ask what it is getting out of the activities of the OSS, to which it is providing the bulk of funding. It is a good question. The framework within

which the OSS operates does very little to encourage positive research in the field of nuclear energy. Rather, the research work of the OSS is directed almost exclusively to esoteric areas which may contribute to scientific knowledge but has little relevance to the nuclear industry. I am not denigrating the studies of frogs and insects, but where is the return to the uranium industry for the funding of its supplies?

There is a critical need for applied research in the field of nuclear energy that is not being addressed. I reject any argument that a reduction of OSS activities in the uranium province will result in a reduction in the monitoring of mining activities. It is an established fact that the great bulk of monitoring of mining in the region is conducted by the Department of Mines and Energy, as is required by legislation. The department does this effectively, which is demonstrated by the fact that not one incident of lasting or serious damage to the environment has occurred since uranium mining started. No doubt a role for the OSS in the Alligator Rivers region is necessary and desirable, but with a staff of 70?

Our proposal is for a restructuring of the activities of the OSS into a school of nuclear studies, still leaving the OSS a function in the uranium province. However, we argue that the effect of that restructure would recast OSS activities into a positive framework, so that important work in the field of nuclear science could be undertaken. The beneficiaries of such a program would be the people of the Territory, Australia, Asia and the world. The Territory government has no doubt about the validity of this proposal and we are confident that the Commonwealth government will be impressed with its essential underlying logic and motivation.

I have sought to inform honourable members about the intentions of the government in the nuclear energy field and the progress being achieved. We will press ahead with our ambitions, even if the federal government continues to turn a blind eye to the enormous prospects of Australia's positive involvement in nuclear energy. The signs are fairly clear that the ALP National Conference will not advance the cause of nuclear energy and that the ludicrous status quo will be maintained. That is a tragedy, but it is inevitable that, eventually, Australia will catch up with the rest of the world and apply itself to nuclear energy. If the current federal government does not do it, the next federal government may. When it happens, as it will happen, the Territory will be ready to take up its proper position of responsibility.

Mr Speaker, I move that the Assembly take note of the statement.

Mr LEO (Nhulunbuy): Mr Speaker, in my reply to the minister's statement, I do not want to dwell too much upon statistics because, inevitably, anybody can lend whatever interpretation they would like to figures proffered in any speech. I do not know that that is necessarily a very profitable exercise. I do not want to get into the self-indulgent, self-congratulatory rendition of what may or may not have occurred in the past.

This is a very important debate, and I thank the minister for making this statement. Certainly, what he has alluded to potentially presents a very bright future for the Australian uranium mining industry and, indeed, for Australia generally. What needs to be done is to spell out quite clearly some of the real political imperatives involved in this industry because, in Australia's history, I know of no other industry which has generated as much political heat. Quite frankly, Malcolm Fraser had a very restrictive policy towards uranium mining simply because of the political imperatives. The

present federal government, the Hawke Labor government if you will, has a very restrictive attitude towards uranium mining, simply because of the political imperatives. It is a fact of life that the vast majority of the Australian population does not believe that it is in its best interest, or in the interest of its children and grandchildren, to further mine, process, export, reprocess and take responsibility for uranium or the nuclear products involved in the uranium industry. That is a fact of political life. No Australian politician I have ever met will buck the people who put him in his job.

In the last federal election, the NDP attracted the support of 6% of the voting population. I found that most dispiriting. Those people did not vote for an improvement in wages or any of the other things which politicians trot out from one election to another. 6% of the Australian population voted on one issue only: the closure of the uranium-mining industry. Another equally dispiriting fact of life is that the Australian Democrats also have a very strong attitude on uranium mining and attract very high levels of electoral support because of that attitude. Those are facts of life and there is no escaping them. The debate can only be turned around, whatever party is in power federally, if the vast majority of the Australian population is convinced that it is in its interest to develop the uranium mining industry further. The pursuit of that goal is not enhanced by jingoistic, sensational statements which promote the idea that we are going to dump 17 000 t of nuclear waste in somebody's backyard. People go cold when they hear that; they just turn up their toes. We can play politics for as long as we like with the issue of mining uranium, but the cause of the uranium industry will not be advanced until the vast majority of Australians believe firmly that it is in its interest to pursue the industry.

The minister spent some time discussing the Office of the Supervising Scientist and its role in monitoring the environmental effects of uranium mining in the Northern Territory. We can criticise the Office of the Supervising Scientist. We can criticise its role and everything it does. We can say that the OSS is too expensive, is self-indulgent, employs too many people and does nothing productive. The fact of life is, however, that the Office of the Supervising Scientist has a credibility in the eyes of the Australian people which should not be tampered with or eroded in any way. If that is eroded, and if public confidence in the Australian uranium industry is eroded because people feel that the reports and recommendations of the Office of the Supervising Scientist are somehow questionable, people will simply go cold on the industry. For that reason, it is important for the minister to understand, when he asks what the 2 uranium-mining companies are getting out of the Office of the Supervising Scientist, that the answer is that they are receiving the most valuable commodity that the industry could ever hope to attract: credibility. That is the importance of that office. The minister can talk about the very high cost of that service, but the office provides the thing that the industry throughout Australia needs most: credibility.

Mr Speaker, I do not need to be convinced of the industry's standards. I do not need to be convinced of the virtues of mining uranium, but the vast bulk of the Australian people is still very toey about the whole damn subject. They are still not convinced, and it is important that credibility be maintained. The industrial movement, including the ACTU and its various affiliated unions, has a very ambivalent attitude towards the uranium industry. Not all, but a significant number of industrial unions, have that attitude. That is because they have not been convinced that the industry does not jeopardise their members' health and safety. I do not need to be convinced on that subject and I doubt that anybody in this Chamber would need to be convinced. However, those people are not convinced.

After watching the horrendous report on Wittenoom Gorge on Monday night's Four Corners program, one cannot help being aware of the hidden dangers involved in some working activities in Australia. The repercussions are frankly quite terrifying. I am not suggesting for a second that those repercussions are applicable to the uranium-mining industry, but the problem is that a very large number of industrial unions are not convinced that that is the case. It is important, once again, that the Office of the Supervising Scientist stays where it is. Its publications, reports and recommendations can be believed and can sustain credibility in the industrial community. If those people start to go cold, the clock will be wound back another 5 years, doing untold damage to the entire industry and the progress achieved in the debate so far.

The cause of the uranium mining industry will not be improved one iota if there is any question within the minds of the Australian public that the industry is dangerous. They must be convinced that it is not dangerous. One of the real problems is credibility. We can talk about waste disposal for Japan and all sorts of difficulties that people raise from time to time. None of that really matters. The problem is the lack of electoral support in Australia for the industry; that is the big difficulty.

Another real problem is trying to convince the Australian public that we are not doing a pig-iron Bob. Menzies dug up iron ore that came back as shells. Are we going to mine uranium that will come back as bombs? I am convinced that the safeguards are watertight. I am convinced that our product will not enter the nuclear weapons cycle. I am convinced of that, but the Australian public is not.

When we can convince the Australian public that no environmental damage will result from mining uranium, when we can convince the Australian public and the Australian industrial community that the health of workers in that industry will not be jeopardised, and when we can convince the Australian public that the exported product will not come back as bombs, we will have a strong and healthy uranium mining, processing and reprocessing industry. It will not happen until then because no government - and I do not give a damn what political persuasion it has - will put itself out of office. If members doubt the reality of people's fears, I suggest that they examine the support which political parties in Australia have attracted on no other basis than their opposition to the uranium industry. It is a great shame and a great pity, but it is a political fact.

As I said, Mr Speaker, I certainly welcome the minister's statement. I have no difficulty with it. I look forward to the day when Australia has a viable, profitable, well-maintained uranium industry. However, the big problem is not convincing me or any other member of this House. The big problem is that we must convince the Australian public.

Mr PALMER (Karama): Mr Speaker, in speaking to the statement by the minister, I intend to devote my energies to one particular aspect of the nuclear fuel cycle and one which has the potential to earn Australia several billion dollars a year in foreign revenue. The very mention of this aspect puts the flat-earthists and the so-called conservationists into a dither of letter writing and graffiti splattering. I speak, of course, about the storage and disposal of high-level nuclear waste.

First, I will explain for the benefit of honourable members what waste is. The member for Sadadeen could obviously tell us, as could any schoolboy physicist, that matter can neither be created nor destroyed.

Mr Collins: No, you are wrong.

Mr PALMER: When fuel is burnt, no matter what the fuel is, there is simply a release of energy. The matter itself remains. That matter is referred to as waste.

Mr Speaker, a 1000 MW coal-burning power station produces as waste 15 t of carbon dioxide per minute. It produces the dangerous and highly toxic sulphur dioxide at the rate of about 1 t every 5 minutes. Over any given period of operational time, the same plant would emit as much nitrogen oxide as 200 000 motor vehicles. There is also the production of other waste products by coal-burning power stations. There are the polycyclic hydrocarbons, the principal type being benzpyrene which is the major carcinogenic contained within cigarette smoke. There is the solid waste or ash which is produced at the rate of 0.5 t per minute. There is the discharge of uranium and thorium, both naturally occurring radioactive elements which serve as the source of radon gas, and there is the visible smoke. Much has been done in recent times to eliminate the visible smoke. We have scrubbers in the stacks, but nothing has been done to eliminate the toxic waste emissions. The other waste products continue to be spewed into the atmosphere from the so-called modern, clean-burn, new-generation, coal-fired power stations.

Waste from nuclear stations differs from the waste from coal stations in 2 dramatic ways: waste from nuclear stations is millions of times smaller by weight and billions of times smaller by volume than the waste produced by a coal-powered station.

Mr Collins: Say that again.

Mr PALMER: I will, for the benefit of the honourable ignoramae opposite.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The member for Karama will withdraw that remark.

Mr PALMER: I withdraw that remark.

The waste from a nuclear-powered station is millions of times smaller by weight than that produced by a coal-fired station, and billions of times smaller by volume. The dangers of waste from the nuclear station arise from its radioactivity. It is easily identified, traced and accounted for. Waste from a coal-fired power station is dangerous to human health as a result of its chemical properties. Its effects are widespread, insidious and not easily traced or identified. We have the technology to deal effectively and cheaply with the waste generated by nuclear power stations. The same cannot be said for the waste from coal-fired power stations.

Mr Bell: Whereabouts in Karama? You tell us, Mick.

Mr PALMER: Mr Speaker, that is the typically ignorant attitude I would expect from the member for MacDonnell. He has nothing to contribute to this debate apart from his xenophobic opposition to anything nuclear and anything which might be done in his electorate to provide jobs, wealth and income for its people. He is a shameful embarrassment to the Northern Territory and I wish he would go back to where he belongs.

Mr Speaker, we have the technology to deal effectively and cheaply with the waste from nuclear-fired power stations. We cannot deal safely and cheaply with the waste from coal-fired power stations.

Mr Bell: You tell people, Mick. Do a bit of doorknocking around your electorate.

Mr PALMER: I know what the member for MacDonnell's contribution will be. It will be negligible. He is running scared of the ALP. He cannot speak for himself. His colleague in front of him cannot speak for himself either because his faction overruled him at the last ALP conference. He is the leader of the centre-left faction and it did not agree with him. He could not even get his own faction, comprising 1 member, to agree with him.

Mr Speaker, I will continue. We do not have the means to deal cheaply and effectively with the waste from coal-fired power stations. Existing coal-fired power stations condemn much of the northern hemisphere and its citizens to ecological destruction and early deaths. In terms of the current waste-disposal techniques, coal wastes are 40 times more harmful to human health than nuclear wastes.

It is also interesting to compare nuclear wastes and coal wastes on the basis of how much they are changing our exposure to toxic agents. The level of sulphur dioxide in the air of American cities is 10 times higher than the level that occurs naturally. The same applies in relation to the principal nitrogen oxides and for carcinogenic chemicals the ratio is much higher. If all of America's electricity requirements were to be produced from nuclear-fired stations, the level of background radiation would be raised by less than 1%. In relation to the risk that presents to human life, I would refer honourable members to my previous speeches on this matter recorded in the Hansard of 23 September 1987 at pages 143 and 1546. The background radiation represents a substantially lower level of danger to human life than that faced by every American citizen from the dangers of dam failure.

I could continue drawing comparisons on the relative dangers presented by the waste of the 2 major forms of power generation. Instead, I will conclude with some interesting figures on the cost to society incurred in averting deaths from various causes. Unfortunately, these figures are somewhat out of date, having been compiled in 1975. Nonetheless, they are relevant. In the USA in 1975, the cost of medical screening and care, per fatality averted, was \$US25 000. For breast cancer, the cost of medical screening and care was \$US80 000, for lung cancer \$US70 000, for hypertension control \$US75 000 and for kidney dialysis \$US200 000. Automotive safety equipment legislation was brought in between 1966 and 1970. The cost there was \$US130 000 per fatality avoided. The passive 3-point harness or seat belt cost \$US250 000 per fatality avoided. Still in 1975, \$US22m was spent on coalmine safety. In other mine safety, the cost was \$US34m for each fatality avoided. Civilian aircraft safety cost \$US1.2m for each life saved. In terms of the waste industry, \$US100m was spent for each fatality averted and for defence-grade high-level waste the cost was \$US200m in 1975 for each fatality averted. Those figures demonstrate the emphasis which a misinformed public has forced governments to place on controls on the nuclear energy industry. The cost penalties those controls have imposed are far in excess of what is spent in other areas to avert what is considered to be a reasonable social risk.

One cannot ignore the push for alternative energy sources which the antinuclear lobby continually promotes. Solar energy seems to be the flagship of that lobby. Technically and economically, it is not achievable as an alternative energy source and the facts speak for themselves. If the state of Texas were to draw its electricity requirements from solar energy, it would require the construction of solar panels over half of the continental area of the United States. The production of those solar panels, in terms of the

minerals and silicates required, would require the mining of the total surface of the continental United States. So much for alternative energy sources.

The issue of safe storage of high-level wastes is often referred to as the unsolved problem. Let me make it clear that high-level nuclear waste, untreated and exposed to the biosphere, does present a serious health problem and does demand the utmost respect. However, the 'unsolved' problem is far from unsolved. We have the technology to safely treat, transport and store high-level nuclear waste. The generally accepted long-term option for dealing with high-level waste following reprocessing is solidification and placement in mine repositories or deep bore holes. The Australian-developed synroc process presents a real advantage over other methods of vitrification or solidification in that it allows for deep, geological burial of the waste.

Mr Ede: Where is it being used? Tell me?

Mr PALMER: Mr Speaker, it is a recently-developed product.

Mr Ede: Where is it being used?

Mr PALMER: There are many other recently-developed products that are not being used.

Other forms of vitrification present problems in that, given the heating of the earth's crust at depth and given the heat generated by the waste products themselves, the glass could become unstable and subject to leaching at the preferred depths of 3 km to 5 km.

The real problem facing the world in relation to the disposal of high-level waste is the irresponsible behaviour of politicians, other public figures and the media in engendering a phobia in the general public, a phobia bordering on blind terror, about the dangers to the world of high-level nuclear waste. Waste encapsulated in products such as synroc and buried in impermeable rock formations some 3 km to 5 km underground is unlikely ever to have any further effect on the biosphere. The synroc would not be placed in areas where it could be subject to the effects of underground water and consequent leaching.

Even if water gained access to the synroc as a result of some catastrophic rearrangement of the earth's crust, the synroc would then have to be eroded away. The likelihood of that happening is negligible. Babylonian bottles over 3000 years old have been found in the bed of the Euphrates River. All that time, they have been subject to water-borne sand erosion. They were still intact after those thousands of years. It is highly improbable that the synroc would erode away. If it did erode away, a water molecule picking up a radioactive isotope would then have to make its way back into the biosphere. The time taken for that molecule to make its way back to the biosphere would be at least 1 million years, perhaps 2 million. The chances of any human being in the entire life span of the species ever being exposed to radioactive isotopes which have found their way back into the biosphere after emanating from a deep geological burial site are akin to my chances of winning Tattsлото.

Given that the industry offers Australia the opportunity to earn billions of dollars in foreign revenue and the philosophy that Australia should fulfil a proper role in the nuclear energy cycle; given the principle that, if we intend to continue exporting uranium, we should at least take responsibility for the waste product; and, given that the control of radioactive material,

throughout its entire cycle, is the only sure method of ensuring that Australian-produced uranium products do not make their way into the nuclear weapons industry, I believe it is time that the debate was brought out of the gutter which the opposition likes to take it into. It is time that members of the opposition made themselves aware of the facts. It is time that the Northern Territory realised its potential and took a proper role in the nuclear fuel industry. It is time we took back our waste products and buried them here.

Mr Speaker, with those few, short and factual comments, I commend the statement.

Mr COLLINS (Sadadeen): Mr Speaker, I rise to add a few comments to this debate on the minister's paper on the uranium industry and his proposal that we should get on with the job in the Territory - something which I am sure all members are aware that I support strongly.

I take on board the comment by the member for Nhulunbuy. All people who are trying to promote the uranium industry must be well and truly aware of public opinion. Years ago, the first motor cars had to be preceded by a horse and a flag because the dangers of such vehicles were not totally known. A hundred years ago, we might have been passing legislation to make vehicles safer. The Minister for Transport and Works has often raised the matter of road safety in the Territory. It was reported in the press the other day that we have 3 times the national average per capita of accidents and deaths caused by motor cars. Motor cars are dangerous things. But, again, so are horses. People who lived in the days of the horse and cart did not have a quiet, accident-free lifestyle. Far from it. In fact, if one could gather statistics from the days when people were killed when horses bolted or people were thrown from vehicles, and to compare them with accidents that occur now with motor cars, one might well learn a few salutary lessons. One has only to look at tombstones in graveyards in some of the older towns throughout this country which show that the people who lie there were killed accidentally. Often that was due to accidents caused by people falling off horses or when horses bolted and carts overturned etc.

I dare say the truth of the matter is that we live in a somewhat dangerous world and we cannot eliminate every source of risk. We do not live a risk-free life. Each of us will die at some stage and we are all subject to taxes. That is just the way things are, and we need to take a balanced view of these matters.

With regard to the subject of nuclear science and understanding of that particular area of science, I raise a point that has appalled me. This area of science seems to be ignored more and more within our secondary schools. Information is not transmitted to the students in a factual manner. In fact, I have taught with some teachers who, to put it kindly, did nothing more than gloss over the area. As far as their consciences would allow, they opposed the nuclear industry and they glossed over those areas. When I was in charge of science at the Alice Springs High School, I went away for 6 months on long service leave. On my return, I found that the steel box containing samples of alpha and beta source and a small piece of radioactive rock had disappeared. They had been used in conjunction with our Geiger counter to carry out experiments. These were very weak, safe sources. They were contained in a block of metal in which a hole had been drilled. The radioactive material was at the very bottom of that hole and the metal contained the radioactivity except that which came out from the direction of the hole. Although they would never admit to it, I believe that some other teachers decided in their

wisdom that there should be no radioactive sources in the school and disposed of the block of metal. No doubt they thought it a great joke.

As I talk to people, I am finding that there is less and less knowledge and understanding of the nuclear cycle. It is in the interests of the ideologies who oppose this particular branch of science: if you can keep people ignorant, you can of course keep them scared. They will oppose what they do not understand. In that context, a great deal needs to be done within our schools in terms of the teaching of factual scientific subject matter. Whether students support the nuclear cycle or not is a matter for them to work out subsequently for themselves. They should, however, be able to do that on the basis of knowledge rather than ignorance.

It was interesting to hear the member for Nhulunbuy say that he welcomed the minister's paper and basically supported what the minister had to say. I think that is a revolution in many ways. I also concur with his astute comment that there are many people in our community - and there even might be 1 or 2 in this House - who are not totally au fait with the nuclear industry and nuclear science. That is not surprising. It is not possible for each of us to be conversant with all areas yet it is a very important area, and education and understanding will be the means to introduce people to the realities. It is not risk free, but it is not impossible to handle this material and gain benefit from it.

I pay tribute again to Roger Watters. I believe that his writings and his activities within the Australian Labor Party, have done much to take people out of the stage of ignorance and into a stage of understanding. The fact that there has been a considerable turnaround in viewpoints within the Territory Labor Party may well be due to the writings of Roger Watters. He certainly would be on the ball in that area and I would recommend to honourable members of this House that they have a look at what Roger has written because he has covered the area pretty well. He does not go into the deeper technicalities of the subject, but his understanding is excellent.

The member for Nhulunbuy suggested that the OSS did play an important role by giving credibility to the mining of uranium in the Territory. That is indeed true. However, I think its role could be altered. It has been able to give reassurance, but not always as vocally as I would have liked. Many will recall that, only a few months ago, after a bit of a spill of sludge material at Ranger, the federal Minister for Primary Industries and Energy was going to do a great job with a big stick and a basket of eggs. He was going to have a big inquiry. No doubt he was playing good politics. Such things go down well with the greenies and the left wing of his party. We have not heard much about that inquiry. As I expected, it has turned out to be a fizzer. However, the minister has not had the good grace - or maybe one could say he had the political sense - to say that there was really no problem. The federal minister is looking at the votes rather than the reality. I believe that the Minister for Mines and Energy is correct and that the money spent on the OSS is having a detrimental affect on the uranium mining industry and its capacity to sell on a competitive market. It is time that the operations of the OSS were looked at seriously and that we considered ways in which it might make a more positive contribution to nuclear science and the development of the uranium industry.

The media are pretty good at climbing on bandwagons and stirring up stories. Unfortunately, they do not carry out much research; they are happy to go along with a populist view. The member for Nhulunbuy suggested that we would not want to resurrect the image of pig-iron Bob. That was a case of our

steel coming back to us in the form of bullets. We certainly do not want to see our uranium coming back in the form of bombs. This is one of the very good reasons for becoming involved in proceeding beyond the production of yellowcake to the enrichment of the uranium 235 isotope to the 3% level which is sufficient for fuel rods. That is far and away below the 90% enrichment required for weapons-grade material. We should form the rods to the specifications of our overseas customers. When these are spent, they could be brought back for processing in this country - to my way of thinking, that is the best way that Australia, if it really wants ironclad safeguards, can ensure that our uranium will not enter the weapons cycle.

I was enlightened by the lesson in science from the member for Karama who said that matter can be neither created nor destroyed. That was the view of John Dalton in about 1600. Dalton certainly played his part in the understanding of science but science is always evolving. He also said that the atom cannot be cut. We know today that the atom is made up of at least 3 particles and many different particles have been discovered in association with the atom and the atom's nucleus. For the honourable member's benefit, the later theory is that matter and energy are conserved. Matter, in a sense being a form of energy, can be converted into energy, and that is the key to the nuclear process. When nuclear reactions take place, a certain amount of mass is destroyed, more in a fusion process when 2 nuclei join together, and less when a large nucleus is split.

However, in both the fusion and fission processes, matter is destroyed and energy is created in its place, according to a formula which most schoolboys have heard about even if they do not know what it means! E is equal to $\Delta M C^2$, where ΔM is the change in the mass, C is the velocity of light, 3 by 10 to the eighth metres per second, and E is the energy in joules. There is a conversion between the 2, and the honourable member might be interested to know that, even in chemical reactions, in which we were taught that matter was conserved, it is not. In fact, even in chemical reactions, whether they are endothermic, with heat being absorbed and matter increased, or exothermic when the actual matter is decreased, there are only tiny amounts. But estimates have it that the earth gains about 160 kg per day due to photosynthesis involving the absorption of light by green plants to produce sugars. However, I digress a little.

A member: Dennis will have to take up the Chair of Nuclear Physics at the University College.

Mr COLLINS: Well, at least I can get out of the 1600s.

Mr Speaker, there is a great deal of wealth hidden here in the Territory. The uranium that we know about contains more energy than the oil in Saudi Arabia. We have a very valuable deposit, one which we may well have to defend in years to come. We will be in a better position to defend it if we have a little money instead of being indebted to the extent that we are today. I believe we have to move into enriching our uranium, increasing the value of the product and producing fuel rods to overseas specifications. We will need to develop a transport system capable of handling the extremely heavy and strong containers needed to protect people from radioactive contamination.

The materials used to store radioactive waste are borosilicate glass and synroc, the latter being superior. The most highly radioactive elements are stored in this way. These are the elements which have a short half-life. Uranium, on the other hand, has a half-life of 4500 million years, which means that it is very low in radioactivity. Given that length of time, it follows

that the rate at which the uranium kicks out an alpha particle and goes from 92 protons down to 90 protons to become an entirely new element is extremely slow. Only the highly radioactive elements need to be taken out by chemical means and processed into synroc. It is not necessary to bury the synroc miles under the ground. Technically, the material simply has to be stabilised so that it cannot be passed on or consumed through drinking water or dust. Atom-to-atom chemical bonding would make it safe under 10 m of dirt.

Mr Speaker, I am keen to see the industry developed on a very safe basis. From what I have seen, I believe that can happen. I believe education is an important part of the process, and I hope the minister will take that on board. The Australian people must have a clear understanding of exactly what is proposed. They need to know that the industry is not entirely risk-free but that we can reduce the risks so that they are lower than those in, for example, the coal industry.

Mr REED (Katherine): Mr Speaker, the debate in Australia on uranium mining and the nuclear fuel cycle in the industry might well be entitled 'Great Contradictions of our Time'. That can be illustrated by various approaches to the industry and, for the purposes of this debate, I will commence with that of the environmental lobby.

It has been the habit of environmental lobbyists to refuse point-blank to consider the benefits which might be derived from the peaceful use of the nuclear cycle. This habit means that such people will not even accept the mining of uranium, the first step in the process. I find this approach somewhat curious in as much as we are now experiencing the degeneration of our environment as a result of the greenhouse effect. This results, of course, from the use of fossil fuels, much of that use occurring in the generation of electricity. The greenhouse effect is having a disastrous effect on our environment and our atmosphere. It is expected that, within the next 50 years or so, it will cause considerable climatic change including an increase in summer rainfall and increased cyclonic activity which may reach more southern latitudes. Given the severe consequences for our environment, our lifestyle and the national economy, I find it a little curious that the efforts of the environmental lobby are not increasingly directed at addressing this problem. To my mind, they are misdirected towards the uranium industry and the nuclear fuel cycle.

The other interesting aspect of this is that, whilst uranium mining and the nuclear fuel cycle are argued against vociferously by the lobby, those people are great proponents of high living standards. It is fair to question whether or not people in the environmental lobby who oppose uranium mining would be prepared to experience a downgrading in their standards of living. They head off to their demonstrations and mine-site sit-ins in 4-wheel drive vehicles and use their computers to type up all their programs of opposition to the industry. They probably do that in air-conditioned comfort. Meanwhile, they fail to take into account the enormous environmental damage occurring through the fossil fuel industry and the generation of electricity by coal-fired power stations, as discussed by the member for Karama.

Another contradiction in relation to the industry is contained in the attitude of the federal government. I find it a little curious, as do many others, that the federal government is happy to approve 3 uranium mines but considers that additional mines would not be acceptable. I find it hard to envisage how this policy can be pursued in light of the view that the lack of markets might make mining unprofitable despite the fact that mining companies are spending millions of dollars on exploration and are keen to develop new

mines and proceed to the production phase. If that is not a contradiction in terms, I do not know what is.

On the other hand, the federal government argues that the proliferation of mining and the use of nuclear fuels would pose a danger to world peace. It is not prepared to recognise means by which the nuclear fuel cycle might be used for peaceful purposes to the benefit of mankind and to defray some of the dangers that flow from the use of fossil fuels. One classic means of doing that would be to accept the fact that the enrichment of uranium could be undertaken in Australia and that this could lead to the future storage in Australia of nuclear waste. By doing that, we would have the ability almost completely to control the use of our uranium and the nuclear fuel cycle as it would be contributed to by this nation.

The Territory government also must face other contradictions which are virtually foisted upon us. The Territory is largely dependent on the federal government for funding and, whilst the Northern Territory government supports uranium mining and the development of the nuclear industry, the federal government places constraints upon us. The minister's statement told us of some of the benefits that we would derive economically and in terms of employment. It is interesting to note that the income which would flow directly from the further development of the nuclear fuel cycle in the Territory, further uranium mines and all that goes with them, would be adequate perhaps to enable the Territory government to become financially independent. Yet, we have this unique set of circumstances which leads to a classic contradiction whereby the federal government places constraints on the Territory's approach. I consider that to be most unfortunate and detrimental to the national cause.

The opportunities which face us in relation to the nuclear fuel cycle, and the benefits that could be derived from it, are clear. They have been indicated by the previous speakers in this debate. There is no doubt that development of the industry will require a long lead time, and it will be years before the industry is developed if approval were achieved for that. However, there are immediate opportunities and one of those, of course, is the development of low-level waste storage. There is nothing new in low-level waste. It is stored in all sorts of circumstances around Australia already which include ...

Mr Palmer: The basement of Parliament House!

Mr REED: Well, allegedly the basement of Parliament House in Victoria, as the member for Karama interjected. Perhaps that illustrates a couple of points clearly. It might explain a few things about the Victorian government and also the total ineffectiveness of storage facilities that are used at the moment.

Some of the items are virtually harmless. They include gloves and other items which are used in practice in nuclear medicine and with x-ray machines. It is said that these items generate an annual requirement for a storage area of about 2000 m³. Of course, that is in addition to items that are stored in what are called 'temporary' facilities in various parts of Australia at the moment. It seems to me to be common sense that there should be a permanent facility where items such as this low-level waste can be placed in effective and long-term storage. To my mind, the logical step, given the attitude of the Territory government in relation to the nuclear fuel cycle, is for such a facility to be developed and provided in the Territory to service the needs of Australia. That is perhaps the first step that could be taken in developing

the industry further in the Territory and, of course, it would play an important part in the education of the populace at large in relation to the furtherance of the nuclear industry.

Additional mines would be another step. As I indicated previously, I find it difficult to differentiate between the value of 1 mine over another, except perhaps in the case of a Roxby Downs when the federal government wishes to win an election or there is some other political cause which it has in mind at the time. Beyond that, we have the further processing and enrichment of uranium.

The member for Nhulunbuy made reference to the fact that the people of Australia have not been educated to accept further development of the nuclear industry and the fuel cycle in Australia at this time. I do not think that this comes as a surprise given that the industry has hardly been favourably supported or promoted by the federal government and, until such time as the federal government gets behind the industry to promote it as a worthwhile cause and one of benefit to the nation, it is hardly likely that such acceptance will be provided by the people of Australia.

Mr Speaker, with those few words I conclude my comments. I support the paper.

Mr SMITH (Opposition Leader): Mr Speaker, unfortunately this statement is based on a fantasy. It is the same kind of government fantasy that gave us the kenaf industry. It is similar to the fantasy that gave us the relocation of the American defence forces and, to a lesser extent, has given and is giving us the Trade Development Zone. What those fantasies have in common is the notion that, in one simple process, we will create 20 000, 30 000 or 40 000 jobs in the Northern Territory. That is the basis of these fantasies. It will not happen like that. Nothing will increase employment opportunities in the Northern Territory and opportunities for our children other than hard and consistent work by the government of the day. Fantasies like those presented in this paper might be nice to look at and might make some of us feel good but, unfortunately, they do not really advance the cause of economic development in the Northern Territory.

Mr Speaker, the timing of this statement from the government is quite appalling. At this stage, efforts being made, particularly within the Labor Party, to promote a rational debate on the question of uranium mining. Those efforts were apparent, for example, at the recent annual conference of the Northern Territory Branch of the Labor Party.

Mr Coulter: Hear, hear. What a world of reality that is.

Mr SMITH: Thank you.

They have been promulgated in recent weeks in position papers prepared by the federal minister, Mr Kerin, by a senator for the Northern Territory, Senator Collins, and by Gordon Bilney MHR and others. What we have in front of us is a paper which could have been tailor-made to sidetrack that very important debate that is going on within the Labor Party at present. How on earth did this government think that this ministerial statement would be helpful? What it does is to once again bring to the fore people's worst fears and concerns.

To take up the comment of the member for Katherine, we have a growing majority of people in the nation who are opposed to the uranium industry.

Mr Coulter: How do you know?

Mr SMITH: The poll figures indicate it.

Mr Coulter: What poll?

Mr SMITH: Perhaps there is an argument for saying that the attitude of the federal government might be a contributing factor to that but, equally, a contributing factor is a paper such as this which says that the Northern Territory government wants the Northern Territory to become the world's nuclear garbage dump. Let us not resile from that. That is what the Treasurer said. He wants the Northern Territory to become the world's nuclear garbage dump. He wants 50 overseas nuclear plants to dump their rubbish in the Northern Territory, not in his electorate but in the electorates of the members for MacDonnell and Stuart.

The Labor Party would be very happy to fight the next election campaign on the question of the Northern Territory becoming the world's nuclear garbage dump. If the honourable members opposite want to advance the case for the Northern Territory becoming the world's nuclear garbage dump, I invite them to make that the focus of the next Territory election. I would remind members opposite of what happened when a toxic waste facility was suggested for Tennant Creek. The Country Liberal Party and the National Party very rapidly dropped that particular policy before the last Barkly by-election because it was doing them enormous damage. If you want further evidence of that, Mr Speaker, all you have to consider is the vote that Maggie Hickey got in the March election when she stood solely on that issue. If members opposite want to fight the next election campaign on the issue of the Northern Territory becoming a nuclear garbage dump, we will be very happy to accommodate them because there is no doubt that, throughout Australia, including the Northern Territory, people do not want the Northern Territory to be a nuclear garbage dump. People do not want to say to their children: 'Son, when you grow up, I will get you a job at a nuclear garbage dump'. They want a better future for their children than that. Unfortunately, that is not the sort of future that the Treasurer opposite is promising the people of the Northern Territory.

There are great similarities between today's announcement and the government's announcements on the kenaf industry, the relocation of defence bases, and the Trade Development Zone. The Treasurer has painted a picture of superb wealth and billions of dollars for all. However, this statement ignores, as did those other grand announcements, the key question of how it will all happen. It also ignores some of the political realities.

Let me quote some of the phrases from the paper that the honourable minister gave us: 'Prospects for Australian Involvement in the Nuclear Fuel Cycle'. This is from the executive summary. It says, for example: 'Australia could secure those markets through aggressive marketing and competitive prices'. Down further: 'Australia could secure a large proportion of the uncommitted demand and supply 15 000 t of uranium a year by the mid-1990s. The door is wide open for Australia to develop competitive enrichment. There is little doubt that firm markets for the back-end of the fuel cycle would be readily secured'. Nowhere in either the honourable minister's speech or in the backup paper is there any detail at all on where these markets will come from. In other words, who will use these facilities that supposedly will bring us so much money?

At the waste disposal end of the debate, to use a slightly less emotive word than 'garbage', even if the people of the Northern Territory were

prepared to accept it, why would Europe send its waste to Australia? Where is the economic evidence that that would work? We need more evidence than an indication from the Treasurer that we will get involved in aggressive marketing and competitive prices. What does that mean? That we will reduce safety standards? Are we to ship the stuff in second-class containers rather than first-class containers? If the government is serious about this matter, it must start providing much more detailed information than it has given.

Let us look at the uranium enrichment side. The minister suggested that cumulative uncommitted demand for uranium enrichment was in the order of 37 million separative work units.

Mr COULTER: What are separative work units? Expand on that. Tell us what you know about separative work units.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! Could the honourable minister show at least some courtesy while the Leader of the Opposition is speaking?

Mr SMITH: He also says that the door is wide open for Australia to develop competitive enrichment, but has he considered these facts? Many countries will not take enriched uranium. The United States is a classic example. Has he considered the estimate of the Nuclear Energy Agency of the OECD in its yellow book which indicated that, at present, there is a 48% overcapacity in enrichment services worldwide? The NEA went on to doubt the future viability of the industry. Has he considered the fact that some overseas operator will have to be convinced to transfer the technology to our shores? And if it is so easy to establish enrichment plants, why is it that Canada, which is the biggest uranium supplier by a long shot, has not moved into the enrichment area? Why hasn't another major producer, Niger, moved into the enrichment area? Those are questions that need answers.

Another aspect is that the Americans have a huge diffusion plant in mothballs, which amounts to an extra 20% capacity which could be brought on-stream. The minister ignored the work being done worldwide on laser enrichment, which will render enrichment rather more efficient than it is at present. He also failed to mention that the economic viability of enrichment relates to the fact that most of it is not being done by private enterprise but by governments with political reasons for being involved.

There are a number of key questions which need to be addressed by this government before anyone can take seriously this concept of the Northern Territory establishing an enrichment plant. The size of the plant is a matter of some concern in itself. Then we get to the question of markets. We have a huge discrepancy between the estimates of the Minister for Mines and Energy, the estimates of the federal minister, John Kerin, and those of Senator Collins on the future demand for Australian uranium. Despite their differences, both Collins and Kerin come down with very similar predictions for the additional demand for Australian uranium over the next 10 years.

Mr Perron: What about South African uranium? Is there a different market for that?

Mr SMITH: Hang on, do you want to make a speech?

Mr Perron: Yes. You haven't said anything.

Mr SMITH: Good. But wait till I am finished.

Although they arrive at the answer by slightly different means, both Collins and Kerin say that, by the year 1995-96, Australia could expect to obtain about 5000 t of additional unfilled demand out of the 17 500 t or thereabouts that is available. The Minister for Mines and Energy, however, says that we will get 10 000 t out of that 17 500 t - well over 50%.

Mr Coulter: So what?

Mr SMITH: So what? It is an important issue because it indicates that you do not understand how the uranium industry operates. The minister ignores the fact that suppliers have, almost as their prime objective, the diversification of their supply source in order to ensure that their demand requirements will be met. No country will take the majority of its uranium resources from any one particular country. The minister has not taken that into consideration.

All serious commentators expect that Australia could get no more than 30% of that unfilled demand - in other words, 30% of 17 500 t - yet the minister claims that we will get over 50% of it. When he responds, he might like to address that particular point. Where is his authority for saying that the uranium consumers who want a diversified source for reliability and the ability to keep the price down will allow Australia to supply more than half of the unfilled demand in 1995?

Mr Coulter: You tell me who said that they wouldn't!

Mr SMITH: Mr Speaker, that is nonsense. Who said that they would not? Both Senator Collins and John Kerin in their respective papers.

Mr Coulter: Bob Collins would know what he is talking about.

Mr SMITH: No, of course he wouldn't. You show me where he said that. I bet you can't.

Mr Coulter: Not a problem. I'll get it for you.

Mr SMITH: It is in the purchaser's best interest to seek the greatest possible range of suppliers in order to keep prices down, just as Japanese buyers do with coal. There is no doubt that the minister has not done his homework.

Let me finish on a slightly more positive note. I turn to the minister's comments about the Office of the Supervising Scientist and the suggested School of Nuclear Studies. I support the concept of a School of Nuclear Studies because I believe that, if it gets off the ground, it will have a very valuable role to play in furthering research into the uranium industry. But, of course, that cannot be at the expense of the operations presently conducted by the Office of the Supervising Scientist. It is those operations, and their independence, that have gained the uranium industry and its activities in the Northern Territory considerable credibility in the south. We cannot afford to lose that credibility.

The major task that the uranium industry in the Northern Territory has at present is to get the safeguards in place at all stages of the industry. That involves much more work on behalf of people connected with the industry. If the School of Nuclear Studies is to become involved in that exercise, I think that will be an excellent contribution that we in the Northern Territory can make. Certainly, the Treasurer has my support in advancing that concept. I

hope that we can make some progress on that because there is certainly a need for a committed research effort on the part of people who wish to further the cause of the uranium industry to ensure that the safeguards, which we all want to see in place, can be put in place as quickly as possible.

Mr EDE (Stuart): Mr Speaker, it has been said that there is very little rationality in the debate over uranium generally in the community. Certainly, emotion played a large part in many of the discussions that we have heard. Along with others, I welcome the position papers to the extent that some of them are bringing a degree of rationality into the debate. The paper issued by Senator Bob Collins indicated his thoughts clearly and set out some of the issues that confront us. The paper by the Minister for Resources and Energy, John Kerin, has also assisted us a great deal in understanding the debate. It is unfortunate that the minister opposite did not take his example from them and continue in the same vein.

Mr Speaker, let us have a look at the concept of morality and reality. I do not believe that it is moral to say: 'Leave it in the ground'. We have often spoken of acid rain and the devastating effect it is having upon the lakes and forests of northern Europe. There has been considerable discussion in the media lately about the greenhouse effect and what that could do to build up the carbon dioxide in the atmosphere. There is no doubt that the burning of fossil fuels is a very substantial contributor to that build-up.

One aspect that has not been discussed quite so often - and this fact amazes me - is the financial effect if we were to close down the uranium industry tomorrow. By saying that Australia should close down its mines, in effect people are trying to exert some influence on the rest of the world to close down its mines. Japan now produces 24.7% of its power from uranium, the Federal Republic of Germany nearly 30% and Belgium 67%. France depends on it considerably also, and the list goes on. If those countries had to move rapidly from that source of production of electricity to another source, it would cause problems that would make the oil price hike look like a minor blip. There would be quite a devastating effect on the international economy which would throw us all into an economic depression which would make the 1930s look like a picnic.

I think that, with the possible exception of natural gas, it is also safe to say that there is no perfectly safe alternative that is likely to become available within the next 40 to 50 years. It is not enough to say that something else will become available. The research on fusion and some of the later work that has been done on sunlight itself, is quite interesting. However, developments in those areas will not assist us, certainly in the next 40 to 50 years at a minimum.

The moral imperative is an industry with the highest standards of safeguards, both environmental and in terms of ensuring that uranium does not pass into the nuclear weapons cycle. There is a proposal, which I have personally supported for some time, that the onshore control and operation of all aspects of the uranium cycle, except power generation, would solve that problem. That would include the manufacture of rods and their leasing, with tight controls to ensure that, wherever they went, each rod would be returned before another went overseas. There would also be tight controls over waste disposal. The argument on waste disposal has been that if you want to take the benefits from the uranium industry, you should also take the rubbish. Rubbish is a quiet word that is parliamentary. The unfortunate thing with the concept of morality contained in that particular proposal of control and operation of all aspects onshore is that it does not fit reality. It does not

fit reality politically or economically. There are a couple of problems with it, one at each end of the cycle.

First, at the disposal end is the basic position: not in my backyard. Let us have a look at some of the problems regarding that position, Mr Speaker. Let's talk about the synroc process that the honourable minister and other members referred to. It is an unfortunate fact that, whilst synroc showed great hope at the laboratory stage, it is having very real problems moving into the manufacturing stage. The last information that I had was that there were real problems with heat build-up. There are other problems with regard to bringing back waste material from overseas. Some of these involve shipping. If we were to bring it back into northern Australia, we would face problems with cyclones affecting carrier ships and with our land transport system in the Territory.

I dislike the blase way in which the honourable minister says that we should put all the waste in central Australia. Tennant Creek has already substantially rejected low-level toxic waste disposal in that area. I am quite sure that my colleague, the member for MacDonnell, will have some words to say regarding storing it in his electorate. I am saying that the government will not bury anything in my electorate. If it tries to do so, it can go and jump in the lake. If this waste can be reduced to a level of safety where the Minister for Mines and Energy can bury it in Palmerston, then he can let us have a look at it. If it is safe enough for him to do that, I am quite sure that my electorate will say 'good luck' to him.

Let us have a look now at the enrichment aspect. As the Leader of the Opposition said, enrichment capacity currently runs at twice demand levels. There is enough overcapacity in the world now, amongst operational enrichment plants, to take the total projected production, including the increases that we have talked about, for the next 32 years. Even if those projected increases in the production of uranium were to be exceeded, the Oak Ridge Gas Diffusion Plant, which is now in mothballs, has capacity equivalent to another 20% of the world's capacity.

Mr Palmer: They cost too much to run.

Mr EDE: Mr Speaker, I will take on that one, because the only possibility is if there is a technological leak.

Mr Palmer: Lasers.

Mr EDE: Laser technology development is being undertaken in the United States, Japan and France. The United States is way ahead in laser technology. The initial testing of its 1 million SWU demonstration facility ...

Mr Coulter: What does that mean?

Mr EDE: Separative Work Units.

Mr Speaker, that testing took place in late 1987. I am told that Japan will be very lucky if it gets anywhere near that by the late 1990s. The United States is that far in front.

What effect, apart from a reduction in the demand for uranium, will that have? I was hoping that there would be something in the minister's paper that would demonstrate that there was some possibility of this technological transfer taking place. It thought he would have that to back up his argument.

He did not bring us anything on that and, because of that, I think this is just a furphy. It is just something that he has thrown in and it ranks with proposals on kenaf, American bases and the rest.

Of course, the other point that will be made is that there would be very few spin-off benefits from the construction of such plants. Even with technological transfer, they would have to be manufactured overseas and assembled here by foreign engineers.

Mr Speaker, I would like to talk for a few minutes on another aspect of what the minister is proposing. In talking about an open-go policy, he has to realise that there are political considerations. I doubt that any member of this House would deny that Roxby Downs got the go-ahead for political reasons. It got the go-ahead because of the ALP's desire to win an election in South Australia. It was a case of political pragmatism. We are talking about something worth \$250m a year to the Northern Territory so we cannot afford to get things wrong. If ALP policy changes and the federal government decides to allow 1 new mine, it could well say that South Australia has 1, the Northern Territory has 2, so the next mine should be in Western Australia. Given that we have a CLP government, we do not have a great deal going for us when pressing our case and that is what it all comes down to.

There is a bright side to the 3-mines policy which we have to take on board. I understand the problems with the 3-mines policy and its likeness to being a 'little bit pregnant'. There is a possibility, within that policy ...

Mr Hatton: Do you support uranium mining or not?

Mr EDE: I have said that! If you had been here you would have heard me.

Mr Hatton: I have been here since you started speaking. You are waffling so much that I cannot follow you.

Mr EDE: Mr Speaker, the Chief Minister had better not contribute to this debate because he obviously has not been listening.

If the 3-mines policy remains, there are more positive benefits for the Northern Territory than if additional mines were approved interstate. Ranger Uranium has the capacity to increase its production by another 2900 t per year. Roxby Downs can increase its production by 4000 t, a total of 6900 t. If Nabarlek does not go into production again, there would be a reduction of 1500 t, giving an additional 5400 t per year which can be produced in Australia under the 3-mines policy. That additional 2900 t per year at Ranger would be worth \$245m a year in exports. It has to be recognised that, if a fourth mine were to be opened, there would be less demand for the Ranger output. If an extra mine goes ahead in Western Australia, New South Wales or Queensland, and takes up the extra capacity, we will lose \$245m. That is a real danger.

Frankly, the chances of the federal Labor government opening up a whole range of new mines are virtually zero. I do not believe that it will happen, certainly not in the next 2 years. I believe that is the political reality and I am trying to help this government to understand what it is dealing with. If the Territory government does not get it right, it risks losing \$245m per year from the Northern Territory economy. It must think before it proceeds.

Mr Speaker, I have made my point and I hope that the minister, who is sitting in the gallery, will take it on board. I am not saying that the

3-mines policy is the best policy. However, I want the government to realise that there are real difficulties with some of the alternatives which, in fact, would be worse for the Territory.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

Mr PALMER (Karama)(by leave): Mr Speaker, the member for Sadadeen cast some doubt upon the facts I presented in my speech. I did say that matter could neither be created nor destroyed and the member for Sadadeen took issue with that. I am prepared to cite my authority for that statement. I cite the Professor of Physics at Pittsburg University, Dr Bernard Cohen. On page 120 of his book entitled 'Before It Is Too Late', he says, and I quote: 'As we know from elementary physical science courses, matter can be neither created nor destroyed'. I cite that as my source and I hope that the member for Sadadeen will be prepared to cite his source.

Mr SETTER (Jingili): Mr Speaker, the minister said in his statement earlier today: 'The nuclear industry is growing rapidly on a global basis while Australia goes to sleep'. He further said: 'Uranium is Australia's greatest untapped source of revenue. We have already lost over the past decade more than \$4000m in revenue from uranium exports'.

I listened to the member for Stuart saying that, as far as he was concerned, in terms of his party's policy, it was now time for morality and reality. I ask you, Mr Speaker! It is because of the 3-mines policy of the Labor Party that other suppliers of uranium around the world have been standing back laughing their heads off. It is absolutely unbelievable stuff. Quite obviously, since the Northern Territory Labor Party Conference on 30 April, members opposite have had a change of heart and uranium mining is all okay now. More about that later, Mr Speaker.

There is no doubt about the fact that Australia was one of the first countries to develop its uranium resource. Back in 1954, Rum Jungle and Radium Hill were developed as uranium-producing mines and Mary Kathleen followed in 1958. I can vividly recall my many visits to Mary Kathleen when I lived in Mt Isa during the 1960s. Mary Kathleen gave a tremendous boost to the economy of the Cloncurry area. Those mines have been worked out and are gone. In more recent times, since the 1970s, we have seen the development of the Ranger uranium mine and Nabarlek. Unfortunately, during the late 1960s and early 1970s, governments were influenced by the antinuclear lobby. One could be forgiven for thinking that perhaps some of our competitors might have been funding organisations involved in the antinuclear lobby. It would certainly have been in their best interests to support and finance organisations involved in banner waving and campaigning to convince the Whitlam and Fraser governments that they should not proceed with the development of the uranium province.

I can recall that, when I first came to the Northern Territory in 1973, I spoke to an engineer from Adelaide. He had come up here with the Commonwealth Department of Works and had a plan laid out for the township of Jabiru. He had been sent here as the on-site engineer. However, it was not until the late 1970s that Jabiru was developed. That was because of the Fox Inquiry, which began in 1975. The uranium industry was put on hold because governments were listening to the antinuclear lobby and the environmental lobby and a whole range of people running around pushing their own barrows. Fools that we were at the time - and I am not referring to the Northern Territory government but to the Australian government - we listened. Today, Australia ranks sixth among the uranium-producing nations. While we were in limbo and our uranium

province was on hold, Canada went out and developed a number of uranium mines so that it is now the world's leader in the production of uranium. The Canadians are laughing their heads off because, in 1985, they produced 10 870 t of uranium. What was Australia's production in that year? It was 3251 t.

Countries which were developing nuclear power stations in the 1970s and depending on our uranium province to supply their needs had to look elsewhere. Now we can see who benefited and who lost out. Australia is No 6 on the list of uranium-producing countries, including countries like Namibia, Niger and South Africa. We sat here feeling warm because we had stopped the expansion of the nuclear cycle in the world. While we did that, other countries were developing their resources as fast as they could for the benefit of their citizens.

Mr Bell: A warm nuclear glow.

Mr SETTER: You should know all about it. I have seen it emanating from your countenance on a number of occasions.

We have lost a tremendous opportunity, Mr Speaker. We have lost it at a time when our economy has been moving gradually into a downward spiral over the last 10 years and our balance of payments has been getting out of kilter. We could have addressed the matter then and been at the top of the list as a very rich country. But not so, not so.

Mr Speaker, let us talk about other realities. The member for Stuart referred to alternative sources of energy. The reality is that all of the industrialised countries of the world are very heavily into producing their electricity from nuclear power plants. I will quote quickly the percentage of electricity produced from uranium in a range of nations: France 69.8%, Japan 24.7%, West Germany 29.4%, Sweden 50.3%, Belgium 67%, Korea 43.6%, Taiwan 43.6%, Switzerland 39.2%, Finland 38.4%, Bulgaria 40% and so on. Those countries are moving increasingly to nuclear power. That trend will not be reversed.

The member for Stuart stated that we have sufficient resources within our 3 existing uranium mines to meet a very large share of the world's demand for uranium. What he did not take into account is the fact that the demand is increasing at a tremendous rate because of all the additional nuclear power stations coming on line. The day will come when this country has to move down the same path. Australia is very fortunate in having enormous fossil fuel resources. We have enough fossil fuels to keep us going for the next few hundred years. That is not the case with countries such as those I mentioned a moment ago which have very little fossil fuel or have already exploited their reserves and now have to move towards uranium. The reality is that, within 2 or 3 centuries, the fossil fuels on this earth will be completely consumed. Based on existing technology, there is no alternative but to work towards the generation of electricity from uranium - nuclear power.

Mr Speaker, let us look at what has been happening in the world as a result of the production of electricity from fossil fuels. I was in the UK a couple of years ago, and I drove up through the Midlands. Every few kilometres I saw an huge coal-fired power station. I know that the same situation applies in France and throughout the rest of Europe. It is the same in the United States, Japan and so on. There is a downside, of course, to those coal-fired power stations - the acid rain that forms from the fumes that come spewing out from them. In fact, when I was in the UK, there was an

article in a local newspaper which referred to the government of Great Britain spending \$400m to modify its coal-fired power stations to prevent the acid fumes which spewed from them floating over to Norway and Sweden, where they have been destroying forests. That is right across the North Sea, some hundreds of kilometres away. At that time, it was costing the UK \$400m to modify the power stations.

We often hear about the possibility of nuclear accidents and their horrendous consequences. They would be horrendous; there is no question about that. But if we look around the world at the accidents and deaths which occur in coalmines and power stations, they far outweigh any deaths that occur or are caused by nuclear or uranium-powered stations. Even in Australia, where our safety standards are extremely high, in the last decade several hundred men would have died in coalmines. That is in this country alone, where safety standards are probably the highest in the world. There is an example of the difference.

There is no doubt that, as far as this particular debate is concerned, the winds of change are blowing in this country. There is no doubt about that at all. Just a few weeks ago, we saw a sudden change in Northern Territory Labor Party policy. The Northern Territory branch of the Labor Party had a policy of no uranium mines for a number of years. If Labor ever came to power as the government of the Northern Territory, and the Lord help us if it ever does, it would have closed down those mines. That was its unequivocal policy. Labor fought several elections on the basis of that policy, and was decimated. We can see the members of the opposition sitting there now with their heads in their hands. There are only 6 of them, and that is all that we have had in this House for a long time. And why, Mr Speaker? One of the reasons is the anti-uranium policy of the Northern Territory Labor Party.

The Labor Party in the Northern Territory has seen the 'reality', to quote the member for Stuart, and the futility of that particular policy and it has now been changed. It was not changed because members of the party disagreed with it but because of the political reality that, in the Northern Territory community, the majority of people support uranium mining. About that there is no doubt. They have changed their policy for political expediency and for no other reason. However, members opposite are now in a cleft stick. They are over a barrel because one of their federal colleagues, Senator Collins, has produced a paper recently. I have read the paper and I think it is quite informative. In fact, I must say that, like the member for Stuart, I agree with most of it. Senator Collins was simply responding to comments made by Mr Peter Milton. However, members of the opposition must find it very embarrassing now to have to cope with Senator Collins' paper which disagrees with the policy that they have just accepted. After all these years, they have just accepted a policy which their senate colleague disagrees with. It is an absolutely remarkable state of affairs.

Of course, we all know that Senator Collins used to be the Leader of the Opposition in this House and that, as Leader of the Opposition and a delegate to the National Conference of the Labor Party, he went down to Hobart a couple of years ago and promoted the concept of developing uranium mines in the uranium province. There was a very good reason for that because the majority of his constituents were Aboriginal people and Aboriginal people in that area support uranium mining. But Senator Collins, or Mr Collins MLA as he was in those days, created some embarrassment within the Northern Territory Labor Party. That is when the knives came out and started thrusting. It was not very long before the good senator, then the Leader of the Opposition, walked in here one morning and, out of the blue, offered his resignation as Leader of

the Opposition. That happened because they got him. The current Leader of the Opposition, who slunk out of the House a few minutes ago, replaced him. But the grapevine tells me that the night of the long knives is about to descend upon us again. His time has come.

Mr Dondas: Whose?

Mr SETTER: The Leader of the Opposition's, of course.

Mr Dondas: I was just curious, that was all.

Mr SETTER: It is his time to feel the long knife, fair where it hurts, and I am sure there will be a twist or 2 as well.

Mr Speaker, I am sure you will understand my confusion when, a few moments ago, I heard the member for Stuart refer to his morality and reality. That is a joke, an absolute joke. Mr Speaker, just let me quote to you from the good Senator Collins' paper. The good Senator Collins said, at page 23 of his very informative paper:

Australia's current uranium mining policy is demonstrably neither an anti- or a pro-mining policy. As a consequence, it dramatically fails to fulfil the objectives of either position. The ALP has sensibly recognised for some years that Australia must utilise its uranium resources by becoming, as it has, an important supplier of uranium to world markets. However, the existing policy places an artificial constraint on the industry which, while allowing Australia to remain a substantial producer of uranium, provides our competitors with a ridiculous commercial advantage.

That is the ALP's position, Mr Speaker.

This extremely detrimental position does not appear to be offset by any conceivable advantage to Australia from either an economic or an ideological point of view. It is essential that the party take the next logical step and allow Australia to develop its extensive and low-cost uranium resources in a manner consistent with both the market opportunities that do exist and Australia's national interests.

That is what the good Senator Collins says, and I would like to hear from some of the members opposite as to whether they agree with what he has said there. I would be most interested to hear what their position is on this very matter. We have heard from several speakers from the opposition, but the member for MacDonnell has not spoken in this debate yet and I would certainly like to hear what he has to say.

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

Mr TUXWORTH (Barkly): Mr Speaker, I thought I should rise quickly in case the Deputy Leader of the Opposition moved for an extension of time for the member for Jingili.

I welcome the opportunity to discuss the paper put forward by the Minister for Mines and Energy. Earlier in the week, I was interested to hear the minister talk about 'Terry the Terminator'. When I read the paper this morning, I thought, well, this will be Barry's beat-up for the week. There are many important things that we ought to talk about with this paper and

closing the nuclear cycle is a matter that I have discussed in this House often. It is very important to the future of the Northern Territory. It is very important to Australia and, in fact, if we ever manage to close the nuclear cycle, it will be the first time it has been done in the world. I agree with those speakers who have said today that, if you want to be a producer of uranium, closing the cycle completely and maintaining control of the waste at the end is really the only sensible thing to do.

The minister outlined the proposal that he saw was proper to put in place and went on to discuss its benefits. He named the supporters of and the antagonists to whole notion of uranium mining and I guess it is very hard to disagree with anything that he had to say. While the minister dealt with what should happen, he omitted to deal with the practical realities of what was involved. The trouble that we all have is that selling uranium is not like selling cars or beef. The sale of uranium has a political component that has absolutely no rationale and bears no relationship to the market and no relationship to price. It is very hard to understand, when you are involved in any one part of the cycle, how the rest of the cycle works. It does not seem to make sense.

I will give some examples of what I am referring to. The American market is very extensive. However, when we are told how big the American market is, we are not told that there is an unwritten and unspoken policy at a federal level that 80% of the yellowcake used in America will be provided by American mines. At McGee's mine at Albuquerque, which the member for Arnhem and I investigated, it costs \$140 a pound to produce uranium. We can sell it to them for \$25. They have a policy of maintaining mines all over America which produce 200 t or 300 t a year, yet we could take over the whole market and save them a squillion. They have a local production policy that we cannot break down. The truth is that, whatever the size of the American market, we would have to fight for a share of the 20% that will not be produced locally.

The other factor is that the Americans have a policy that all their hexafluoride production will occur in America. Occasionally they break out of that cycle and some of it is done in Japan. If we want to step into the uranium market and be a totally integrated supplier, we have to come to terms with these realities. In Canada, uranium is sold as hexafluoride. It does not sell yellowcake, and we are competing against that in the market. In Europe, the major control over the manufacture of the rods is in France and the USSR. It is interesting that the Japanese are not shy about using the USSR to make their rods.

In the past, Japan used to write contracts for 2000 t to 3000 t with a mine. If we look at the contracts that have been written in the last few years - and here I agree with the opposition - the Japanese are spreading their eggs very carefully all around the world. Ranger is writing contracts for 350 t and 400 t. I suggest that it is not such a bad thing for us to have our eggs spread around either. If anything goes wrong, at least the losses are kept to a minimum. The Japanese also have a policy of undertaking their own hexafluoride production. They are trying very seriously to maintain control of the manufacture of their rods and to have their own industry.

When I went to Korea, I spoke to Mr Toyota of the Korea Electric Power Corporation. We suggested that we could provide uranium to him on very good terms. He said that he would be taking all the production from Koongarra. We said that Koongarra was unlikely to be in production for a few years but that we had a couple of other mines that could supply his needs. He said that he bought uranium from Denison and, if Koongarra was not producing, he would get uranium from Canada.

These are the political distortions that have screwed the market up to a point where it is very hard to say that the market is this big - and I am holding up a map of the American market - and then argue that you can take any portion you like because it is commercially possible. The political interference in the market has distorted it to the point where we must catch as catch can. We have the same political distortion in Australia. We have a federal government that completely controls the uranium industry and then says: 'We will have only 3 mines because that is all that we believe in. One of them must be in South Australia because there is an election coming up there!' Don't tell me that that logic is any different to the logic of other people who instil political policies into uranium sales and purchases.

We have been played off a break. I have said it before and I have no hesitation in saying it again: the Canadians and the South Africans have done us like a dinner. While we were poncing around contemplating whether it was moral to mine, sell and buy uranium, they were funding the antinuclear movement in Australia and making sure that we did nothing. If you look at who cleaned up all the contracts while we were having the Fox Inquiry and deciding what moral people we were, the Canadians and the South Africans took us to the cleaners. What are we doing now? We are running around and picking up a couple of crumbs. What a bunch of mugs we have turned out to be.

Mr Speaker, the great depth of feeling that I have for this is such that I have to say that I do not think that anything is likely to change. The Labor Party may tinker with its uranium policy a bit and we might have 4 mines or some other variation. If there were a change of government, I am sorry to say that I cannot see any change coming of any significance because I know the people on the other side of the House fairly well, having dealt with many of them for about 14 years. If you can show me a man there who has the backbone to stand up and say that they will stop this nonsense and get into the industry, I would like to hear his name. Until now, he has been keeping a pretty low profile. Our prospects of doing what we think is sensible, reasonable and economically smart are pretty grim because the market is controlled by the federal government. It is change at that level that needs to come.

If we are to have any credibility in terms of advancing an argument for closing the uranium cycle, we must clarify certain things in the minds of people in the industry. If we want to integrate the uranium industry vertically, we will turn the world industry upside down. If we think people who are processing hexafluoride and rods and who are involved in disposal of uranium waste will stand by and watch us climb into this market, then we are pretty naive. It will be a tough battle.

The problem that we have with vertical integration is the economy of scale. If we want to have rod and hexafluoride production, we must be able to guarantee the supply of yellowcake into those plants and the continuity of supply to the end-users. The immediate problem is that all our contracts are written in terms of the supply of yellowcake. If we wanted to change that, we would have to obtain the consent of the purchasers because they also have long-term contracts for processing yellowcake. We would not get out of such contracts very lightly. If the minister is serious about his proposition - and I know he is and I support him in what he is trying to do - we have to come up with the answers to how to vertically integrate the industry, extract ourselves from existing contracts and give end-users the guarantees that they want.

The honourable minister says there is no problem. He waves his hand and says: 'Trust me'. I will be interested to hear how he proposes to do it because we have to do some pretty fast talking. We need to convince the Commonwealth that what we are prepared to do is in the interests of everybody concerned because there is no way that we will persuade the Commonwealth to agree to the variation of an international contract if the end-users and the other parties to that contract are not happy with it.

Economies of scale are the key. We would need to bring on our 4 mines to justify a small hex plant like the one run by Kerr McGee at Sequoia in Oklahoma. Even to run a plant of that nature, we would not have enough hex stock to make the rods and would need to get additional supplies from somewhere else. Economies of scale might not seem important to us but, to people in the industry, they are the key. If we want to advance the proposition of closing the cycle, I will be the first one to stand up and help argue it when the answers are made clear. If we cannot give those answers, we will have no credibility in the market.

Of course, closing the cycle would have great appeal to those who are confronted with storage problems and would make our long-term position pretty favourable. However, before we enter into storage, we have a bit of homework to do on the local scene. At this stage, there is no way that the Australian community is ready to get into bed with the storage proposition. There are many who can see merit in it but many others are not sure about it and, the moment you talk about putting it in their backyard, support for storage of wastes disappears completely. Mr Speaker, if you want an indication of that, let me take you back to the proposal for installing a small toxic-waste incinerator near Tennant Creek.

Mr Hatton: That was your proposition.

Mr TUXWORTH: It was my proposition and, if I had had the carriage of it, it would not have failed.

For the sake of honourable members who may have forgotten what happened, I will refresh their memories. If we want to get into the complete uranium cycle, we need to make a success of something like that incinerator project. You need to show that it can be done and that people are happy with it. As I said in letters to the Minister for Mines and Energy and the former Minister for Conservation, I have to say that the government's performance in organising that project was the greatest shambles and exhibition of mismanagement that anyone is ever likely to see.

Mr Coulter: You got out of the party halfway through it.

Mr TUXWORTH: Mr Speaker, I wanted to win my seat. The way the government handled the matter indicated that it was determined that I would not. Let me say now that, if the minister wants to proceed with the storage of radioactive waste, I invite him to do so. I think it would be really good. I would, however, plead with him: please do not do it in my electorate. I have had a personal experience with the minister and I would not want a re-run of that episode under any circumstances.

Mr Hatton: We would tell them the truth.

Mr TUXWORTH: Tell them what you like. Truth has never got in your way.

Mr Speaker, I think there are many arguments in favour of what the minister is trying to achieve but the things that stop him will not be local Territory problems so much as the will of the federal government, which has complete control of the uranium resources of Australia under the Atomic Energy Act. It does not matter how logical and reasonable our arguments are, we are not likely to get anywhere until there is a change of government at the federal level. Even if that were to occur, I am really concerned that not a great deal would change subsequently.

Mr Coulter interjecting.

Mr TUXWORTH: The minister has sat with me on occasions when we have tried to talk to federal shadow ministers about things that ought to happen. One can only shake one's head and wring one's hands at what they have in store for us when they take over from the Labor Party in Canberra.

In terms of carrying out the full uranium fuel cycle in Australia, a massive public education campaign is needed. That is a matter for the federal government but, first of all, somebody has to get to the federal politicians to explain the benefits that are likely to accrue. Unfortunately, I cannot tell the minister how he will overcome the lethargy that he will find at that level. Mr Speaker, let me say to the minister that his proposition has been raised before. It is as valid today as it was then. Regrettably, the problems that existed previously have not gone away and, in my view, are not likely to go away until there is some massive change at the federal level. If the minister would like to give an indication in his reply about how he will handle the federal parliament, which has control of the matter, I would like to hear it because I would like to join with him in knocking some sense into that parliament.

Mr TIPILOURA (Arafura): Mr Speaker, I rise to speak with mixed feelings. Firstly, I wish uranium had never been found. I hate to see the people of the Northern Territory divided on such an emotive issue and I hate to see the Aboriginal people caught in the middle. However, uranium has been found and it has been mined.

The federal government now has a policy which says that uranium mining is okay at Ranger, Nabarlek and Roxby Downs but is not okay for Koongarra and Jabiluka, the 2 major prospects in my electorate. That policy is unfair because it is discriminating against my constituents, the Territory and Australia as a whole. It is my job to represent the interests of my constituents in the electorate of Arafura and I totally support their right to determine what happens on their land. I would be failing in my duty to them if I did not do that. I am at an advantage over other members because I have recently been out to meet the traditional owners at Koongarra. The Minister for Mines and Energy has not done that nor, I believe, has any other member of this House. I have also spoken to the project developer, Denison Mines Australia. The traditional owners gave their go-ahead for the development 3 years ago. They have signed a joint venture agreement with Denison Mines. The agreement gives them 25% equity in the proposed mine. This is the type of agreement Northern Land Council Chairman, Mr Galarrwuy Yunupingu, told the Mining Expo in Darwin this week that Aborigines are now seeking.

The Koongarra project area was excised from Kakadu National Park in the early 1970s. It covers an area of 12 km². It contains proven reserves of 30 000 t of yellowcake. Denison could go into production tomorrow at Koongarra. The reason is simple. All of the low-cost reserves have already been sold to Japan over the 10-year mine lease through existing contracts held

by the parent company, Denison Mines of Canada. Australia will earn \$2000m between 1991 and 2001. The Aboriginal people of the Northern Territory and elsewhere will earn more than \$250m, and that money will be spent in education, health and a whole range of other areas which need to be looked at. It will give the children of traditional owners a chance that their parents were never given.

The key traditional owners want mining. I have spoken to them about it and they strongly believe that mining is the way for them to go so they can benefit from the income. They are still living in poor conditions around Patonga and many of them still live in large sheds with wire mesh doors and basic standards. The traditional owners have said they want the Australian Labor Party to change its policy at its forthcoming National Conference in Hobart to allow the mine to go ahead. Whether that policy will change or not remains to be seen.

Denison has shown its contracts to the federal government. It has gained all the necessary approvals and agreements on the environmental and Aboriginal sides. The management of Denison has told me also that the project will provide 600 jobs in the 18-month construction phase of the mine. 80% of the \$180m construction cost will be spent in Australia and as much as possible will be spent with local contractors. There will be at least 130 permanent jobs for workers who will all need accommodation in Darwin. The supply contracts will also be worth a lot of money. I am talking about real jobs, real people, real investment and real benefits.

The only other thing I disagreed with in the statement made by the honourable minister was his comment about 40 000 jobs for Australians. I find that hard to believe because I have been told by the mining company that Koongarra and, hopefully, Jabiluka will get the go-ahead if the policy is changed in Hobart.

Mr Speaker, to go back to the traditional owners, they are sick and tired of being pushed around, being told what to do and what benefits they can get out of mining and everything. They are sick and tired of it. If they can be told the truth about mining, what they can get out of it and so on, that is all okay. But, in the past, the traditional owners there have had no idea of what was happening about mining or about the money side of it either.

I have taken a great interest in mining since I became the elected member for the electorate, and the people out there are very concerned about mining. It will only be a 10-year lease, I think, with the mining, and I really do not know where they will go in the 10 years after that but, hopefully, what they obtain from the mining royalties can be used to benefit them in the long-term future.

The minister spoke about the report of the Industrial Safety Division of the department, under the heading 'hazardous waste'. 'A small, significant amount of selected waste chemicals has been held in storage pending the development of appropriate destruction and disposal facilities in the near future'. He also said that the government is still developing destruction disposal facilities for the chemical waste. And how can anyone accept that they want to be responsible for the world's nuclear wastage? I would like to ask all members to remember the plan to develop a high-level toxic waste incinerator in the Tennant Creek area. I think that has been spoken about by the member for Barkly. If an issue like that can be looked at seriously, it can benefit us all with regard to any waste that must be disposed of. That is all I have to say now, Mr Speaker.

Mr HATTON (Chief Minister): Mr Speaker, I would like to open by congratulating the Minister for Mines and Energy on his statement on uranium. Without doubt it is a reasoned and studied statement which spells out the immense opportunities afforded by this valuable resource. My government has given the uranium industry its total support, standing up for the industry's interests against those who would prevent legitimate mining. We will continue to challenge publicly, and through the courts, the Hawke Labor government's political interference which is preventing uranium exploration, just as we fought against the Fraser government's interference in exactly the same process. We will continue to fight for the start of the Jabiluka and Koongarra mines in the Northern Territory. We support the orderly development of uranium resources, under proper environmental controls which are now well spelt out in Australia.

As an active proponent of the industry, I have long been involved in campaigning for the evolution of a sensible uranium policy in this country and, as this debate has been developing, my mind has been cast back to some of the events in the early and mid-1970s when we saw the discoveries of uranium in the Northern Territory and, I must say, a positive attitude to uranium mining being exhibited by the Whitlam government. We all held hopes for the future development of this important and valuable industry in Australia in that period. But sure enough, the then burgeoning anti-uranium, antinuclear, anti-development, Greenpeace, et al groups in this country started moving, pushing, prodding and generating public debate.

Mr Speaker, I can remember some amazing events. For example, I can remember Aboriginal communities in the area of the uranium province in the East Alligator region and around Oenpelli being told that, if uranium was mined, the rainbow serpent would come out of the ground and destroy their communities. I can remember cartoon books being circulated to the Aboriginal communities to frighten them about uranium mining. I remember the community being frightened with the thought of uranium mines spreading death and disaster across Australia. In the mid-1970s, I was familiar with the so-called Camp Concern. I met the people who were there. They had a little shed near the near the South Alligator River. The greenies had their own little camp there as a protest against uranium mining at that time, in the middle of the Fox Inquiry period. Our famous friend, Strider, was a permanent resident of Camp Concern in those days. I had many an interesting ale with Strider when he got sick and tired of the evenings at Camp Concern and wandered up to the South Alligator to discuss the subject.

At that stage, I was a very active proponent for the commencement of mining at Ranger, Jabiluka, Koongarra and Nabarlek and the processes of the Fox Inquiry. For years, we have all debated the Fox Inquiry. These documents seem to develop a sort of biblical aura of their own. It is worth while going back and reading some of the puerile nonsense and assumptions that are spelt out in some of those documents. Not the least of those put forward in the Fox Inquiry was that tourism would destroy the Aboriginal people, that we could not allow tourism to develop in Kakadu and that it was absolutely nonsensical for the Northern Territory government to suggest that we could attract up to 50 000 tourists a year to Kakadu National Park. That is why the Fox Report recommended against any tourist-related developments in Jabiru and the Kakadu area.

Mr Speaker, I have gone through that and I have listened to the debates down south. I have listened to fears about meltdowns and unbelievable debates about the dangers of uranium, yellowcake and nuclear power. I have listened to the simplistic arguments brought forward by the anti-uranium movement

which, without doubt, did influence the view of the community. They frightened the community because their underlying argument is: 'You will have a nuclear war if you open a uranium mine'. It is unfortunate but true that society is afflicted with what I refer to as the Hiroshima syndrome. If you mention the word 'nuclear', people think immediately of a nuclear bomb and they recall the horrific disasters that occurred at Hiroshima and Nagasaki. That is the link that the antinuclear people use to scare the community.

If we as politicians, as leaders of the community - and we are elected for that purpose - are to be responsible, we must be prepared to put reasoned responses to those arguments. They are available. The minister has tabled reports and dealt with the relative dangers of nuclear energy versus other forms of danger in the community. No one would deny that yellowcake is a heavy metal poison which does emit radiation. However, one must consider its relative danger in comparison to other dangers in society.

No one supports a system which would ignore safeguards and protection for the community. However, it is important in any debate on such matters that one analyses the relative danger compared to the alternatives. One must analyse the relative risk of injury in the nuclear cycle as compared to other traditional cycles. In respect of hydro-electric power, for example, one must consider the risk of people being killed in the construction of dams and the risk of dam break. In fact, more people have died as a result of dam bursts than have died as a consequence of the nuclear industry. The dangers of coal-fired power stations and the radiation emissions from coal-fired power station stacks must be taken into account when considering the concept of a nuclear power industry. We all support the view that we should fight against nuclear energy being used for military purposes. However, we should support the responsible use of nuclear energy for peaceful purposes. I will come back to that later.

In particular, I would like to deal now with the economic implications of nuclear energy for Australia. The member for Nhulunbuy spoke for some 15 or 20 minutes and all he said was that it will not proceed because the people do not want it. I have already said that people have been scared off. We have the task of putting the truth before the people in place of the nonsense spread by the lunatic left in its deliberate scare campaign. We heard from the Minister from Mines and Energy and others about the Canadian situation. We could almost treat it as a legitimate business expense because we gave Canada such a business advantage in the world uranium market. The anti-uranium movement was financed in Australia to ensure a multi-million dollar industry in Canada.

Mr Speaker, as early as my maiden speech, I have advocated in this House the resolution of the stalemate resulting in the current uranium policy of the federal ALP government. My government and, indeed, previous CLP governments have been very vocal in questioning the current uranium policy which allows the development of South Australian uranium and not ours because South Australian uranium is not bad uranium like ours must be. It is pleasing finally to hear the member for Stuart recognise publicly that the decision to allow Roxby Downs to go ahead was a purely political decision because the ALP wanted to win an election in South Australia. It ignored the mines in the Northern Territory because we were not politically relevant to it. If I were a Labor member seeking office in the Northern Territory, I would scream from the rooftops about the disgraceful conduct of my own party in that particular exercise. I have been waiting for some years to hear that outburst but all I have heard was the defence of the federal Labor government on the argument of markets. That is another furphy that I would like to deal with later.

I have often argued with the federal government's logic in stealing our revenue-raising measure of collecting uranium royalties. Only in the Northern Territory do uranium royalties not attribute to our government; they go straight to the federal government. Is the Australia Labor Party about to embark on a cynical exercise to demonstrate that uranium from Rudall is as good as that from Roxby Downs, but that uranium at Koongarra and Jabiluka still isn't? I agree with the member for Stuart that we need to be very careful. I will not be at the ALP conference in Tasmania but I trust that the Northern Territory delegates will stand up and defend the Northern Territory against that sort of cynical nonsense. I trust that they are prepared to stand up against their own illogical policies, even the one they have just adopted.

For years, Australia was regarded as having ridden on the sheep's back. Now, Australians have to pay through the nose for a local product that the world enjoys at half the price - pure wool. The Australian textile industry has not been able to develop to take advantage of value-added processing. Australia is known as an exporter of raw materials. Australia is an importer of manufactured goods with consequent balance of payments difficulties and massive overseas debts. Are we going to replicate the mistakes of the past by ignoring the economic and social benefits available through capitalising on the opportunities provided by the nuclear fuel cycle? That is the question facing Australia.

EPAC, a federal government organisation, has brought out a clear report that says: 'For the last 20 years, Australia has continued to develop its raw materials, its basic commodities and exporting those, and has paid no attention to getting value-added off its products. It has gone into a market that for 20 years had declining commodity prices ...'

Mr Ede: You can blame Black Jack for that.

Mr HATTON: The whole lot - Liberal, Labor, Country Party - ignored that fact and ignored the greatest growth area in Australia: manufactured products.

We have a product in the Northern Territory and the minister has outlined the extent of the commodity. We know that we have dramatically larger deposits of uranium than Canada, yet we gave the world market to Canada because we stood on some moralistic, nonsensical argument that, if we denied uranium to the world, somehow we would limit nuclear development. That did not happen.

Remember the issue of Kakadu's listing on the World Heritage list? That was a classic. The Canadian representative who chaired the 1986 meeting was put into the chair by our own Professor Ovington. He stood there and moralised about Kakadu Stage 2 while his own country was draining a major natural lake in the mountains to get at the uranium beneath it. He wanted Kakadu locked up because he did not want our uranium competing with Canada's. That was what was occurring in France in the course of that world heritage debate in 1986.

The nation cannot afford to be conned. We have serious problems with our balance of payments. We have a major resource that the world will take advantage of, whether we supply it or others do. Are we going to be so moralistic and puerile that we step back and allow South Africa, Niger, Canada, the USSR and other countries to develop their uranium resources while we go quietly broke and our living standard degenerates to third-world levels?

Mr Ede: You have 5 minutes. Tell us about waste disposal. Come on.

Mr HATTON: Mr Speaker, I am not prepared to accept that sort of logic for Australia. We have heard continuously from the opposition about ...

Mr Ede: Tell us what you think.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! I am quite prepared to tolerate the odd interjection across the Chamber, but not a running debate. The member for Stuart is on his final warning.

Mr HATTON: Mr Speaker, the fact is that uranium will be sold and Australia will take advantage of that fact or it will not.

The other question that we must ask ourselves is whether we are prepared to enter into the full nuclear cycle and take advantage of the real value-added. The minister gave some figures today. They may sound astronomical but I would advise the member for Arafura that at Cap de la Hague in France, \$50 000m was spent to develop a nuclear reprocessing plant where spent fuel rods are reprocessed to produce new fuel rods. That is a \$50 000m investment and France has no uranium reserves of its own. It imports uranium and fuel rods from around the world for reprocessing. The market is there if we have the courage and the sense to look at it and to ensure that the industry is developed in an environmentally-logical and sensible way.

The solution to the problem of our uranium being diverted into the production of nuclear weapons is simple, although I do not believe that any federal government would have the political courage to adopt it. We would produce the fuel rods and export them to nuclear power stations. We would not sell the rods; we would lease them. When they completed their economic life, we would take them back and reprocess them. We would use the synroc process to bury the wastes, thus ensuring that no Australian uranium could be used for military purposes.

I turn now to the Northern Territory Labor Party's policy on uranium. Members opposite boasted some weeks ago that they had made a major advance in their policy. They had moved from a policy of closing the mines to a 3-mines policy. Their policy is now in line with that of the federal Labor government. It says that they will allow 'the export of uranium from only Nabarlek, Ranger and Roxby mines under the most stringent nuclear non-proliferation conditions to those countries which the government is satisfied observe the non-proliferation treaty' and so on. The policy would prevent the development of any mines other than Nabarlek, Ranger and Roxby Downs.

I understand that the motion to change the policy was moved by Margaret Gillespie, the convenor of the left wing of the Labor Party. I understand that the Leader of the Opposition kept right out of the debate except for seconding the motion. I cannot understand the opposition's barbed-wire mentality. We do not support the foot-in-both-camps approach adopted by the party of members opposite. The logic of it escapes me. Are the safeguards and control requirements in the 3-mines policy different to those in a more-than-3-mines policy? What is different about the environmental controls with a 3-mines policy as opposed to a 4 or a 5-mines policy? What is the logic in 3 mines?

Members opposite might say that it is a matter of markets. A month or so ago, representatives of Denison Mines walked into Minister Kerin's office to

talk about Koongarra. They had environmental approvals, agreement with the Aboriginal communities and a contract. All they needed was an export licence. If they do not mine uranium here, they will mine it in Canada. They would prefer to mine it in the Northern Territory. Why knock them back? There is no market argument. The same thing applies to Pancontinental. There is no logical argument for the 3-mines policy. It is simply a balancing act between the left and the right with no logic and no consideration of Australia or its balance of payments needs.

More importantly, Labor Party policy is in breach of the nuclear non-proliferation treaty to which Australia is a signatory. I will quote article 4 of the non-proliferation treaty:

Nothing in this treaty shall be interpreted as affecting the inalienable right of all the parties to the treaty to develop research, production and use of nuclear energy for peaceful purposes without discrimination and in conformity with articles 1 and 2 of this treaty. All the parties to the treaty undertake to facilitate, and have the right to participate in, the fullest possible exchange of equipment, materials and scientific and technological information for the peaceful uses of nuclear energy. Parties to the treaty in a position to do so shall also cooperate in contributing, alone or together with other states, to international organisations, to the further development of the applications of nuclear energy for peaceful purposes, especially in the territories of non-nuclear weapon states party to the treaty, with due consideration for the needs of the developing areas of the world.

Those are our treaty obligations under the Nuclear Non-proliferation Safeguards Act of the federal parliament. How can the ALP justify preventing the mining of uranium when the government has an obligation to open up the peaceful use of nuclear industry in the world?

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

Mr EDE (Stuart): Mr Speaker, I would like to move that the Chief Minister be granted an extension of time to allow him to tell the House where he stands on the issue of nuclear waste disposal in the Northern Territory.

Motion agreed to.

Mr HATTON: Mr Speaker, if the member for Stuart had been listening instead of gasbagging to his mates he would have heard me say that, for many years, I have supported the complete nuclear fuel cycle taking place in the Northern Territory. That is the mining and processing and the leasing of fuel rods and receiving them back for reprocessing and storage using the synroc process.

I have not had a chance to refer to the member for Barkly's platitudinous nonsense about toxic waste disposal. He criticised my government for being somewhat unhappy about the proposal to site a toxic waste disposal unit at Warrego near Tennant Creek, in his electorate. I am certain that the member for Barkly knows that, when he was Chief Minister, the Department of Mines and Energy prepared a report, before any of the research was carried out, which recommended that the unit not be sited at Warrego. That report was not brought to the attention of government. It was buried and an instruction issued that a new report was to be prepared promoting the then Chief Minister's preferred option that the development should be sited at Warrego,

with the restructuring of the furnace there. We carried out some detailed assessments of that option and our consultant, Bechtel, eventually confirmed that Tennant Creek was not a good location. It is a terrible shame that, when he was Chief Minister, the member for Barkly did not bother to advise his Cabinet colleagues of that advice. He might have saved us considerable time and worry.

After losing the leadership, the member for Barkly left the CLP and began to put out his moralistic, nonsensical view: 'If I were doing it, I would do it properly. I do not trust these guys to do it properly and therefore I am against it'. I can hardly believe the hypocrisy of that although I have been getting used to it during the last year or so. The fact is that we wasted considerable time and effort in finding out what the member for Barkly knew at the beginning: that Warrego was not a suitable site. Had we not taken the trouble to carry out proper examinations, the problems might not have come to light. In view of the subsequent earthquakes, we would have made a sad mistake if we had gone down the path prepared by the member for Barkly.

Mr Ede: Where was the other place?

Mr Coulter: Your backyard.

Mr Ede: Yes, that is what I am worried about.

Mr HATTON: There were a number of other siting options and they were dealt with previously by the Minister for Mines and Energy when he addressed the consultant's report in this House.

Mr Ede: He was very vague.

Mr HATTON: Mr Speaker, I am amazed at the opposition. I would like to know how members opposite can justify a 3-mines policy and not a 4-mines policy or a 5-mines policy. I hope that Nabarlek is included in the policy and that the other resources on that lease can be exploited and put into the refinery to meet existing markets. That is an important issue and the opposition really ought to stand tall and fight for it. Members opposite should argue for the opening up of Koongarra because the last vestige of the anti-uranium argument lobby has been destroyed in that case. Having accepted that nuclear non-proliferation measures were in place, together with safeguards, the only remaining objection was the absence of markets. Denison has now shown that the markets exist. What will the anti-uranium element do now, having run out of arguments? Will some other fantasy argument be provided as to why we should not proceed with the nuclear industry or even the basics of mining and producing yellowcake, without even considering the enrichment issue and further development of the industry in the pursuit of national economic priorities - set by this federal government - for the further processing and achievement of value-added from our own natural resources so as to offset the country's balance of payments problems?

That is the question this federal government has to face. It cannot have an economic policy which is contradicted by an illogical uranium policy. It has to be consistent. In the context of an economic policy promoting value-added in terms of base resources, the produce of our uranium mines should be further processed in this country. You cannot have it both ways. It certainly has to be achieved in an environmentally-acceptable manner, but you cannot have it both ways, Mr Speaker. Either one or the other. If the government does not agree with any uranium mining, it should say so. The people will then vote against it.

Firstly, the federal government should compensate the Northern Territory for lost revenue if it is going to deny us access to our uranium resource. It compensated Tasmania when it denied that state a resource, so why not the Northern Territory? Secondly, it should explain that it has a policy which is not justified by any logical technical argument and that it is acting in contravention of the nuclear non-proliferation treaty. How does it justify breaching the nuclear non-proliferation treaty? It is denying Australia international wealth that might stop us degenerating into a third-world country with a debt level something like Mexico's. The choice is whether to rationally and reasonably support the Australian economy, jobs and wealth, or to support the Canadian, Nigerian, South African and Russian economies. This behaviour will not change the market and the development of the nuclear industry.

The federal government might also explain to the people the effects of pumping fumes into the atmosphere through coal-fired power stations around the world and the damage that that will do to ozone levels. It ought to explain how it will avoid the greenhouse effect while promoting coal which, when burnt, has a direct effect on the ozone level and contributes to the greenhouse effect. It should put the nuclear industry in that context because it has no such effects. There are environmental arguments for going nuclear rather than using hydrocarbons to fuel mass power production.

Then there is the argument about dealing with the developing economies. There is a need to develop the third-world economies of South America, Africa, Asia and the subcontinent of India. They have a growing need for industry. As they move to develop and improve their standards of living, increasingly they will become consumers. If they want to increase their standards of living, they will need more energy. There will be a massive demand for extra energy. Where will it come from? Or do we want to say we do not want to increase the energy consumption in the world? We do not want to use hydrocarbons because they are a scarce resource nor do we want to use nuclear energy because we do not like it - though for no logical reason. The places I have mentioned are not able to develop enough hydro-electric power. Where will they get their energy from, Mr Speaker?

If the nations of the third world cannot get enough energy for development, are they to be told that they should stay broke, poor and disenfranchised rather than use nuclear energy? Or should we recognise the need for energy and point out that nuclear energy, when properly managed, is clean, is supported by the nuclear non-proliferation treaty, can contribute to improving standards of living across the world, can address some of the problems caused by the greenhouse effect and, heaven help us, can actually make some money for Australia and improve the standard of living of Australian citizens? That is what the nuclear option can do for Australia.

Let us stop the nonsense and let us talk logically about this. I urge the opposition, when it goes down to Hobart, to stand up as Senator Collins has done and adopt his stance, a very clear and unequivocal stance. I will finish with the excellent comment Senator Collins made in the federal parliament. He said that he was not prepared to go antinuclear. Why? Because he was simply 'not selfish enough, exclusive enough or elitist enough to be anti-uranium'. Nor should any member of this Chamber be so.

Mr BELL (MacDonnell): Mr Speaker, I think it is about time we pointed out a few inconsistencies in the Chief Minister's sophistry. I would like to commence by humbly accepting the accolade he paid to the party that I have been proud to be a member of for 20 years, the Australian Labor Party, and the

accolade he paid to the policy-making process even to the extent of seeking to lobby delegates to the conference which will be held in June.

Mr Hatton: 9 June.

Mr BELL: I am pleased to see that he even knows the dates; that is most commendable.

I humbly accept the accolade paid to the Australian Labor Party by the Chief Minister because one of the reasons why I am so proud to be a member of that party is precisely because of the policy-forming activities that go on within it. I suggest that it is the very lack of those policy-forming activities in the Country Liberal Party and whichever one of the National Parties is the flavour of the month that causes so much trouble. The Australian Labor Party does take seriously policy issues such as uranium mining and the nuclear energy cycle.

I do not think anybody on the government benches, certainly nobody out there in the Territory community or anybody in the press gallery, will be able to remember when there was a meaningful public debate on an important public policy issue within the CLP or either of the federal parties which it is occasionally and variably involved with. The very processes of policy formation that have been occupying media attention in the months leading up to the National Conference of the Australian Labor Party in June are, I believe, an important part of public debate that is sadly lacking in the conservative parties.

A couple of the other comments made by the Chief Minister were quite extraordinary. I hope he checked them out with the Minister for Mines and Energy before he made them. His references to the 'lunatic left' as he called it, were really quite surprising, and I dare say they could be termed unbalanced as well. That statement was one of the more disgraceful emanations from the rabid right in his own Cabinet. I suggest that the Chief Minister really should look in his own backyard before he attempts to look at the 'lunatic left'.

The debate about uranium mining and the nuclear energy industry is one of the most important public issues of our time. It is perhaps the toughest issue at every level of government: the local level, the state or territory level, the national level and internationally. It is one of the toughest public issues. One of the things that I find most offensive about the honourable minister's statement is that he suggests that the entire debate can be reduced to a simplistic notion of more mines! Jobs! You sat there and heard him bellowing, Mr Speaker. I suggest that the assessment made by the shadow minister for mines and energy, the member for Nhulunbuy, was entirely correct. The respect for this legislature and its capacity to make decisions of such import are seriously cast into question by the sort of rambling rabid response that we get to such questions from the Minister for Mines and Energy.

The next time the Chief Minister rises to talk about which countries mine uranium and which do not, he should know that, in fact, France does have its own uranium resources. I point out to him that, in 1980, France produced 2634 t of uranium and, in 1985, that increased to 3200 t. The Chief Minister suggested that France was not a producer. That illustrates the sort of inconsistencies that the Chief Minister was guilty of in his comments to this Assembly in the 30 minutes that we had to listen to him.

The minister's statement contained some quite astounding comments. I will give some instances to illustrate my opinion that the minister's statement sets back the nuclear debate both within the Territory and nationally. National reporting of this statement will do extraordinary harm and add nothing to the public debate about the difficult issues involved. For example, the reference on page 1 to the 'national nuclear weakness of the 1970s and early 1980s' does the minister no credit whatsoever. As I have said already, what the Minister for Mines and Energy chooses to describe as 'national nuclear weakness' is, in fact, the democratic process and the shifting of ground in the nuclear debate. New technology and new information are becoming available all the time and uranium mining is a practical issue. Rational public debate is not a weakness. Rational public debate enables rational public decision-making. This statement does absolutely nothing to enable rational public decision-making.

I notice that the honourable minister was also very selective in his reference to key contributors to the nuclear debate. He referred to Peter Milton's paper, Bob Collin's paper and John Kerin's paper. He went on to say that there have been other recent and important contributions. He referred to an analysis of future market prospects from a Colorado firm. He referred to a report from the Department of Mines and Energy and to a meeting of distinguished scientists in the field of radiation protection at an international nuclear workshop. He referred to the visit to the Territory by the United States Secretary of State for Energy and a visit and inspection tour by the Director of the Nuclear Safety Division of the IAEA.

I had the pleasure of meeting Mr Tony Webb whose visit was sponsored by the Greenpeace organisation ...

Mr Coulter: What a top man!

Mr BELL: I thought that would bring howls of derision from the Minister for Mines and Energy. That is exactly what I am complaining about - that sort of cynicism. On one level, the minister suggests that he wants free and open debate, but all we get from him is rabid outpourings. When I suggest that there are people who are expressing points of view that he does not agree with, the best he can do is to tip a bucket over them.

Mr Coulter: I said he was a top man. Is that tipping a bucket on him?

Mr BELL: Mr Speaker, the quality of mercy may not be strained but I suggest that the quality of the minister's sarcasm certainly is.

I was interested in the information that Mr Tony Webb provided and I am surprised that the honourable minister did not refer to it in his speech. There was considerable ...

Mr Coulter: ... lunatics.

Mr BELL: Sorry?

Mr Coulter: Don't worry.

Mr BELL: I think I will pick up that interjection, Mr Speaker. I cannot quote it exactly but it did include the word 'lunatics'. I will ensure that is recorded in Hansard so that the lack of objectivity that the Minister for Mines and Energy brings to debate is well and truly placed on record.

Mr Webb's credentials, incidentally, are reasonably impressive. He is the Director of the Radiation and Health Information Service, Coordinator of the UK Radiation Round Table and Coordinator of the Radiation and Health Working Group of the UK Public Health Alliance. I will table 4 documents for the benefit of honourable members. The first gives some background on Mr Webb and his interest in radiation protection safeguards. The second document is an abstract of a paper presented to the International Workshop on Radiation Protection in Mining. The third is a briefing paper on uranium mines and radiological protection and the fourth is a briefing paper on the International Commission on Radiological Protection. They may be of interest to honourable members. Mr Speaker, I seek leave to table those documents.

Leave granted.

Mr BELL: Honourable members may be interested in those papers. To me, they give rise to 2 main points. It is not an area in which I claim any great expertise but there ...

Mr DALE: That is so on any subject.

Mr BELL: I appreciate that humility is not the long suit of the Minister for Health and Community Services, but I trust he does not find humility offensive.

I do not claim to be an expert in this particular field, but 2 issues seem to come out of the papers. One of them is the question of radiological standards and the movement of the public debate in that area. Obviously, that is of importance to workers in the Northern Territory who are employed in the industry, particularly those employed at the Ranger uranium mine and any future mines in the Territory. It applies also to workers involved in other aspects of the nuclear fuel cycle. My understanding is that subsequent research based on - at the risk of upsetting the Chief Minister - longitudinal studies of the victims of the Hiroshima and Nagasaki bombings suggests that there may have to be adjustment to radiation protection standards. That is the first point.

The second point that I think is worthy of consideration, which was raised with me by Mr Webb, is that the international politics of radiation standards are such that there will be reluctance internationally to change these standards. I understand that the Canadian mines have a less high reputation as clean mines than do the Australian mines. I commend this for investigation by the minister and the people in his department who have responsibility for these issues. I understand that, in fact, the mines in the Territory have an excellent record, and I am happy to acknowledge that. Through sitting on the Sessional Committee on the Environment I have considerable respect for the safety record of the mine. However, I suggest that that issue of the relative status of Canadian mines and Territory mines ought to be investigated.

In the time that remains to me, let me talk quickly about this waste disposal thing, because that is the chink in the government's armour. The Chief Minister ducked the issue until my colleague, the member for Stuart, pressed him into addressing it. The plain fact of the matter is that, in spite of all the pious statements we have had from government members, not one of them will get up and say that he is willing to go out to his electorate and tell his constituents that he is happy to have nuclear waste, nuclear rods or whatever placed there. That is the inconsistency in the government's line. Government members are quite happy to see as much uranium mined as possible, but they are not prepared to bite the bullet and say 'Yes, fine, we will have the waste in our electorates'.

Mr Palmer interjecting.

Mr BELL: Mr Speaker, I refer the honourable loudmouth over there ...

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

Mr Palmer interjecting.

Mr BELL: I withdraw unreservedly. I saw how easily the member for Karama identified himself.

I will close here, Mr Speaker. At page 10 of the minister's statement, he says that 80% of Territorians are in favour of uranium mining ...

Mr Coulter: Yes.

Mr BELL: Are 80% of Territorians in favour of nuclear waste disposal?

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

Mr PERRON (Industries and Development): Mr Speaker, listening to the member for MacDonnell was interesting because he gave a classic demonstration of a politician trying to represent his party and wringing his hands because the problems were too hard. At one stage, he referred to the comment in the statement of the Minister for Mines and Energy about the national nuclear weakness that existed and, in fact, probably still exists. The member for MacDonnell criticised the minister for making that statement saying that it probably put back the debate by some time.

Of course, the minister was referring to a reality, the national nuclear weakness, the inability of governments of any political persuasion to have the courage to stand up and give a lead, and get into the nuclear industry. Either you get into it or you get out of it. But no, what governments have decided to do on behalf of all Australians is to say that we will just mine a small amount of it, but we will not have anything to do with the rest of the industry. That way, somebody else can worry about all the problems that will arise right through to the disposal of nuclear waste, but they will not be our problems. Those problems are too hard for us to grapple with in this country because the people out there don't like them.

If we could get enough politicians in this country with the courage and backbone of the Minister for Mines and Energy, who were prepared to stand up for the nuclear industry, we might make a bit of progress in this country instead of burying our heads in the sand like the members opposite. They are part of the national nuclear weakness. They want a little of the uranium industry but they do not want to know about those parts that are too hard. They are changing slowly, very slowly. In the recent past, a senator for the Northern Territory, Senator Collins, and the Territory member in the House of Representatives, Mr Snowdon, both did a 180° turn on uranium. That is a step forward in my view.

Those of us who have been around this Assembly for a little while will recall the marathon lectures we were given in this House by the former member for Arafura about the evils of uranium. He used to say that there was masses of it in his electorate but that no one would be able to touch it if he had his way. Of course, over a period of time, he decided that uranium was not such a bad thing, particularly because his constituents felt it was okay to earn a dollar from it. He changed his mind, and now one of his colleagues has

followed suit. Hopefully, over a period of time, a few more of them will follow suit as well.

I have gathered some information on the uranium industry and would like to record some of it in Hansard. We have heard often in the last few years that there are no markets for uranium and that everybody is turning away from building nuclear reactors because the world has supposedly come to its senses and decided that the nuclear industry is not a good one to be in. Of course, the facts demonstrate otherwise, but that is not what we are told by the greens. I would like to read a couple of quotes from some Uranium Information Newsletters. The February 1988 issue said:

According to the International Atomic Energy Authority Agency, nuclear power plants now generate approximately one-sixth of the world's electricity and, in 1986, produced some 1.5 trillion kW hours of electricity, up 8% from the previous year. The IAEA forecasts that world nuclear generating capacity will increase by 28% from 1986 to 1990, that is from 274 000 to 350 000 MWE and by 16% from 1990 to 1995.

I quote from the March 1988 newsletter:

According to preliminary data compiled by the International Atomic Energy Agency, 23 nuclear power reactors in 8 countries were newly connected to these countries' electricity grids in 1987.

Mr Speaker, if one did not read pro-nuclear material - and I accept that that is what this material is - and simply listened to the media, one would be surprised to realise that 23 nuclear power reactors were commissioned and connected into power grids in 1987. These added slightly more than 23 000 MW of electricity to world generating capacity.

This brought the total number of nuclear electricity plants worldwide to 417 and their combined generating capacity to almost 297 000 MW. Nuclear plants now operate in 26 different countries and account for more than 16% of total world electricity production.

In some countries, nuclear power units are responsible for 50% to 70% of total electricity generated. Those countries which brought new units on to line in 1987 were: Bulgaria 1, Canada 1, France 4, Czechoslovakia 1, Hungary 1, Japan 1, Spain 1, United States 8 and Russia 5. Despite regular forecasts that nuclear power in the USA will not survive, the USA heads the list with 8 units brought on-line and an increase in nuclear electricity production for the year of approximately 10% over 1986. The atom produced about 17% of the nation's electricity in 1987 and continues to be the second-largest source after coal.

Mr Speaker, I will not quote more from that newsletter although there is much interesting material in it for anyone who wishes to follow the nuclear debate. At least it dispels the myth that the nuclear industry in the world is in decline and is likely to go out of business over time. Clearly, that is not the case.

Any rational person should consider the position of Japan. It is a tiny country with an enormous electricity consumption because of its manufacturing industry. It has a climate where you freeze to death if you do not have some form of energy in winter. Because it has virtually no natural energy

resources of its own, one can realise that a country like that must have access to enormous quantities of energy elsewhere. If access to those resources is not permitted voluntarily, it would have to go out and obtain them because governments cannot stand by and watch their people freeze or starve to death.

What I would like to see from the opposition benches is a little more leadership. In the past, the member for MacDonnell has said in the House - I forget what the subject was at the time - that on certain issues politicians should take the lead instead of sitting back and asking what their constituents think. He believes that there are issues that arise from time to time on which politicians should advocate a certain course of action to their constituents if they believe it is a rational one. This is an issue on which they might care to give a lead.

In typical fashion, the member for Nhulunbuy said that it was too hard because we could not convince the Australian people that we should be involved in the full nuclear fuel cycle. He said that, even if it made sense, it would not happen because no government would be game to become involved because it would be thrown out of office. To him, that is the end of the story; it is all over. Why doesn't he take the lead? Why doesn't he enter into the debates in the Labor Party? Why isn't he a strong advocate if he believes that we should be in the nuclear fuel cycle as advocated by the minister?

Mr Speaker, I will not use the whole of my time. I think that enough has been said on this issue over and over again today. I support the minister's statement. I believe that it could be a catalyst because other people in this country might sit up and take some notice, given that we now have politicians who are prepared to produce public documents advocating the involvement of this country in an industry that we could simply step into because we have the opportunities right in front of us.

Mr COULTER (Mines and Energy): Mr Deputy Speaker, I thank honourable members for their commitment and their involvement in this debate, particularly the Minister for Industries and Development. Although he did not use the full time available to him, he really got to the crux of the matter: it is time to stand up and be counted. Today, the opposition has demonstrated that it is not prepared to be counted. There has never been more than 1 member opposite in the Chamber at any time throughout this debate. On this side of the House - and full credit to government members - the benches have been filled throughout the entire debate. I would like to congratulate members on this side of the House.

Mr Ede: Rubbish!

Mr COULTER: The lone member for the opposition now chooses to denigrate this side of the House. The facts speak for themselves. There is 1 member present on the opposition benches at the moment and there are 11 members on this side of the House.

Mr Deputy Speaker, let us talk about the honourable member for MacDonnell. He tabled papers about Greenpeace and told us what a wonderful fellow Tony Webb was. He is a self-proclaimed prophet and I will speak more about that in a moment. These papers talk about the research assistant to Frank Cook, British member of parliament for Stockton North, Director of Radiation and Health Information Service, Coordinator of the UK Radiation Roundtable and Coordinator of the Radiation and Health Working Group of the UK Public Health Alliance. They do not talk about Tony Webb at all.

Tony Webb has no credentials. He is a Greenpeace consultant. He has interests in radiation protection, but is not qualified in either radiation physics or biomedicine. He is a self-proclaimed expert. At the radiation protection workshop, attended by over 30 overseas expert and scientists, not one person supported Mr Webb's suggestions in respect of radiation limits. It was considered that Mr Webb's suggestions were probably wrong by a factor of 5. That is the type of person cited by members of the opposition in support of their arguments. That is their authority. What a sham!

On 28 October 1987, the member for MacDonnell made these comments in the House regarding the Office of the Supervising Scientist:

... which is set up to monitor the mining of uranium in the Alligators River region is sited some 2000 miles away in Bondi. One can only assume that the Supervising Scientist and their staff prefer the waves of Bondi to the wetlands of Kakadu, a question of dubious taste as far as I am concerned. Perhaps scientists are in thicker supply down there. I was very concerned to hear that the majority of the OSS staff are stationed in Sydney and not where their job is, and I will put that on the public record.

The member for Fannie Bay referred to politicians standing up to be counted. He was referring to the member for MacDonnell. It is time to be counted. Where was the member for MacDonnell on 28 October 1987? He was putting this issue on the public record. He said that it was a sham and that the Office of the Supervising Scientist should not be stationed at Bondi. I quote him: 'I am concerned ... Perhaps scientists are in thicker supply down there. I was very concerned to hear that the majority of the OSS staff are stationed in Sydney'. Obviously, he got it wrong. Only a third of them are stationed in Sydney. But that is not where their job is. The member for MacDonnell said:

'There may be some innocent explanation. It is not an issue that I have been in an position to pursue with a great deal of vigour. I certainly noted it, however, when Dr Terry Gardner of Ranger Uranium Mines brought it to my attention during our most recent visit. I fail to see any reason why the Office of the Supervising Scientist should not be based in the Territory'.

Those are the words the member for MacDonnell used on 28 October 1987. Today he stood in the Assembly and dared to ridicule me for suggesting that we should do something worthwhile with the Office of the Supervising Scientist. As the member for Fannie Bay said, it is time for politicians to stand and be counted. This type of inconsistency will not be tolerated by the voting public. They have had a gutful of this type of nonsense. I will shortly deal with some of the other nonsense that has been delivered from across the Chamber during this debate, but this is one example. The member for MacDonnell talked about an expert with no credentials, a self-proclaimed prophet who is unknown. He then went on to talk about the Office of the Supervising Scientist, which he himself condemned last October.

A spokesman from Senator Richardson's office has said that my proposal to bring the Office of the Supervising Scientist to Darwin is ridiculous, preposterous and cannot be done because of something in the Fox Report. We have said today that it has cost over \$30m to run the Office of the Supervising Scientist. The annual cost is \$6m. Let us hear what Justice Fox had to say because the spokesman for Senator Richardson said that the current situation has to continue because Justice Fox recommended that in his report.

Let me quote from chapter 17 of the Fox Report, referring to research: 'The operating of this program, which will be an integral part of the ongoing environmental control program, we propose should be coordinated and supervised by an experienced, highly-qualified scientist. We refer to him in this chapter as the supervising scientist'. The word used is 'he' - singular. The member for Koolpinyah will complain about that, of course, because the reference is not to 'she', 'them' or 'persons'. Justice Fox continues: 'He should be appointed as soon as possible after the decision to permit mining, since it is clearly desirable that he be responsible for assembling the group of experts to which we have referred'.

Mr Deputy Speaker, the Office of the Supervising Scientist was to consist of 1 person, not 70 people, with 18 of them relegated to the shores of Bondi. One person was to coordinate these efforts. The Office of the Supervising Scientist was singular, according to Justice Fox, not 70 people. It was not to cost \$6m to run each year or \$30m since it was set up. It was to be a coordinating unit. Under successive governments, including the Fraser government, it has expanded, developed and grown into an organisation that has not contributed a single thing to the development of the uranium industry in Australia today. Another lie has been put to bed. It is very easy to tear apart the opposition's arguments; it is like taking candy from a baby.

The member for Nhulunbuy spoke about statistics and polls that needed to be taken. Let us go back to Canberra on 20 April 1988, when the Minister for Primary Industries and Energy, John Kerin, delivered his statement to parliament on Australian nuclear safeguards in response to allegations contained in the German magazine Der Spiegel. His statement concluded that: 'On the basis of investigations conducted and the information available to the government, there is no evidence that any material subject to Australia's Bilateral Safeguards Agreement has been diverted from peaceful use or that Australia's safeguard requirements have been breached'. That is from a transcript from the ministerial statement.

We should not be fooled by the actions of Canada in this whole matter. I was in Paris when the Minister for Environment and the Arts was put up as the facilitator at the United Nations seminar in Paris to consider world heritage listing for Kakadu. His name was put forward as the chairman for the day. The motion to register Kakadu was put forward by Ambassador Clark from Canada and seconded by that wimp, the Ambassador for Australia. He would have been put against a wall and shot years ago but is tolerated in Australia's current economic climate when the nation continues to get itself into debt. The member for Stuart might not like it, but that is the fact. The Canadians have been smarter than us. They have infiltrated the International Union of Conservation and Nature. Thursfield and all his mates have taken that over. It is a sham.

In the meantime, the Canadians are blowing up mountains and draining lakes. I cannot lower my voice in speaking about this because Canada's actions have been so transparent, although the member for Stuart cannot see through them. The Canadians have taken our markets from us. Our founding fathers, who put the constitution of this great nation together, must be rolling in their graves. I would hate to come across Sir Henry Parkes in a dark corner of hell or heaven if he had found out that I was not strong enough to beat this Canadian conspiracy which has been supported by the Australian government. I have seen photographs of the gentleman and Sir Henry Parkes looks like a pretty angry man, judging from his beard and the look I see in his eyes. I would not like to be with Sir Henry Parkes in that dark alley in heaven or hell when he finds out what sort of a sham is being pulled over Australia by the Canadians.

The same thing happened when we tried to get into the trade in endangered species. Who held us out? The member for Katherine will remember, as he was involved in conservation at that time. The Vietnamese held us out. Why? Because they had the market cornered and they did not want Australia involved. They wanted us out of the crocodile market. That is why it took us 7 years to get into the trade in endangered species. How stupid are we, in Australia, to believe that the world owes us a living and that everything will be all right whilst the Canadians are out there. They have taken over the UNESCO headquarters. They have taken over the International Union of Conservation and Nature and we sit here wondering what is happening. We wonder why we are in debt, what the problem is, why we cannot get into world markets. If we are that stupid, we deserve everything that is happening to us. However, the pendulum is swinging. It is coming back in favour of our forefathers and the people who made this great land. We are starting to get smart. We are starting to realise just what is happening in Australia today and what the Canadians have done to us. In South Africa, uranium is being mined 4 km below the earth's surface where the temperature of the rock is 60° C. For every tonne of ore pumped out, 10 t of cold air must be pumped down the shaft.

Things are turning. People now believe in Australia and that our markets and the uranium we can supply are accessible. Our safety standards are viable and the economics of kicking a little bit of dirt off the top of the earth and getting a shovel and picking up uranium are possible. In spite of federal governments of either political persuasion, Australia is now in the position, as I pointed out today, to capture those markets. We can do it.

In France the same thing happens. They can mine their uranium over there. They do not have a problem with that. There is a cost factor, that is all. It is more expensive for them to mine their own uranium, and they are looking for overseas markets. In the United Kingdom, there is public acceptance at Cellarfield, which is the British nuclear installation and the site for expansion of its reprocessing industry. It has been named by the English Tourist Board as the country's fastest-growing tourist attraction. The new \$5m visitors' centre, due to open in June, is expected to attract some 150 000 visitors.

The sole member of the opposition in this Chamber turns his back in shame. And so he should, Mr Deputy Speaker. He cannot accept the facts.

Mr Ede: You are too loud.

Mr COULTER: He should listen, because there is more to come.

The member for Stuart admitted here today that the current Territory ALP policy on uranium mining is illogical - and it was nice of him to tell us that - and unsatisfactory. It is nice to have him on the public record saying that his own party's policy is both illogical and unsatisfactory. That policy has only just been introduced. It was the policy that was to bring the party out into reality. That enormous step forward into the world of realism has been described here today, just 4 weeks after the ALP conference, as illogical and unsatisfactory. Mr Speaker, this is what we are asked to make judgments on today. The Deputy Leader of the Opposition says that the ALP's policy is both illogical and unsatisfactory. It was introduced very recently, and now the Deputy Leader of the Opposition says that he has known for a long time that it is not realistic. Where was he at the conference and what did he have to say there?

Turning to the contribution of the Leader of the Opposition, what a pathetic effort! It sickened me to have to stay in this Assembly and hear him speak in this debate. He accused us of bad timing. What the Territory government does is in the best interests of the Territory and has nothing to do with any game-playing, number-crunching or factional disputes within the Labor Party. It just so happens that I ventured into this campaign some 3 years ago, and I am committed to this cause because it is inevitable that Australia will enter into the nuclear fuel cycle. It is as simple as that, and I will not stand here today and be accused of bad timing by the Leader of the Opposition, just because the far left, the centre left, the centre right, the half left or the right left is considering the issue or whatever.

This is the time of reality, the time of reckoning, the time for people to stand up and be counted, as the member for MacDonnell has said on many occasions. It is good to see him back in the Chamber. In any case, the Territory's submission to the Commonwealth on the nuclear industry is due to be given to Minister Kerin at the AMEC this week. In Fremantle a year ago, I promised him that I would provide him the submission. In his statement, he said that the Northern Territory would provide that information to him, and I will. I will deliver it to him on Friday. I understand that it is agenda item No 4 at the meeting. The ALP National Conference has played no part in this schedule. I did not set the date for the AMEC meeting; that is a Commonwealth prerogative. It has been called for this Friday and I will deliver the goods.

The member for Barkly wants to give up without a fight. Sure, it is a hard job convincing the federal government, but the Territory has been leading the struggle to bring common sense and reality to this debate, and it will continue to do so. The fight will not be won by rolling over, as the member for Barkly seems to want to do. As Territorians, we have to take this challenge to the people ...

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

Mr FIRMIN (Ludmilla): Mr Deputy Speaker, I move that the minister be granted an extension of time.

Motion agreed to.

Mr COULTER: Mr Deputy Speaker, thank you very much. I thank honourable members for their interest in this particular subject and I note the interjection from the opposition, asking me to sit down.

Mr Bell: Yes, sit down.

Mr COULTER: Members opposite had nothing to offer in this debate and now they hate to hear the truth coming at them.

My statement today was essentially a report on the progress of the Territory government's move towards the inevitable nuclear future. That future will be determined largely by the federal government, but that does not mean that the Territory has to sit on its hands and watch the world go by. Members opposite are on a roster, Mr Deputy Speaker. One comes in and another goes out.

I believe we will advance the tide of public opinion for Australia's involvement in the nuclear industry if we continue to promote community debate. The Territory's positive case is based on fact and certainty, and in

the end that must win the day. Mr Deputy Speaker, if you keep telling the truth, you do not have to remember what you have said, because the reality is that it will come true. The NUEXCO report, the Leslie Kemeny report, the comments from Secretary Herrington, and the contribution from Dr Rosin from the International Atomic Energy Association's Nuclear Safety Division, have all happened recently. The scientists involved in the monitoring of radioactivity throughout the world, who have been in Darwin just recently, are factually qualified, not like Mr Tony Webb who happens to be the self-proclaimed prophet of the antinuclear industry and has no qualifications whatsoever. The developments I outlined in my statement can happen; that is fact.

If we wait for the inevitable decision and do not prepare ourselves for it, we will miss the opportunities when they arise. The task is to get the Territory ready so that we can grasp those opportunities and be a jump ahead of the states which, when the political climate changes, will embrace nuclear energy in a twinkling.

Some speakers in this debate have talked about public opinion on nuclear energy and the need to woo it on a long-term basis. I believe that they are falling into the trap set by the highly-vocal and highly-organised antinuclear lobby. National surveys show consistently that the substantial majority of Australians - about 65% - support the economic development of our uranium resources. I have some figures here that indicate the number of people in the Labor Party that support it. The Morgan Gallup Poll conducted a nationwide survey in September 1987 and 64% of respondents were in favour of developing and exporting uranium. In September 1986, the figure was 63%. Is it any wonder Labor is in trouble in places like NSW and is about to be in trouble in places like Victoria and Western Australia, which additionally has to deal with the imposition of a gold tax? In September 1987, 64% of ALP voters were in favour of developing our uranium industry. Those are the facts. 64% of the ALP's own members said: 'Let's get into it!'. The ALP wonders why it is in trouble, why it is losing seats around the place. As I said before, it must be as nervous as a long-tailed cat in a room full of rocking chairs. It is in trouble. It needs to wake up to itself and it needs to do that very quickly.

National surveys are consistently showing that a substantial majority of Australians support economic development of our uranium resources. These are not bad figures and, as politicians, we should be aware of them and recognise them. If we had 65% support, we would be feeling pretty safe about any issue. It only seems as if vast numbers of people oppose nuclear development because the antinuclear lobby makes a big noise and is treated with undeserved reverence by the federal government and many sections of the media. In reality, it is Australian politicians who really need educating about nuclear energy and the benefits which can flow to the Australian community.

I sincerely hope that the Territory delegates to the ALP National Conference in Hobart will put the case of the Territory people to that forum. Whilst on that subject, let me go back to events in Hobart just a few short years ago, and refer to the Hogg amendment. Honourable members will be aware of what was done to Mr Hogg, the national secretary of the ALP. People in the party tried to get rid of him but he did a Lazarus and came back. It was actually a better resurrection than that of Lazarus because Hogg came back with renewed vigour. However, it was the Hogg amendment which gave us the 3-mines policy, this ridiculous policy which has been agreed to by members on the opposition benches. The amendment was seconded by none other than Senator Bob Collins. That is how we got into the situation we are in today.

In those days, many people in the ALP wanted a no-uranium policy, a policy to leave it in the ground and close down the mines. However, Mr Hogg stood up and said 'Let's have a 3-mines policy'. His motion was seconded by Senator Bob Collins.

That is how we got into the situation we are in today. And let us not forget, the policy is not for any 3 mines; it specifically refers to Nabarlek, Ranger, and Roxby Downs. What a shame, Mr Deputy Speaker. Rex Connor would be very disappointed if he knew what was going on today. On a recent 'Hypotheticals' in Sydney, I spoke with a previous Prime Minister of Australia, Gough Whitlam, and said that I would have him back today. He asked why and I explained that, if that was the case, we would have a uranium industry in Australia today. Rex Connor was about to develop the uranium industry, and we have notes and inter-office memoranda to prove it. Those were the days when members of the Labor Party were prepared to stand up and be counted, but not today. Today, they are a mob of wimps.

The matter is far too serious for any game-playing strategy. The submission has always been scheduled to be presented to the federal Minister for Primary Industries and Energy and the Australian Minerals and Energy Council, which meets in Adelaide on Friday. Nevertheless, if the submission offers any assistance to the members of the Territory delegation to the ALP National Conference, I urge them to use it. I understand that one delegate, will be no other than the Leader of the Opposition, Terry Smith. After his contribution to today's debate, it will be interesting to see what he actually brings forward at that conference. If I were a member of the Territory ALP, I would be concerned at sending such a delegate to fight for me on any issue. On this issue, Mr Deputy Speaker, he might as well stay at home. At the very least, I would hope that the Territory delegates would speak against those who keep putting up the nonsense about a lack of world uranium markets. The NUEXCO paper I have from Colorado puts that argument to bed.

Somebody asked me to comment on a book called 'If we dig it up, can we sell it?' I said: 'Look, I'll get you on the phone to KEPCO in Korea. You tell the people there that you have 3000 t of yellowcake. Tell them what the price is and see if they will buy it'. That's the way you can sell uranium. Never mind the academics, the people who have been educated beyond their intelligence. Let the market forces take care of things and let us see what happens. It is vital to the future of the Territory that a nuclear industry be developed here. The great drawback to our progress is our lack of a substantial manufacturing base. Small business will grow, tourism will grow, horticulture will grow and the mining and energy industries will grow, but we lack a large-scale manufacturing sector and there is no real prospect in the short and medium term that one will develop. The nuclear industry, however, would fill that gap absolutely. It would provide employment opportunities and an economic stimulus unrivalled by anything in the Territory's history. The Territory government has the political will to bring that about. We need only look at the Cap de la Hague development to see that. It is Europe's largest project and is costing \$12 000m. That could happen here in the Territory. We are talking about 15 000 jobs during construction, 5000 jobs during operation and 20 000 jobs as the multiplier effect comes into action.

Mr Deputy Speaker, in one word, the opposition's contribution to this debate has been pathetic.

Motion agreed to.

MATTER OF PUBLIC IMPORTANCE
Radiology Services at Royal Darwin Hospital

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, the following: the Northern Territory government's failure to provide adequate radiology services at the Royal Darwin Hospital.

Yours sincerely,
Neil Bell,
Member for MacDonnell.

Is the proposed discussion supported? It is supported.

Mr BELL (MacDonnell): Mr Deputy Speaker, yesterday the Minister for Health and Community Services unburdened himself by spilling thousands of words about the Royal Darwin Hospital onto the floor of this Assembly. Those of us who had to try to sift through what he said found his statement to be, to say the least, incomplete. It gave a history of failure without addressing the causes, particularly in respect of radiology services. It was a list of excuses and it was a list of excuses without apology.

Today, I will address only 1 facet of the hospital's problems. I shall examine in detail the radiology services. I will demonstrate that the problems of the unit are a direct and inevitable consequence of this government's wilful neglect. By putting the radiology unit under the microscope, I will allow the public of the Northern Territory to judge the value of the minister's utterances on the hospital in general.

Yesterday and today, I was engaged in long and detailed discussion about the hospital's radiology service and was given the medical perspective on the life expectancy of the equipment. This was estimated to be 18 months for each of the pieces in casualty, the general room and the screening room. This is very understandable when one discovers that the equipment was installed in 1979 and, even at that time, was out of date. It seems that it was obtained cheaply and was therefore a bargain. We are lucky that some of it still functions. To add insult to injury, it seems that the equipment was never properly installed. It seems that the aim of the exercise was to establish a cheap and second-rate facility in as short a time as possible. Staff have come and gone from the radiological unit. There is little doubt that their departure has been a consequence of frustration associated with attempting to cope with the less than adequate equipment. The neglect of the equipment and its failure to provide a suitable working environment can only be described as scandalous. Even more disgraceful is the associated increased patient risk and neglect.

Mr Deputy Speaker, let me take you on a guided tour of these radiological services. Let me take you on a conducted tour of some of the rooms in the radiology department. In the ultrasound room, we have overworked, frustrated staff attempting to cram as many people into the over-booked system as possible. They are flat out with routine work, let alone squeezing in an emergency. If there is additional pressure, no backup is available. Another piece of ultrasound equipment is not considered fit enough to cope with any

minor demand, let alone the flow-on from the major unit. Moving on to the screening room, only a moment is required to see that its equipment can succinctly be described as useless.

I was most interested to visit the angiography room last Monday. Its equipment is renowned for its failure on at least 50% of procedures. Given that the room is not air-conditioned and that staff are required to wear protective gear, the environment can become very oppressive. With a number of staff trying to cope with malfunctioning equipment in a warm enclosed space, it is to be expected that stress levels are enormous. At least those staff do not have to be concerned about a sterile environment. However, that is the case for the procedures room where a scrubbed radiologist soon finds himself and the patient tangled up in catheters ad infinitum. Mr Deputy Speaker, if you are unlucky enough to be a patient in the screening and angiography room, it is likely that you may be exposed to additional levels of radiation. For example, if the lift happens to move and create a break in the power supply to the equipment, the possibility is that the equipment will not work and the procedure will have to be repeated, exposing the patient to further radiation. This problem has also caused extremes in the quality of x-rays as well. Some may be completely black or totally washed-out. A re-run is then required, and we all know what that means: more time, and more risk to the patient. It is in the same room, in addition to another general procedures room, that the film can be relied upon to produce a reasonable diagnostic quality for only 50% of the procedures.

Mr Deputy Speaker, let us move on to casualty, where a person needs to be most concerned. Even the staff are worried. They have taken to lodging their daily complaints on a notice board. What they are most concerned about is that extra time that a traumatised patient is subjected to in order to obtain a reasonable x-ray. It would be sufficiently horrifying to be admitted to casualty as a road accident victim without having to endure these problems.

Most of the public would be shocked to hear about the state of public equipment which has been paid for by the taxpayer and which is being kept in a state of neglect by the ignorance of this government. More people would be shocked if they knew that, if they drove to Jabiru on Monday, the visiting radiographer could obtain a better picture on the equipment there than can be obtained in the hospital. I suppose the truth here is that, if you are going to have a road accident, you are better off having it close to Jabiru and nowhere near Darwin. Most general practitioners in Darwin are aware of the problem. They do not use the hospital service. It takes too long and they can get a faster result elsewhere. Is it any wonder that the results are slow? There are not enough staff and when the work requires additional runs, there must be an obvious block in the system.

Let me turn to the history of review. This is a subject that the minister might be able to shed some light on. He has not been prepared to shed any light on in the 2 questions that I have already asked in these sittings. He was not prepared to shed any light on the matter during his summing-up on his statement yesterday or in the statement itself, a ream of paper which said absolutely nothing.

Anyone new to Darwin might imagine that the difficulties which I have explained in relation to the radiology equipment have stemmed from a recently-created situation. Those people who have been around for some time are, unfortunately, painfully aware of its long history. They know that the department has been plagued by a chronic history of reviews, all trying to get to the bottom of the problem. There was one in 1982 by Ms J. Prince and

another in 1983 by Graham Tidswell from the South Australian Medical Centre. Engineering reviews have taken place regularly and their recommendations are consistent. They continue to express concern about the malfunctioning, technically-outdated equipment which has a short-term life expectancy. They have proposed replacement programs.

We heard the minister say yesterday that the 1983 proposal was 'not accepted by hospital management'. We also heard him say that more recent material had formed the basis of a future plan. My perusal of those reports suggests very little inconsistency in the recommendations. The only variation on the theme came yesterday when the Minister for Health and Community Services referred to a further 1985 review by a Dr Shiel from the Commonwealth Department of Veterans' Affairs. Dr Shiel apparently thought that the equipment was okay. He appears to be in a distinct minority. The recommendations from his report had a very interesting outcome. He indicated that a CT scanner was required. What eventuated was the establishment of an extremely private outfit at the Royal Darwin Hospital. Reviews have become commonplace in the radiology department. Why, then, is it necessary to establish a 2-month review? Why does it take so long to determine what is so obvious to everyone? With a lack of professional expertise on the team, it may necessitate that extra bit of time.

Let me turn now to the history of breakdown. Mr Deputy Speaker, if you think the history of reviews is tedious, you would be worn out by the extent of equipment breakdowns since 1982. Some areas stand out, however, in the frequency of breakdowns. The room with the most depressing history of failure is the angiography room. This is particularly disturbing when you realise that the procedures there are delicate and high-risk at the best of times. It would not be much fun to have a catheter inserted, only to have the equipment fail and to be subject to a re-run.

I might say at this point that I have obtained briefings in respect of some of the procedures in the angiography room. I have received briefings from Dr Sutton who, even if she causes a degree of embarrassment to the Minister for Health and Community Services, has provided an important public service to the people of the Northern Territory by being prepared to stand up and be counted. Some of the stories I have heard about the difficulties that are experienced in the angiography room - and I have learned a fair bit about it in the past 2 or 3 weeks - have been absolutely horrifying.

I said earlier that the procedures are not carried out in a sterile environment, basically because the room is too crowded for that to be possible. I point out to the minister that that situation is nothing short of a scandal. His attempts to whitewash the situation by announcing a further review do him no credit. I contend that those conditions place in jeopardy people who need good treatment from public hospitals in the Northern Territory.

During 1987, the accident emergency area experienced equipment failure for 12 days and the 'specials' room, in which a range of highly-specialised procedures are undertaken, was unavailable for 31 days. If we consider the Phillips screening room, the breakdown figures are not even worth recording. The equipment is 15 years old and would only be used as a last resort.

I hear the minister telling me that he thinks this is pathetic. That's fine. He will have 15 minutes to tell us why contentions like that are wrong. You tell me why it is pathetic, Mr Deputy Speaker. I do not think you will be able to. I say the equipment in the Phillips screening room is 15 years old

and is only used as a last resort. The minister describes that statement as pathetic but I think it is a significant charge which needs a response. I am getting a little tired of the abuse which is heaped upon the opposition when it makes objective criticisms which are supported by facts, such as those we have produced for the minister day after day during these sittings.

Mr Deputy Speaker, let us talk about maintenance. It seems that medical engineers have been expressing their concerns for a long time and I hope the Minister for Health and Community Services will address that. The department can only be described as remiss in its lack of attention to their pleas. Any rational planner knows that there is a great deal to be gained by considering future needs and adequately planning for them. That is simple logic. This is particularly so in the Northern Territory where isolation contributes to delays in obtaining spare parts and a lack of suitable alternative backup arrangements.

Let us turn for a minute to the government's extraordinary obsession with privatisation. We know that it is hell-bent on privatisation; it believes it will save it money. As a result of the government's desire to save money, a unique situation has developed at the Royal Darwin Hospital. A privately operated CT scanner is located in the midst of all the public equipment. I must say that my visit to the Royal Darwin Hospital to see the radiology equipment was a real eye-opener in that regard. I really fail to understand why we have one particular piece of equipment that needs to be privatised in that way.

Mr Dondas: Are you an expert?

Mr BELL: Mr Deputy Speaker, I hasten to add that ...

Mr Dondas: Just tell me, are you an expert?

Mr BELL: Shut up, will you?

Mr Dondas: I am not going to shut up.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! Both honourable members will address any remarks through the Chair.

Mr BELL: Mr Deputy Speaker, I have already made it clear that I do not claim to be an expert on this equipment, but I do claim to have informed myself. If the honourable backbencher, the former Minister for Health, listens to me, he may learn something.

The opposition does not object to privatisation in principle. However, if it can be used by the radiology staff at the hospital to enable them to provide a service that is accessible to public patients, this makes us wonder what plans are under way to provide a service in the newly-planned private hospital. Will there be a monopoly on service provision, thus boosting the coffers of a lucrative lone operator?

In conclusion, let me say that the standard of the radiology equipment could only be regarded as that affordable by a third-world country, relying on cheap handouts from some rich benefactor. The quality of material produced could hardly be regarded as reliable. Perhaps the Commonwealth has reason to question the data to be provided to the national breast and cervical cancer screening program. The involvement in the program was noticeably belated. Perhaps the department was aware of deficiencies in its equipment, particularly in the the mammographic unit.

The opposition has been adamant in calling for a review of the radiology department - a review which calls upon the expertise of people in the specialised fields of engineering, radiography and radiology. Our terms of reference would include how best to provide a 24-hour service to all public and private patients which is: firstly, cost effective; secondly, up to date technologically; thirdly, efficient; fourthly, comprehensive; and, finally, suitably staffed. The opposition is pleased to have forced the hand of the minister. Through the attention that we have drawn to these difficulties, we have forced him to address the problem.

Mr Speaker, it is the intention of the opposition to notify the Australian Council of Radiologists of the crisis in the Northern Territory service. I am hoping that, in this way, we can get an independent perspective on the quality of the service that is able to be provided with this equipment. I intend to write to the council and advise it of the nature of the debate and the nature of the questions that I have asked of the minister. I dare say that it will be less than impressed with many of his responses. Because the opposition has dealt with this in a thoroughly objective fashion, I expect that I will receive from the council an objective assessment of the quality of the equipment that is provided. To that extent, some objective assessment will once again be able to be provided. We have described to the minister the litany of reviews that have been carried out. I am surprised that he has not seen fit to accept the results of any of them. However, he can rest assured that the opposition's concern in this matter is objective and that we will continue to pursue concerns in an objective manner.

Mr DONDAS (Casuarina): Mr Deputy Speaker, in rising in this debate, I would like to commence by referring to a statement made in the Assembly by the member for MacDonnell yesterday. In reference to the minister's statement, he said: 'Mr Speaker, I take the statement as one of the finest compliments that has ever been paid to me in my 7 years in this Assembly'. Mr Deputy Speaker, I take that last speech as one of the worst made by a member of the opposition in the almost 14 years that I have been in this parliament.

Yesterday afternoon, the minister at least opened the door for reasonable debate with members of the opposition on health services in the Northern Territory. What did we get yesterday afternoon? We got 25 minutes of absolute nonsense from the opposition in relation to radiology and other services provided by the Department of Health. All the member for MacDonnell could do was ridicule the statement made by the Minister for Health and Community Services. He had nothing to say. He made no contribution except to say that he would make a statement in the next couple of days by means of an MPI. He did not want to shoot his bullets off yesterday and respond immediately to the minister because he knew that, at some stage during these sittings, the opposition would raise an MPI and he could then have a go at the minister. In nearly 14 years, I have never heard a worse contribution from a member in relation to a comprehensive statement on services provided in the Northern Territory. I could copy the member for Nhulunbuy and resort to screaming, but I will take a reasonable line.

Even in the last 20 minutes, the member for MacDonnell made a fool of himself. For 20 minutes, he read a statement that made no sense whatever. I can hear interjections from members opposite, but I will not pay any heed to them.

Yesterday, the member for MacDonnell treated the minister's statement with contempt. He had the opportunity to debate health services at length but, because he intended to raise an MPI today, he did not take that opportunity.

He engaged in a filibuster and wasted the time of the House. He did not talk about the issues. He spoke about the open day at the Royal Darwin Hospital but he did not say that it was organised by the department to let the community know what was occurring in that facility.

We are not only talking about the Royal Darwin Hospital. We are talking about health services throughout the Northern Territory, an area of 1.3 million km². We are not talking about services in Dubbo or Geelong, which have populations of 70 000 or 80 000. We are talking about Northern Territory health services, which are the best in Australia for a population like ours.

The Leader of the Opposition is sitting there making notes. He will be heard in the media criticising the work of the professionals. However, his criticism will not be based on fact. It will be based on hearsay. Let me talk about hearsay. When I was Minister for Health many years ago, a guy was discharged from the Royal Darwin Hospital and he went to the the Marrara Hotel. The Marrara is a drinking hole frequented by many prominent citizens of this particular area. He told his mates that he had had a heart attack on Thursday and had just been discharged. This was Saturday afternoon. He told the amazed drinkers in the bar that the hospital was short of beds and wanted to get rid of him.

The other side of the story was that the guy was admitted to hospital on the Thursday night because he had wind around his heart that gave him flatulence. If you go to the hospital complaining of chest pains, they will place you in the emergency section and monitor your condition for 48 hours. After monitoring him, they told him that there was nothing wrong with him. He had not had a heart attack and therefore he was discharged. This guy went to the Marrara Hotel and claimed that the Department of Health had kicked him out of hospital. The true story was that there was nothing wrong with him.

The point that I am trying to make is that the Leader of the Opposition listens to complaints from people but he will not test those claims. An instance of that was reported in the Sunday Territorian of 8 May 1988. There are 2 sides to a story. The Leader of the Opposition is very quick to pick up complaints but he does not bother to check them out. If this particular chap was in intensive care on Friday and, on Saturday, was drinking at the Marrara Hotel, I would question it myself.

The Minister for Health and Community Services has defended the position in respect of the radiology unit. The member for MacDonnell, who is no longer in the House, spoke about the services that we inherited in 1979. The minister made the point that equipment has a certain life span, and that he accepts the recommendations of his department in relation to the replacement of equipment replaced. We do not want Territorians to have a second- or third-rate service. Before self-government, if something was seriously wrong with you, they sent you to Adelaide. That resulted in family members being separated. In 1988, services are provided here that are recognised as being the equivalent of, if not better than, the services in other parts of Australia.

If there is cause for complaint, there is a medical board that can deal with that. Through his doctor, a person can write to the board and complain about the services that he has received at the hospital. We did not hear of any correspondence between patients of the Royal Darwin Hospital and the medical board. All the member for MacDonnell could talk about was the SPIEL awards. We will have the SPIEL awards at Christmas time. What do the SPIEL awards have to do with debate on a statement about health services? All he wanted to do was waste time.

If honourable members opposite were concerned about the level of health services provided by the Northern Territory government, yesterday was a good time to raise those concerns. The Hansard report of the honourable member's speech yesterday covered 10 pages. He had every opportunity to raise points but all he did was weep crocodile tears. He wanted to keep his powder dry for today, 1 day before the termination of these sittings. He wanted to demonstrate to his colleagues, if there is to be a spill, that at least he tries to hit the government over the head. What a load of nonsense he has come up with.

Heaven help the opposition and heaven help the Territory if the member for MacDonnell ever becomes Leader of the Opposition. It would be a catastrophe. He did not want to debate the merits of the minister's statement yesterday. All he wanted to do was waste time talking about his SPIEL awards. He wanted to postpone his contribution until today, when it was to be more convenient for him.

The Leader of the Opposition spoke about wilful neglect. Nobody in the Department of Health and Community Services nor any member on this side of the House would accept the proposition that there has been wilful neglect in providing health services within the Northern Territory. The Minister for Health and Community Services said yesterday that \$80m of the Territory budget is spent in providing health services for 150 000 people, some 27 000 of whom are Aboriginal. Expenditure on the Royal Darwin Hospital, which provides services to 70 000 people, is some \$50m. How can that be wilful neglect? The honourable minister fights with his Cabinet colleagues to obtain as many dollars as possible to provide reasonable services. I know what it is like to battle for extra dollars to provide reasonable services. When Bob Collins was Leader of the Opposition, he used to throw a few bouquets around. Not this Leader of the Opposition or his colleagues! They do not recognise that, given our population base and the level of funding that we receive, the services this government provides are equal to the best in Australia. Let them travel overseas and see what kind of services are provided in the United Kingdom or the United States. I am talking about English-speaking countries, not third-world countries. Our services are excellent.

Yesterday, the Minister for Health and Community Services spoke about the appointment of an Aboriginal Territorian to the National AIDS Forum because of her expertise and the way she was promoting the Northern Territory. We have a great deal to be proud of. But no, the member for MacDonnell just knocks and knocks to make political points.

Given the situation in the Labor Party and its caucus, I had wondered what kind of contribution the member for MacDonnell would make. Health is always a good scapegoat. You can always get mileage out of health, as you can from education. But at what cost? The community is starting to wonder what is going on because of the member for MacDonnell's scaremongering about radiological services not being up to scratch.

We know about the young boy who fell off his bike. The Minister for Health and Community Services stated that the treatment of that boy was being investigated by the Department of Health. I trust the minister, as I would trust the Leader of the Opposition if he stood up in this House and said: 'My department is investigating that problem and, once I know the results, I will let you know'. Members of the opposition all laughed when I tried to tell them about the guy who had flatulence around his heart, went into the Intensive Care Unit and was discharged 24 hours later. They laughed. But there are always 2 sides to any story.

Yesterday, the Minister for Health and Community Services told us the story about the gentleman who had been bitten by a snake - or perhaps it was a spider. He outlined the reasons for the precautions the emergency service section of the hospital takes when somebody walks in who says he may have been bitten. All the member for MacDonnell could talk about was being bitten by a spade!

Mr Ede: A spade?

Mr DONDAS: A spade. That is all that he could say in the 20 minutes in response to a statement by the Minister for Health and Community Services. When the member for MacDonnell stood up he said it was the best compliment he had been paid in 7 years. I reckon I can say that that was the worst speech that I have heard in nearly 14 years in this parliament in response to a ministerial statement. It followed all the questions the member for MacDonnell has asked the minister and the diatribe he levelled at him. He should be ashamed of himself. If he ever raises a question about health services in the Northern Territory provided by this government, I will get up and give him a serve again.

Mr SMITH (Opposition Leader): Mr Deputy Speaker, members on this side of the House miss the contributions of the member for Casuarina, because they are so entertaining. It is unfortunate that they do not shed much light on the subject.

This is a serious subject. I do not intend to get emotional about it, but I can say that I find it disappointing that the honourable minister has not given himself 20 minutes to respond in relation to the serious matters which have been raised.

Mr Dondas: He has not responded yet.

Mr SMITH: Now he has left himself with only 15 minutes.

The common ground that the government and the opposition have on this particular matter is that we both want the best possible services in our hospitals throughout the Northern Territory for the people of the Northern Territory. Because members opposite have never been in opposition, they do not understand how it works. We do not sit around in our offices talking amongst ourselves and inventing things with which to harass the government on any particular day of any particular week. When you are in opposition, people come to you with complaints and problems. What we have found on this particular issue is that, over a period of time, a considerable number of people have come to us with complaints about the radiology services at the hospital. There have been complaints from patients and, equally if not more importantly, from professional staff at the hospital. They are complaints that we have all received and which indicate that the best possible service is not presently being provided to the people of the Northern Territory by the radiology unit at the Royal Darwin Hospital.

Mr Dale: Relative to what?

Mr SMITH: I will give an example of what it is relative to. It is relative to the service available at Jabiru. As my colleague the member for MacDonnell said, on comparing the facilities at Jabiru and the facilities at the Royal Darwin Hospital, it is the opinion of the experts at Royal Darwin Hospital that a person is much better ...

Mr Dale: Experts? They're the cleaners. Come on, give yourself some credibility. Which experts?

Mr SMITH: Keep going, I will take up when you have finished.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order!

Mr SMITH: It is much better to use the radiology service at Jabiru than at the Royal Darwin Hospital because the equipment is better and gives a better definition. I would like the minister to comment on that. If he wants confirmation from an expert, I suggest that he might like to watch the ABC TV news tonight and he most likely will get it.

What we have is a situation where, over a period of time, there have been major criticisms of and major problems with the radiology equipment at the Royal Darwin Hospital. That could be for 2 reasons: firstly that it is outmoded and, secondly, that it is malfunctioning.

I can accept the outmoded argument, which the minister has run in these sittings, that new equipment is always coming onto the market and it is very hard for a public hospital, funded from the public purse, to keep up with the latest trends and have the latest equipment. I can also accept that, at times, equipment gets near to the end of its useful life and there may be extra problems with it. But that is not the problem in the radiology unit of the Royal Darwin Hospital. The problem is that some of the equipment there has never been installed properly and, secondly, much of it has been malfunctioning for significant periods of time.

We heard that some of the equipment in the ultrasound unit cannot be used. We have heard the screening room equipment described as useless and that the equipment in the angiography room is failing for at least 50% of the procedures for which it is used. Angiography, as we have heard, is one of the more arduous tests that a person going into hospital has to undertake. If that procedure fails, it is stressful for the person involved and for the person undertaking the procedure. But that is the situation that exists in that particular section of the Royal Darwin Hospital.

That is the bottom line. The Royal Darwin Hospital cannot guarantee that a person walking in off the street today, who requires the use of the radiology facilities at the hospital, will receive treatment with the type of equipment the best possible service would be expected to provide. That is the bottom line and that is the problem we have at Royal Darwin Hospital, and I will say it again. A person walking in off the street and requiring radiology services at the Royal Darwin Hospital has no guarantee, given the present condition of equipment at the hospital, that he will receive the best possible service, which he is entitled to receive as a citizen of the Northern Territory. That is the bottom line. That is the point we have been pushing for the last 2 weeks, and that is the point that the honourable minister will not accept and will not do anything about.

The member for MacDonnell went through a comprehensive list of equipment inadequacies at the Royal Darwin Hospital. I want to make the point that, despite what the member for Casuarina said, no one is criticising the staff at the Royal Darwin Hospital. They are doing their best with the inadequate facilities that they have. This debate is concentrated on a criticism of the inadequate equipment that is there for those staff to work with. What is really annoying and upsetting about this whole business is that the government has known since 1982 that there are significant problems with the radiology

equipment. It had a report in 1982, as my colleague said. There was another report in 1983 and now, in 1988, a further report that indicates the severe level of problems at the Royal Darwin Hospital.

Mr Dale: Who from?

Mr SMITH: I understood that you said yesterday that it was from the medical engineer at the Royal Darwin Hospital. Over a period of several years, those reports have pointed out consistently that there were significant problems with the equipment, that it was malfunctioning on a regular basis and that it was not reliable.

Mr Dale: Have you ever been to the Prince Alfred or to Adelaide? That has outdated equipment.

Mr SMITH: The bottom line, as I have said before, is that the people in the Northern Territory are not receiving the service they are entitled to. To pick up the interjection, it does not matter so much if equipment does not work in an Adelaide hospital, because there is another one down the street. But if the equipment does not work in the Royal Darwin Hospital, we have a major problem because people have no alternative. Equipment is not working in the Royal Darwin Hospital and that is why we are raising the issue.

Now that the minister has taken up the call for an inquiry into the facilities at the Royal Darwin Hospital, he ought to accept that it should be an independent inquiry - I understand the technical term is a peer group inquiry - so that we can attempt to get to the bottom of the problems that we have out there.

As I said previously, it is a matter of concern when people come to you, off the street, and say that they have had problems which have not been diagnosed properly at the Royal Darwin Hospital. It is a matter of concern when professional members of the staff at the Royal Darwin Hospital are prepared to come to you and are prepared to speak out publicly on this matter as some people have. That is a matter of real concern. Of course, the obvious and normal response for the government in that situation is to shoot the messenger. I have no doubt that when the honourable minister gets up he will spray a number of people who have worked at the hospital in a professional capacity and who have worked to the best of their ability with the inadequate equipment that is there. In other words, he will exhibit the typical government tendency in this situation to blame everybody but itself. There is, however, no one to blame but the government. It has known now for 6 years that there are serious problems with the radiology unit at the Royal Darwin Hospital. It has been advised to adopt a proper procedure for replacement and maintenance of equipment in that section of the Royal Darwin Hospital and it is only this year, as I understand it, that it has even started to address that particular matter. The problem we have now is that things have become more serious. The breakdowns are so frequent that they are reflecting on the whole hospital.

I would like the minister to get up and address the points made by my colleague, to go through the problems in each room as the member for MacDonnell has done, and to tell us what he is doing about fixing the problems in each case. That is the only honourable thing the minister can do, when the problems are so serious.

Mr Finch: Are you going to stay here and listen to him?

Mr SMITH: Yes, I am. I will be very interested in what he has to say.

Mr DALE (Health and Community Services): Mr Deputy Speaker, we have just seen a classic illustration of opposition tactics which exemplifies its approach to the overall management of the Northern Territory. In recent times, we have seen the opposition attack the corporate character of Hungerford Refrigeration Pty Ltd and now we see it trying to torpedo the excellent services provided at the Royal Darwin Hospital.

Yesterday, I gave all 6 members of the opposition the opportunity to tell us everything they knew about the good or bad management of the Royal Darwin Hospital, in every section of it. I have given them every opportunity to be briefed by my department and to inspect any part of the hospital because I know how much they need to be informed. They are a complete vacuum of knowledge about what goes on in the Northern Territory. That is an absolute fact of life. Yesterday, the member for MacDonnell said that he would bring on an MPI, either today or on Thursday, depending on further information which might come to light concerning equipment at the Royal Darwin Hospital. That proves beyond any doubt whatsoever that, as of 24 hours ago, the opposition had absolutely nothing to contribute in terms of criticism of the Royal Darwin Hospital management or its radiology section.

Mr Deputy Speaker, do you know what the Leader of the Opposition has done today? Remember how I said that he had got hold of a young boy from his electorate ...

Mr Smith: He came from your electorate, actually.

Mr DALE: ... and told a story to the effect that every person intending to use the Royal Darwin Hospital should be terrified of the service they would receive there? He used that child for his own political point-scoring!

Mr Deputy Speaker, do you know why the member for MacDonnell said that he 'might' bring on an MPI? Do you know why the opposition could not debate the issues yesterday? It was because the opposition wanted to wait until a former employee of the hospital, a Dr Sutton, went on television holding up x-ray films, one taken at Jabiru and another apparently taken at the Royal Darwin Hospital. She was on television tonight. The opposition expects that the people of the Northern Territory, having seen that, will be utterly horrified and will want to sack the minister. What a beat-up! It is completely irresponsible!

Let me address the issue of radiation. Radiation safety at Royal Darwin Hospital is enforced by 2 pieces of related legislation. The Radiographers Act governs the use of x-ray equipment and the Radiation Safety Control Act is concerned primarily with radiation leakage from the x-ray machines, the occupational safety of the radiographers and other hospital staff, and the safety of the public. My information comes from a briefing paper from the Chief Medical Officer which I table for the edification of the members opposite. By the way, the member for MacDonnell got his little shot of radiation at the hospital the other day because an inspection was actually being carried out while he was there. I am sure it will do him more good than harm.

Mr Bell: What an absurd thing to say, Don.

Mr DALE: Mr Speaker, the opposition's criticisms today were nothing more than irrational verbiage unless they can tell me what expertise they based

their statements on. I will have a guess. I will say that the opposition had only 1 informant: Dr Sutton, a person who is disgruntled and upset because a submission which she put to me was not accepted.

Mr Smith: Here we go!

Mr DALE: I will go no further on that matter. The member for MacDonnell made 4 points amongst all his verbiage. One related to radiation levels and I have dealt with that. Another was that there are not enough staff in the radiology unit at the Royal Darwin Hospital. Do you know what the opposition's informant would have done if her proposal had been accepted? She would have cut staff by 3 in the first year and 5 in the next. She intended to cut the staff of the radiology unit by 8 within 2 years. This is the person who advised the opposition that the section is understaffed!

The member for MacDonnell went on to talk about the length of time it takes to get photographs done and talked about the frequency of breakdowns. I have never argued about the machinery breaking down and I informed the House yesterday that I had the matter in hand.

I want to refer to another part of Dr Sutton's submission, which was not accepted. It contained a plan for the replacement of equipment over 3 years. That is exactly what I have in place anyhow.

Mr Smith: Your plan was over 5 years.

Mr DALE: I said yesterday that, in this coming financial year, I was putting in a bid of \$1.5m for replacement of equipment. Do you recall that?

Mr Smith: Yes. Over 5 years.

Mr DALE: Do you know what the friendly doctor's submission said? In phase 1, which related to the replacement of equipment at the Royal Darwin Hospital radiology section - equipment which, incidentally, she intended to use for the first 12 months - her bid for equipment replacement was \$306 000, as opposed to our proposition of \$1.45m. Who has the best proposal as far as equipment replacement is concerned?

Mr Deputy Speaker, I have here the 1985 report compiled by Dr Shiel. If members opposite wish to check his credentials, I am sure that they will see that he has all the letters in the world after his name and that he is a highly-respected person. He said that the hospital had its own team of service technicians, which he was quite amazed at. The member for MacDonnell can sit down. I am going to table the document because I want to educate him on this subject. Dr Shiel said that: 'The resident technicians are skilled in the department's general equipment and down time is minimal'. The report is full of compliments. 'From my observation, the standard of clinical radiology in the department is of a high order'. He draws attention to the need for a CT scanner, and we have subsequently obtained one. Mr Deputy Speaker, I table that report for the education of the members opposite.

The member for MacDonnell was looking for some advice from people in the south. I would recommend that he contact a Dr David Wigg from the Royal Darwin Hospital and a Dr Graham Morgan, whose location I am not sure of. They are both members of the Royal Australian College of Radiologists. An article published in The Australian of 16 May stated that:

'Nine thousand cancer patients would be denied radiotherapy this year because of an Australia-wide shortage of facilities and personnel', the Royal Australian College of Radiologists said yesterday. The Director of the Department of Radiation Oncology at Royal Adelaide Hospital, Dr David Wigg, and the Secretary of the Radiation Oncology Standing Committee, Dr Graham Morgan, said it would take a decade to bring the services back up to standard.

The problems that we are facing have not come about because of poor management. We have a reasonable number of breakdowns, considering the high-tech equipment we have at the Royal Darwin Hospital.

Let me make just one other interesting point. We apparently have a problem with the professional people in the area of radiography. The problem is that the equipment to be used for a particular purpose is selected at the whim of a particular radiologist. That can cause some problems in receiving advice about what equipment should be acquired. I accept that the opposition has taken its advice from Dr Sutton. I would suggest that members opposite should also talk to Dr Morgan, Dr Bolger and Dr Wieteska. I know that the Leader of the Opposition had a chat to Dr Whitlock about 2½ weeks ago. Since he has not quoted from those discussions, I am sure that he did not get any satisfaction from them.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I do not think that I need add any more. I said that we had the Shiel Report. I said yesterday that, as a consequence of that report, we have put in place a CT scanner. We have also purchased 5 different pieces of equipment, so our program has been ongoing. We have a first-class medical engineering section at the Royal Darwin Hospital. By the way, that is the next section that I will be evaluating, as part of the program I started 12 months ago, not at the whim of the member for MacDonnell whose head has only been filled with information about the radiology section during the last 24 hours. He has proven that beyond any shadow of doubt.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I will not take up any more of this House's time. It takes no more than 10 minutes to convince this House and the people of the Northern Territory that members opposite do nothing but scaremonger in their efforts to denigrate services, be they in the private sector or the public sector. There is a single saving grace: the people of the Northern Territory do not listen to them.

TABLED PAPER
Standing Orders Committee
Fourth Report

Mr SPEAKER: Honourable members, I present the fourth report of the Standing Orders Committee. The report deals with:

1. debate in the committee of the whole when considering the annual Appropriation Bill; and
2. answering of questions asked on previous days.

Mr COULTER (Leader of Government Business): Mr Speaker, I move that the report be printed.

Motion agreed to.

Mr COULTER (Leader of Government Business): Mr Speaker, I move that the report be adopted.

Mr BELL (MacDonnell): Mr Speaker, for the benefit of honourable members, this has caught me rather by surprise. I think that the ...

Mr Dale: You just have to say something ...

Mr BELL: Oh, shut up will you, Don. I am sick of the sound of your voice.

Mr SPEAKER: Order!

Mr Dale: Of course you are, Sunshine.

Mr SPEAKER: The honourable minister will withdraw that reference to the honourable member.

Mr DALE: Sunshine, Mr Speaker? I withdraw that comment, Mr Speaker.

Mr SPEAKER: Honourable members must be addressed by their correct titles.

Mr BELL: Mr Speaker, I apologise for any offence I may have caused you or, dare I say, the Minister for Health and Community Services.

I am rather surprised that the adoption of this report has not been accompanied by any comment.

Mr Coulter: You did not send your representative to the meeting, and now you are going to debate it.

Mr SPEAKER: Order!

Mr BELL: Yes, I am going to debate it because it is a fairly important issue.

Mr Coulter: It would have been nice if your members had turned up at the meeting, wouldn't it?

Mr BELL: I will pick up the interjection of the Leader of Government Business. I did attend the meeting. My colleague, the member for Arnhem, was unable to attend that particular meeting. I extended an apology for him.

I believe that the subject of this report deserves some consideration in the House's time. If the Leader of Government Business insists on interjecting and wants to raise the heat in this particular debate, I am more than happy to accommodate him. I have no intention of conducting a debate over these particular issues, which are important to the House's business, in any fashion other than that in which they were discussed inside the committee room at lunchtime. However, if the Leader of Government Business insists on behaving like a job, I am more than happy to accommodate him.

Mr COULTER: A point of order, Mr Speaker! You have just ruled that members shall be addressed by their correct title, and yet the member for MacDonnell is clearly not interested in adopting ...

Mr SPEAKER: Order! There is a point of order.

Mr BELL: May I speak to the point of order, Mr Speaker?

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The Leader of Government Business will cease his interjections. There is a point of order. The honourable member will be asked to withdraw that reference.

Mr BELL: Mr Speaker, I did not refer to the Leader of Government Business as a yobbo. I said if he behaved in the manner one would associate with a job ...

Mr SPEAKER: The reference or the innuendo was there. The honourable member must withdraw.

Mr BELL: I withdraw unreservedly, Mr Speaker, but I will confess that my patience is being tried rather beyond its limits. Having to listen to the interjections of the Leader of Government Business on top of 10 minutes of nonsense from the Minister for Health and Community Services is a little bit more than I can bear. I suggest to you, Mr Speaker, that the substance of this report and the concerns of the Leader of Government Business about the standing orders of this House, is exemplified by the sort of interjections that we have just heard from him. I suggest to him ...

Mr Finch interjecting.

Mr BELL: Do you know what the report is about, Fred?

Mr Finch: Yes.

Mr BELL: What?

Mr Finch: I have read it.

Mr BELL: Will you be getting up to debate it?.

Mr Finch: I am rational.

Mr BELL: Good.

Mr COULTER: Mr Speaker, you have ruled that the member for MacDonnell must refer to members by their titles, and the member for MacDonnell continues to refer to people as Fred, boyo and yobbo. He seems to be treating your ruling with contempt.

Mr SPEAKER: I again remind honourable members on both sides that members must be addressed by their correct title and comments must be made through the Chair.

Mr BELL: I apologise profusely to the tender soul of the Minister for Transport and Works.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! Some members on the government side are being provocative.

Mr BELL: I can dispatch this in about 3 minutes, if honourable members on the government benches will give me the time.

All honourable members may not be aware that the Standing Orders Committee report refers particularly to the amount of time to be spent in debating the

Appropriation Bill. I draw the attention of honourable members to point 2.2 which says that, in 1985, the total time taken in debate on the Appropriation Bill was 4 hours 10 minutes. It went up by 20% or 30% in 1986 to 5 hours 40 minutes. In 1987, it went for 10 hours 10 minutes.

I appreciate the concern expressed by government members of the committee in relation to the length of that debate. I was prepared to accept the point that some of the toing-and-froing in that debate was related to policy issues that might have been more appropriately debated elsewhere. However, I do want to place on the record of the Assembly the concern I expressed to the committee.

We have a unicameral parliament. We do not have an upper house of review, mercifully. The debate on the Appropriation Bill provides one of few opportunities for shadow ministers and backbenchers to scrutinise actively and meticulously the fiscal policies of the government as they impinge on departments, and so on. It is one of those debates where things are very much drawn together.

I have some reservations about the compromise the committee has reached: the fixed time limit of 6 hours. I am not sure that the absolute time limit will allow the sort of invigilation that the Appropriation Bill merits. I want to place that on the record. Also, should time elapse pursuant to that standing order, during debate on particular subventions, some appropriations could go completely unscrutinised. I want to place on the record an indication of my concern in that regard.

The alternative of going back to each member having 10 minutes would not have been a positive step. The government members on that committee indicated that they were not prepared to accept the status quo but I believe that two 10-minute speeches as an alternative was not as good a compromise as this 6-hour compromise.

I am sure some people will be interested to hear, if they have not had the opportunity to read the section on 'Answers to Questions Asked on Previous Days' that the recommendation of the committee is that a further standing order be adopted that would allow a 10-minute period at the end of question time for the answering of questions. Honourable members may recall that this was raised by the Leader of the Opposition. Because it would follow directly after question time, it is likely that the broadcasters would carry that additional time as well. I believe that is a positive approach.

Mr EDE (Stuart): Mr Speaker, I confess that I am outraged by this proposal. It imposes a limitation on our rights, and the rights of all members here to perform their functions as members. The Treasurer can laugh to his heart's content about that. I have no doubt that he would like to see debate on the budget limited. But do honourable members realise what they are letting themselves in for here?

I invite honourable members to glance quickly at the Supply Bill which is before us tonight and count the number of divisions. There are 30 divisions, Mr Speaker. The proposal from the committee is to limit debate to 6 hours, that is 360 minutes, which allows 12 minutes for each division. Look at an example, Mr Speaker: the Department of Transport and Works, a division which generally takes up a fair amount of time in this Assembly. It is a very responsible portfolio which requires considerable analysis and in which all members are interested. There are 7 subdivisions within it. There are a substantial number of matters which will affect members in this House. These

are matters which members would like to raise in this parliament, and very rightly so, in order to examine the priorities of the government. What do we get, Mr Speaker? An average of 12 minutes for each division!

Mr Speaker, we allow 10 minutes for a question to be dealt with. All that is needed under this system is for the government to get the nod and ask a dorothy dixer. If a lot of time is expended on the early divisions, we could run out of time for the later divisions. Under this proposal, whole departments might escape the ordinary parliamentary process of review in committee.

Mr Finch: What are you on about? You do not know what this thing is about.

Mr EDE: The Minister for Transport and Works says that I do not know what this is about.

Mr Finch: You don't.

Mr EDE: Mr Speaker, I used to be on this committee and I know what it is about. When I see a rat, I know it is a rat. When I smell a rat, I know it is a rat. That is what this is. It is a rat and it is a rort!

Mr Dondas: You are a rat.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The member will withdraw that reference.

Mr DONDAS: I withdraw, Mr Speaker.

Mr Coulter: It is the rat on their side who said it.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The Leader of Government Business will also withdraw his remark.

Mr Coulter: I withdraw unreservedly, Mr Speaker.

Mr EDE: Mr Speaker, I hope that the next speaker from the government side will adjourn this debate. It is far too important a matter to be dropped into this House today and rammed through without its mover even bothering to speak on it. He simply moved that it be accepted and then sat down.

Some very important principles are involved. Members on both sides of the House have the right to be involved in debating the appropriations. As shadow minister, I have a particular interest in matters relating to labour and administrative services and to education. I take a particular interest in those divisions, but I also have an interest in other divisions because they affect my electorate. I would hope that there are government members who have the same interest in their electorates and how the budget affects them.

The budget represents the primary use of government muscle. It is the driving force of government. Government can have all the policies in the world but, unless there is money to back them, nothing gets done. That is what the members opposite should be worried about, particularly those on the backbench. Those members have an obligation to their electorates and, if they vote for this motion, they will be known as the people who allowed parliamentary control of the budget to be strangled. It will allow ministers, in connivance with one another, to give long, rambling answers in the committee stage to prevent ...

Mr Coulter: Yes, that's it.

Mr EDE: That is exactly it! From the mouths of babes come words of wisdom, Mr Speaker. That is what it is all about.

Mr Coulter: Sit down and I will finish off for you.

Mr EDE: Mr Speaker, during the last budget, the opposition attempted to obtain a good, hard analysis of what the budget was about, to draw out fundamental points and to get the information we needed and which the people of the Northern Territory wanted. That is what we attempted to do. Because of that, this government has decided to knock 4 hours off the amount of time we took to do that. If the government believes that an individual member on either side of the House is misusing his rights in committee, as set out in standing order 77, it has an option to act under standing order 79. Of course, whenever the government uses that option, it cops some political flak. If it misuses its numbers under standing order 79, it deserves to cop that flak.

On this occasion, the government is using its numbers to change the rules of play. I cannot just sit here and take that. I hope that somebody on the other side of the House will have the guts to stand up and move that this debate be adjourned so that the issues can be discussed more fully. To ram this through in this way is both disgusting and outrageous.

Mr COULTER (Leader of Government Business): Mr Speaker, if there was ever an example of the pot calling the kettle black, we have just seen it. Let me read out the times spent on various divisions in the committee stage of the 1987-88 Appropriation Bill. On division 20, the member for Stuart spoke for 38 minutes, the Leader of the Opposition for 19 minutes and the member for MacDonnell for 28 minutes. On division 58, the member for Stuart spoke for some 36 minutes and 30 seconds, the member for MacDonnell for 1 minute, the member for Sadadeen for 1 minute and the member for Arnhem for 2 minutes. The figures show clearly who is the greatest culprit in terms of wasting the time of this House because, if we go back to 1985, the total time taken to debate the Appropriation Bill in the committee stage was 4 hours and 10 minutes and, remember, we had more money in those years.

Mr EDE: A point of order, Mr Speaker! The minister is quoting from a document. I presume it is not confidential and I ask that it be tabled.

Mr COULTER: You do not know anything about that either, do you?

Mr SPEAKER: The minister will table the document when he has concluded his speech.

Mr COULTER: Mr Speaker, I am reading from information that was supplied to the committee. I will not be tabling the document. The member for Stuart was on the committee that put together these recommendations.

Mr Ede: I was not.

Mr COULTER: Sorry, the member for Arnhem was on it. Mr Speaker, may I continue? In 1986, the time taken ...

Mr BELL: A point of order, Mr Speaker! I reinforce the point of order raised by the member for Stuart.

Mr TUXWORTH: Mr Speaker, may I ask for clarification? A moment ago, as I understood it, you instructed the minister to table the document when he was finished.

Mr SPEAKER: At the conclusion of his speech. That is correct.

Mr TUXWORTH: Subsequently, he said that he would not be doing that. Can the issue be clarified?

Mr SPEAKER: The document is to be tabled.

Mr COULTER: Mr Speaker, I will table the document. It has been given to both sides of the House.

Let us not lose sight of the facts. The member for Stuart has been the main culprit in wasting the time of the House - and I use the word 'wasting' deliberately. In 1985, it took 4 hours and 10 minutes for the Appropriation Bill to pass through the House. In 1986, it took 5 hours and 40 minutes to go through and, in 1987, it took 10 hours and 10 minutes.

Mr Ede: If you can't stand the heat, get out of the kitchen.

Mr COULTER: No more, Mr Speaker. Have you ever seen such a pathetic performance from the member for Stuart as on this particular issue? I have shown quite clearly that he, more than any other member of the opposition, wasted the time of this House. It took 5 hours and 12 minutes ...

Mr EDE: A point of order, Mr Speaker! The minister is reflecting on me by saying that I wasted the time of the House. He has put forward nothing to back that up.

Mr COULTER: Sit down and let me do it!

Mr SPEAKER: Order!

Mr EDE: All he has done is show that I spent considerable time debating the budget. If the minister wishes to make reflections about my wasting the time of the House, he can do so by means of a substantive motion.

Mr SPEAKER: There is a point of order. The minister may not cast aspersions on the behaviour of other members.

Mr COULTER: Mr Speaker, I will give the simple facts. Of a total time of 10 hours and 10 minutes spent in debate, 5 hours and 12 minutes were spent in debating non-ministerial matters. That is more time than it took to debate the entire Appropriation Bill in the preceding year. More than any other member, the member for Stuart used the time of this House to make statements rather than to ask questions of ministers.

Mr Speaker, you will remember that this side of the House gave ample opportunity last year for questions to be asked during the committee stages of the Appropriation Bill. However, 5 hours and 12 minutes was taken up, not by ministers answering questions, but by members of the opposition making statements. One has only to pick up Hansard to see that. The member for Stuart spent some 38 minutes discussing division 20, and that was 10 minutes more than the member for MacDonnell and 20 minutes more than the Leader of the Opposition. That is just 1 example. There are many other examples which indicate that the member for Stuart's complaints are a nonsense.

The 6-hour limit is a reasonable compromise, and it will mean that the opposition will have to do its homework. If it spends 3 hours on questions about a particular division, limited time will remain in which to ask questions on the other divisions. It will mean that we will no longer have a gabfest. The proceedings will be structured and meaningful and we will not have statements being delivered. Instead, there will be questions. One has only to pick up Hansard to see numerous examples of the type of statements that were delivered. As a result of the committee's recommendation, the opposition tactic which has doubled the time it takes for the Appropriation Bill to pass through the Assembly will be stopped. I commend the committee for its recommendation.

The Leader of the Opposition raised a very important question about a minister being able to answer a question that had been asked of him during the course of a previous sittings or during an adjournment debate. The minister will now be permitted to answer such a question after 11 am. There will still be a full hour of question time. After 11 am, the minister will be able to answer such a question within a maximum period of 10 minutes. I believe that this also is worth while. I trust that the Leader of the Opposition supports the committee's recommendation in that regard. I would be aghast if he did not.

The other question that the committee discussed was the adjournment. There was a proposal that a certain hour be determined by which the Assembly must adjourn. Another proposal was to reduce the time limit on adjournment speeches from 15 minutes to 10 minutes. In respect of both proposals, we decided to maintain the status quo. The adjournment debate or grievance debate can be very worth while. Some very good contributions are made in the adjournment debate. I certainly was not in favour of either proposal.

Mr Speaker, I believe that the committee has submitted a very worthwhile and workable report. The opposition has been found out. The facts are there for everybody to read.

Mr Bell: You did not say this today, Barry.

Mr COULTER: Mr Speaker, it would have been very difficult for me to have said it today whilst an ABC reporter was leading the sole opposition representative out the door to a press conference. If he had had more time to stay in the committee room, I would have been able to develop this.

Mr Bell: That is a lie.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The member for MacDonnell will withdraw that remark.

Mr BELL: I withdraw it, Mr Speaker.

Mr COULTER: Mr Speaker, I believe that the committee has come up with a very workable proposition. It is to be implemented on a trial basis by way of a sessional order. I commend the report.

Motion agreed to.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

Mr BELL (MacDonnell)(by leave): Mr Speaker, I wish to make a personal explanation under standing order 257. I have been gravely misrepresented by the Leader of Government Business. I remind you, Mr Speaker, that the

material that was raised in this debate today by the Leader of the Government Business, with respect to his allegation that the member for Stuart raised vexatious material in debate on the Appropriation Bill, was never mentioned in the deliberations of the committee.

Mr Coulter: It was in the report. I read it.

Mr BELL: The allegation that the member for Stuart raised material vexatiously in the appropriation debate was never discussed. If the minister wants to refer my attention to a particular report where that is mentioned, I will be most surprised if he can do so. He suggested that, because I had to leave the meeting in some haste, I perhaps missed something. I am prepared to be corrected, but I believe that the matter of the speaking times on the Appropriation Bill had been completely dealt with. Indeed, I believe the substance of the meeting had been well and truly dealt with before I left.

I would ask that the Leader of Government Business extend some sort of apology for misrepresenting me in that fashion. Further, the comments made by the Leader of Government Business in this debate as well as the sort of behaviour that he evinced when I rose to speak do the committee no credit and do him none whatsoever.

NEW PARLIAMENT HOUSE COMMITTEE

Mr SPEAKER: Honourable members, I have received a letter from the member for Arnhem seeking his discharge from further attendance on the Sessional Committee on the New Parliament House.

Mr SMITH (Opposition Leader)(by leave): Mr Speaker, I move that the member for Arnhem, Mr Lanhupuy, be discharged from further attendance on the Sessional Committee on the New Parliament House and that the member for Millner, Mr Smith, be appointed to the Sessional Committee on the New Parliament House.

Motion agreed to.

MAGISTRATES AMENDMENT BILL (Serial 100)

Bill presented and read a first time.

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

The purpose of this bill is, first, to amend the qualifications for appointment as a magistrate to include: practitioners of suitable standing in the major jurisdictions and Papua New Guinea, which qualify a person to be admitted as a lawyer under section 13 of the Legal Practitioners Act; persons who possess legal qualifications and have been magistrates in those jurisdictions; and the correction of an existing anomaly in section 9(2). Secondly, it will create the position of relieving magistrate. To a large extent, these matters are connected.

As honourable members may be aware, over 90% of criminal and civil claims in the Northern Territory are dealt with in courts presided over by magistrates. Unlike most of the states, there is no system of intermediate courts here. The government wishes to appoint a magistrate on a relieving basis. The Magistrates Act permits the appointment of an acting magistrate,

but only during an actual vacancy in an existing appointment. The power has only been used where an existing magistrate has been on sick leave for a substantial period, such as over a year. It is not feasible to use this provision for shorter periods - for example, 3 months - as such illnesses cannot be anticipated far enough in advance to enable replacement. It is not used for periods involving long service or recreation leave as this is generally too short to justify the full terms and conditions that apply to the appointment of an acting magistrate. It is not feasible to use the provision for non-continuous periods.

It is, therefore, considered necessary to create the additional position of relieving magistrate and permit appointment to this position as the need arises - for example, when there is a short-term increase in the workload per magistrate. A relieving magistrate will hold office for a maximum period of 6 months. It is not expected that this position will be filled on a permanent or continuing basis.

The immediate need for an additional magistrate position arises due to a continuing vacancy in 1 permanent position of magistrate and the fact that 4 magistrates have indicated that they intend to take leave for staggered periods during the next 3 months.

Permanent magistrates are appointed by the Administrator. In making a recommendation to the Administrator, I act on the advice of an interview panel consisting of the Chief Justice, the Chief Magistrate and the Secretary of the Department of Law. Generally, such appointments are approved by Cabinet. Unfortunately, the government has had difficulty in filling the existing vacancy. Most lawyers with suitable experience to fill this position, such as members of our local profession, would take a considerable drop in salary if they were appointed as a permanent magistrate. The government is still considering appointments to this vacancy.

Appointments for a short period, such as 3 months, from the ranks of practising lawyers would cause substantial disruption to the continuing nature of their professional commitments and case loads so that short-term appointments also present difficulties. Further, there is the possibility of conflict of interest if local lawyers are appointed on a short-term basis. However, I would not rule out such appointments in appropriate cases. While I believe strongly that, ultimately, the interest of the Territory is best served if appointments to the magistracy are made from local members of the legal profession, at this point in time, whilst the numbers are still relatively small, it is important not to cut our options.

Of course, one of the arguments against making permanent appointments from the bar is that we would be robbing Peter to pay Paul. That is to say that we should not readily denude the strength of the bar, say at its mid-level ranks, for those persons already play a major and important role in our courts by competently representing litigants.

There is a proposal to establish a national panel of relieving magistrates to assist with the administration of justice in the lower courts. Recently-retired magistrates and other suitable persons have indicated a desire to be part of such a panel. Such a panel avoids the problems with short-term appointments that I have indicated above. Some of these persons have indicated a willingness to act as relieving magistrates for the Northern Territory, but would not be prepared to be appointed full-time magistrates.

There are a number of senior, experienced magistrates in Australian jurisdictions who have not been admitted to practise, even though they have law degrees. As honourable members may be aware, in some of the states, Crown lawyers do not have to be admitted as practitioners, although they must be qualified for admission, and may become magistrates without ever being admitted. I do not consider we should exclude former magistrates from other jurisdictions who are legally qualified but have not been formally admitted.

Finally, clause 11 has added a provision enabling a magistrate to continue hearing a case commenced before his term of office expires. I commend the bill to honourable members.

Debate adjourned.

SUSPENSION OF STANDING ORDERS

Mr MANZIE (Attorney-General)(by leave): Mr Speaker, I move that so much of standing orders be suspended as would prevent 6 bills, the Aboriginal Land Amendment Bill (Serial 90), the Summary Offences Amendment Bill (Serial 91), the Stock Diseases Amendment Bill (Serial 92), the Bushfires Amendment Bill (Serial 93), the Fences Amendment Bill (Serial 94) and the Interpretation Amendment Bill (Serial 104) (a) being presented and read a first time together and 1 motion being put in regard to, respectively, the second readings, the committee report stage and the third readings of the bills together; and (b) the consideration of the bills separately in the committee of the whole.

Motion agreed to.

ABORIGINAL LAND AMENDMENT BILL
(Serial 90)
SUMMARY OFFENCES AMENDMENT BILL
(Serial 91)
STOCK DISEASES AMENDMENT BILL
(Serial 92)
BUSHFIRES AMENDMENT BILL
(Serial 93)
FENCES AMENDMENT BILL
(Serial 94)
INTERPRETATION AMENDMENT BILL
(Serial 104)

Bills presented and read a first time.

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

Since the Aboriginal Land Rights (Northern Territory) Act 1976 came into force, both past and present Commonwealth governments have agreed that Territory law does and should apply to Aboriginal land. In fact, this is provided for by section 74 of the Commonwealth act. There are 4 Territory acts - the Bushfires Act, the Fences Act, the Stock Diseases Act and the Summary Offences Act - which, among other things, provide a right of entry to leased land in accordance with prescribed procedures.

Honourable members would understand that the provisions of these acts relate particularly to emergency situations such as bushfires, the repair of fences, the recovery of stock and action in relation to stock diseases. Some doubt has been raised concerning the application of these acts to Aboriginal

land. The amendments proposed in these bills will clarify the situation. They will provide a right of entry to Aboriginal land to a person who has an obligation or a responsibility to take action relating to bushfires, the erection or repair and maintenance of common fences, the detection and prevention of stock diseases and for the legitimate recovery of straying stock. Mr Speaker, this is an example of this government's approach to treating all Territory citizens in a similar manner.

Aboriginal land is provided for under Commonwealth government legislation, but it is land in the Territory and land held by Territorians. My government services that land and it is appropriate that Territory law apply to it. A consequential amendment to the Aboriginal Land Act removes the need for permits to be issued in such cases.

Also, a minor amendment is proposed to the Interpretation Act. This will have the effect of removing any unforeseen inconsistency between the Commonwealth legislation and the application of Territory laws. As a result of previous discussions with the Commonwealth and the land councils, my government believes these amendments are non-controversial, and I have advised the Northern and Central Land Councils of my intention to introduce the bills.

Mr Speaker, I commend the bills to the House.

Debate adjourned.

SMALL CLAIMS AMENDMENT BILL
(Serial 108)

Bill presented and read a first time.

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

The purpose of this bill is to amend the Small Claims Act in a number of particulars. It is the result of a review undertaken by the Department of Law in conjunction with the Chief Magistrate.

The monetary limit of small claims is to increase from \$2000 to \$3000. Although I have received representations for a more substantial increase, at this stage, this is considered the appropriate limit, particularly as the local court only has a \$10 000 limit. Figures for the first 2 months of the year showed that 75% of all small claim judgments were for less than \$1000 while 42% of all local court judgments were for less than \$2000. My government is presently reviewing the local court limit, and any increase in that jurisdiction may affect the small claims area.

Provisions dealing with procedures are to be put in the regulations. Many provisions in the act relate to the procedures. Modern practice is for provisions regarding procedures to be in Rules of Court giving greater flexibility, consistency with local court practice and a quicker response to changed conditions, while provisions regarding jurisdiction appear in the act. Some procedures specified in the act are inconsistent with existing similar procedures. For example, the service procedures in the magistrates court for a small claim, a local court claim, and a work health claim are all slightly different. By putting these procedures in Rules of Court, greater consistency can be achieved.

Amongst these procedural innovations will be a power to refer small claim matters for a pre-hearing conference before a magistrate or a Clerk of Courts. The opportunity will also be taken to rewrite the court forms in a more straightforward style and to prepare an information booklet for people wishing to bring small claim actions. Repeal of the existing service procedures will enable more claims to be served by post, as is done in the Work Health Court, Supreme Court and elsewhere. No fee will be charged for postal service. Where personal service has to be made, a claimant will be required to pay the bailiff service fee, presently \$10. This fee will be recoverable as part of the judgment debt. The Clerk of Courts will have a discretion to waive this fee in cases of hardship.

Under the present act, the court may only order the payment of money. It is considered the court should be empowered to make a wider range of orders and these are spelt out in the new section 30A. The 1986 Supreme Court Rules provided a new and simpler procedure for appeals to the Supreme Court from a decision of courts and tribunals. Sections 32 to 39 of the act provide a procedure that is, in many ways, different to that provided in the new rules. The 2 are to be made consistent by the amendments in clauses 18 and 19.

I commend the bill to honourable members.

Debate adjourned.

FINANCIAL ADMINISTRATION AND AUDIT AMENDMENT BILL
(Serial 117)

Bill presented, by leave, and read a first time.

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

The bill amends certain sections of the Financial Administration and Audit Act dealing with the Treasurer's annual financial statements. At present, the Treasurer's annual financial statements are signed by the Treasurer, but they are transmitted to this House by the Auditor-General. The amendments will allow the Treasurer to table the financial statements after receipt of the Auditor-General's Report. This is in line with the practice in Western Australia and Queensland. It recognises the important fact that the annual financial statements are, in fact, a report of the Treasurer's stewardship of the Territory's finances over the preceding 12 months. The statements are prepared in Treasury and are signed by the Treasurer, who accepts total responsibility. Therefore, it is appropriate that the Treasurer table the statements himself.

The Auditor-General has endorsed this amendment, which also clarifies his own reporting authority and responsibilities. The amendments make clear his responsibility to report to this House at least once a year, but he retains the authority to submit any supplementary reports to this House during the year.

Mr Speaker, I commend the bill.

Debate adjourned.

POWER AND WATER AUTHORITY AMENDMENT BILL
(Serial 119)

Bill presented, by leave, and read a first time.

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

The objective of the bill is to remove an anomaly that has occurred as a result of operation of the relatively new Power and Water Authority Act in conjunction with the Electricity Act, which itself is an amended form of the original Electricity Commission Act.

The Electricity Commission Act was interpreted in such a way that I was able to fix and vary tariffs for sale of electricity to the general public. Notice of such tariffs in the gazette was mandatory. On the other hand, the electricity commission was able to determine charges for electricity supply for one-off contracts with commercial organisations. Such contracts were rare as the commission's marginal cost of production was too high to attract miners and the like away from cheaper private generation. In any case, financial delegation limits resulted in a requirement for my approval of charges so determined but - and this is the crux of the matter - it was not necessary to publish such charges in the gazette.

As a secondary issue, NTEC was able to negotiate other charges for distribution system extensions, major consumer substations and the like with specific consumers without any approval and without notice in the gazette. Many such charges are agreed between the Power and Water Authority and consumers in all centres on a daily basis. Recent interpretation of the operation of the Power and Water Authority Act and the Electricity Act is that only I, as Minister for Mines and Energy, may fix and vary all tariffs and charges, and that the gazettal of all tariffs and charges is mandatory.

Other electricity supply authorities have power to determine charges for contract sale and purchase of energy and other negotiated charges, as opposed to sale to the general public, without proclaiming details of those charges in a gazettal notice. That the Power and Water Authority no longer has power to do likewise is merely an unforeseen and unfortunate consequence of the 2 acts operating in conjunction.

Now that the Power and Water Authority is generating most of its electricity from gas-fired power stations, marginal costs have reduced to an extent where mining companies and other organisations could be attracted away from private generation. However, negotiations will fail if the requirement for gazettal of commercial details of charges of such one-off contracts is allowed to continue. There are 3 clear and serious penalties: (1) many commercial organisations, also being prospective parties to special electricity supply contracts, will simply not negotiate with the Power and Water Authority if information well-recognised as commercially confidential is made public knowledge by notice in the gazette; (2) in the unlikely event that agreement with a special consumer were negotiated, the Power and Water Authority's subsequent negotiating position with any other prospective consumer would be destroyed; (3) the Power and Water Authority will lose opportunities to increase revenue and ultimately contain cost increases to the benefit of its general public consumers.

The effect of the proposed legislation is to remove the requirement for gazettal of charges in those cases where the general public is not involved,

and to remove the requirement for my approval and the subsequent gazettal of other negotiated charges with certain major consumers and rural distribution extensions.

Only section 15(2)(c) of the Power and Water Authority Act has been amended. I believe this amendment to be essential if the Power and Water Authority is to continue to improve its financial performance and contain future cost increases for the benefit of all existing and potential consumers.

Mr Speaker, I commend the bill to honourable members.

Debate adjourned.

ELECTRICITY AMENDMENT BILL
(Serial 120)

Bill presented, by leave, and read a first time.

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

The amendment in this bill to section 30 of the principal act is proposed for the reasons given in relation to the amendment to the Power and Water Authority Act.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I commend the bill to honourable members.

Debate adjourned.

SUSPENSION OF STANDING ORDERS

Mr COULTER (Treasurer)(by leave): Mr Deputy Speaker, I move that so much of standing orders be suspended as would prevent the Supply Bill 1988-89 (Serial 116) passing through all stages at these sittings.

Motion agreed to.

SUPPLY BILL 1988-89
(Serial 116)

Continued from 24 May 1988.

Mr EDE (Stuart): Mr Deputy Speaker, as honourable members know, the Supply Bill is simply a device to provide for a sum of money to carry us through from the end of the financial year until such time as the budget itself has passed through all stages in this House. Generally, the Supply Bill relates to the amount of money that is estimated as necessary to carry us through for the first 5 months of the financial year and, over many years, it has been the practice of members on this side of the House not to oppose supply or in any way attempt to amend it, but simply to allow the bill to pass through. I recall the first time that I became aware of that. I asked my caucus colleagues why we did not debate the Supply Bill. My colleagues said it was because we had unlimited time in the committee stage of the Appropriation Bill to take up all the matters that we wished to raise in relation to the various divisions. As I said earlier, there are 30 divisions. While there were only 6 of us, I previously held the view that the arrangement allowed ample time for members to raise matters relating to their shadow portfolios or their electorates. I was persuaded by my caucus colleagues that

that was a satisfactory situation and that there was no need to debate the Supply Bill.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I will be watching with great interest as the budget proceeds through the House this year. I can say firmly that, if we do not have the opportunity to carry out our functions as shadow ministers or as members, I will certainly be recommending to my caucus colleagues that we change our long-held custom and debate matters at the supply stage. I would be quite within my rights now to speak for the next 45 minutes on a whole range of issues that concern me, both in my electorate and in my shadow portfolios. It would also be quite possible for other members to spend 30 minutes doing the same thing.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I hope that the Treasurer will not get carried away by a rush of blood to the head and that honourable ministers opposite will demonstrate that they are able to engage in debate in a way which will allow us to go through each division carefully and analytically. If we do get to the end of the 6 hours and find that there are a couple of divisions still remaining for debate, I hope that an extension of time will be given. I will be watching that debate very seriously to determine my advice to my caucus colleagues regarding our tactics for next year.

Mr Deputy Speaker, the opposition supports the Supply Bill.

Motion agreed to; bill read a second time.

Mr COULTER (Treasurer)(by leave): Mr Deputy Speaker, I move the bill be now read a third time.

Motion agreed to; bill read a third time.

SUSPENSION OF STANDING ORDERS

Mr MANZIE (Attorney-General)(by leave): Mr Speaker, I move that so much of standing orders be suspended as would prevent the Law Society Public Purposes Trust Bill (Serial 106) passing through all stages at these sittings.

Motion agreed to.

LAW SOCIETY PUBLIC PURPOSES TRUST BILL (Serial 106)

Continued from 19 May 1988.

Mr BELL (MacDonnell): Mr Speaker, there are some interesting aspects of this particular legislation, as honourable members who paid attention to the second-reading speech of the Attorney-General would be aware. They may have become more aware as a result of media coverage of the recent Law Week activities and the Law Society's considerable effort, through a public education campaign, to encourage people to better understand how the law works and how lawyers work. This bill is germane to that purpose.

Until quite recently, the interest on solicitors' trust accounts was retained by the banks. Some 2 or 3 years ago, Law Societies around the country, including that in the Northern Territory, had these interest payments paid into a specific bank account. Since then, that amount has been building up. In the Territory, it has been used by the Law Society to conduct public education campaigns and various other appropriate activities. The purpose of

this bill is to set up a trust arrangement for the disbursement of those moneys.

During the course of Law Week, I remember seeing a televised excerpt from one of the moot courts conducted in high schools. I recall seeing Mr Graham Hiley and Mr John Reeves in that excerpt. As well as the moot court proceedings, lectures were given so that students could be made aware of how the law worked and what lawyers actually did. It seems to me that, particularly under Mr Graham Hiley's presidency, the Law Society has taken a rather high profile in these matters.

The Attorney-General will recall crossing swords with me over the opposition's proposal to instigate a review of administrative decisions bill. That proposal was consummately dismissed by the government. Without seeking to rehash that debate, honourable members may recall that the inspiration for my proposal was a seminar on the subject conducted by the Law Society. It is by no means a dead issue and I am looking forward to seeing it pursued by the Law Reform Committee, to which the Attorney-General has referred it.

Other activities conducted by the Law Society included stalls at Casuarina and the Darwin Mall, where lawyers gave their time gratis to provide advice to people and to put a human face on the law. They are entirely to be commended for that. My wife and I thoroughly enjoyed an evening at the Law Society Ball earlier in the year. It was very gratifying to see the proceeds from the ball donated to the Life Education Centre. You will recall, Mr Speaker, that the Life Education Centre conducted a travelling education program on the problems of drug abuse, aimed at educating youngsters. The Law Society's donations to organisations like that are to be highly commended. I understand that the society organised a dinner, the proceeds of which were used to assist Phil Deveraux to compete at the Para-Olympics. I am sure that honourable members will agree with me that that is to be encouraged.

To return more strictly to the subject of the bill before us, the opposition is quite happy to support it. We look forward to seeing the trust set up under the legislation being used for the good purposes for which it is intended. It has been somewhat contentious elsewhere that some of the trust funds will be used for legal aid. I understand that there is a 30% ceiling on the amount of the trust that will be applied for that purpose.

With those comments, Mr Speaker, I indicate that the opposition happily supports the bill.

Motion agreed to; bill read a second time.

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

Motion agreed to; bill read a third time.

SUSPENSION OF STANDING ORDERS

Mr HATTON (Chief Minister)(by leave): Mr Speaker, I move that so much of standing orders be suspended as would prevent the Commission of Inquiry (Deaths in Custody) Amendment Bill (Serial 111) passing through all stages in these sittings.

Motion agreed to.

COMMISSION OF INQUIRY (DEATHS IN CUSTODY) AMENDMENT BILL
(Serial 111)

Continued from 24 May 1988.

Mr LANHUPUY (Arnhem): Mr Speaker, the opposition supports the bill in terms of what the Chief Minister has outlined to us. When the Hawke government announced last year that an inquiry would be held into deaths in custody throughout Australia, we indicated that we would do our utmost to support the commission. Hopefully, what the commission achieves will be of some benefit to this community.

I was very pleased to hear the Chief Minister announce that there will be an additional 3 commissioners to assist Justice Muirhead. I believe that the matter of deaths in custody affects many Aboriginal people throughout the Northern Territory and elsewhere in Australia. Personally, I take the matter seriously. It affects some Aboriginal people whom I do not know, but I can appreciate the emotional effects that it has on their families. I welcome the announcement that the terms have been extended to take into account deaths in custody not only in gaols but also in hospitals and mental institutions throughout Australia. The opposition certainly supports the appointment of the additional commissioners to the commission. We will do our utmost to support the work of the commission.

Mr EDE (Stuart): Mr Speaker, I rise to add my support to that of the member for Arnhem. One of the aspects that has worried me about this royal commission has been the length of time that it has been taking. I believe that the additional commissioners will enable a reduction in that time.

In some quarters, it is believed that the length of time that the inquiry has taken has led to a particular tragedy. The tragedy is what is referred to as the 'copycat suicides'. Depressed people, who have heard what has occurred elsewhere, come to believe that the final statement that they can make is to take their own lives. The sooner we can find some answers and some ways of preventing the tragic loss of life, the better.

There is one other point that I would like to raise briefly. It is very difficult to undertake a complete analysis of deaths in custody. However, recent figures do suggest a correlation between a high rate of suicides in custody and people who suffer problems of poverty and powerlessness. This does not relate only to Aboriginal people. In fact, the rate of deaths in custody among non-Aboriginal people who fall into that group is akin to the rate for Aboriginal people. For whatever reason, people in this group are possessed of a sense of hopelessness and a sense of despair in the face of their inability to affect either their own circumstances or the world around them. Often, they have had a number of encounters with the law or have lost the support of the family structure that gave them a feeling that there was something worth while in life for them. In prison, they believe they have reached a final nadir from which there is no way up. They see nothing left but to make a final gesture by killing themselves. That is the essential tragedy. It is a tragedy in terms of the loss of life but also it is a tragedy in that people have reached a point where they feel that there is absolutely nothing for them. Some of these people are in their teens or their 20s. In our country, such people should have the whole of their life to look forward to. They should have some spark of joy and hope and a feeling that there is something they can do, not necessarily for the world around them but for themselves.

Mr Speaker, that is the tragedy and that is why I support this bill as I supported the previous one. I hope that we can find something, not solely for Aboriginal people, but for all the people who find themselves in that circumstance. Perhaps we can find a way of doing something for those people before they take that ultimate step.

Mr HATTON (Chief Minister): Mr Speaker, I thank members opposite for their support for this legislation. In particular, I would like to compliment the member for Stuart. I have not had many reasons to do that during the course of these sittings but I do rise to compliment the member for Stuart for the comments he has just made. I fully endorse those comments. The hopelessness and the loss of life are a tragedy. I support his recognition that our concern should be not only for Aboriginal people but for all people in custodial circumstances whose depressed state of mind results in their taking their own lives. I fully support any attempt to overcome those circumstances and reduce or, hopefully, eliminate this tragic loss of life.

Motion agreed to; bill read a second time.

Mr HATTON (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.

DISCHARGE OF ITEMS FROM NOTICE PAPER

Mr HATTON (Chief Minister): Mr Speaker, I move that the following orders of the day Government Business be discharged from the Notice Paper: No 7 relating to health promotion; No 10 relating to the 1986 Annual Report of the University College; and no 13 relating to industries and development.

Motion agreed to.

ADJOURNMENT

Mr HATTON (Chief Minister): Mr Speaker, I move that the Assembly do now adjourn.

Mr EDE (Stuart): Mr Speaker, tonight I would like to continue my discussion of some points that I raised last night in relation to the principles which the opposition feels should be embodied in higher education in the Northern Territory. I pointed out that I would not cover the situation of Batchelor College in last night's debate because I believe that it is a special case and I wanted to have a bit more time to explain our ideas.

We see Batchelor College as being the national centre for further education for Aboriginal people with particular reference to those people who come from what might be called a tribal or a semi-tribal background. We believe that it is possible to develop a unique educational process there, a process which is already exemplified in the teacher training program now operating at Batchelor in conjunction with Deakin University. During the process of developing that course, it was found that there were some fundamental differences between our teaching methods and those which had been used from time immemorial by Aboriginal people. The course model was developed around the usage of things within people's daily life and within their environment. That approach was based on the concept of taking knowledge from the child's known environment and gradually building on that. While the results at the end of the primary school years are the same as those in our

system, the means of teaching and the pupils' rates of progress in various areas are often quite different. The means of linking a child's current knowledge of the world around him with new knowledge are substantially different. I believe that a similar principle will apply in other areas we would like to see the Batchelor College becoming involved in.

I have already had very promising discussions with the education ministers of Western Australia and South Australia. The aim of those discussions has been to ensure that we all cooperate and do not each try to reinvent the wheel. We want to ensure that we can all work together and, hopefully, Queensland will be involved in a bigger way in the future. To achieve that, it is essential that Batchelor be upgraded and be seen in an equivalent light to what are currently known as colleges of advanced education. It should have its own legislation and receive funding from the federal government on the basis of advanced education equivalence.

At the moment, funding is only at a level appropriate for a marginal institution working on the fringe of advanced education. I believe that students at the Batchelor College should be funded at the same rate as advanced education students elsewhere. The API money which is currently used should be an extra component to fund the additional work that is required to translate basic advanced education services into services which are relevant to Aboriginal people in terms of their cultural diversity, cultural differences and geographic diversity. If that money were forthcoming whilst the Territory government maintained its contribution in real terms, I believe that we would have the basis for a very substantial institution.

I believe that the Batchelor College has to move into 2 major areas which it has not yet really begun to tackle. It has moved into one to some extent and I will deal with that first. I am talking about community management and the need for people to have recognised diplomas or degrees in the various aspects of community management. We need to have highly-qualified town clerks in community councils. We need skilled workers in those councils and we need to provide people working in jobs like essential service supervisors with management skills. As I said last night, education should be seen as a lifetime exercise. In some cases, the skills I am talking about can be imparted in long courses. Many others can be imparted through short, intensive courses carried out in conjunction with on-the-job development of skills.

Mr Speaker, the Batchelor College has been attempting to initiate programs in this area for some time. They have had a somewhat chequered history of stops and starts. It is, however, a very real need and it is one that we in the Northern Territory should be able to meet. There will be untold rewards for people in the communities as well as for the government. People educated in those programs will be the contact point when the government and the communities negotiate on local government matters.

The present situation, where non-Aboriginal people make up the majority of the workers in Aboriginal communities, cannot continue. It is wasteful. People learn to operate in the communities and then depart. That is just not right in terms of the people out there who want jobs and are deprived of them. It seems to be much easier to bring in people who are already trained rather than training local people. It is also morally wrong. People out there want jobs and are unable to get them. I am not blaming the community advisers and the very committed non-Aboriginal staff who work out in those communities. The vast majority of them agree with what I say and would be the first to back me up. Most non-Aboriginal people on the communities see themselves as

working themselves out of a job. There are a few people who say that but do not act accordingly. However, when I see people doing it, I take my hat off to them. Without blowing my own trumpet, I was able to do that in a number of different positions in Papua New Guinea and with all the Aboriginal organisations I worked with in central Australia. There is very little which compares with the sense of achievement one has when one leaves a job in the hands of somebody who has all the skills necessary to carry it on. You feel as though you have done a job which is actually worthwhile rather than that you have merely filled a position for a number of years.

The other area which I believe Batchelor College must move into is health worker training. Whilst the Katherine Institute has done some excellent work, I feel the time has come to link health worker training into Batchelor and for courses to be developed to enable people to gain a hierarchy of skills that will allow them to be confident that they possess the same degree of knowledge and ability as the very best of the sisters who are now in charge of health centres.

At the moment, there is a very strong reaction amongst health workers against taking over the health centres in my electorate. That is so even amongst the ones who are considered by the department as being amongst the very best. It is because the people concerned do not feel the necessary confidence. They feel that they have not received the training which other health workers have had. They know that, in the community, they are not seen as having that skill and confidence. Because of that, they have a very real fear that, if something goes wrong in spite of all their best efforts, they could be subject to tribal punishment. That is a very real problem. That situation will not change until such time as the community believes and they believe that their skills are equal to or better than those of the clinic sisters.

Mr Speaker, there are some other issues I want to cover although time will not permit me to do so in great detail. I believe that there is a need to carry out some negotiations to determine whether parts of the courses offered at Batchelor College can be offered in Alice Springs with the assistance of the Institute of Aboriginal Development. It may be that a contract system is appropriate. There is talk of an annex which will enable teachers to do a fair amount of their training in Alice Springs rather than having to come up to the Top End in the early stages. That is a very difficult thing for many people from my electorate and that of the member for MacDonnell. It is difficult to be so far away from your family for such a long time, particularly when you are going back into a school situation after many years away from it.

I believe that the task force located at the DIT should also be made an annex of Batchelor College. It would then be able to perform 2 roles. It would allow people who wish to pursue courses of the type offered at Batchelor to do so here in Darwin. It would also be in a stronger position to develop its role in respect of Aboriginal people who want to take courses at the University of the Northern Territory. I explained the structure last night. I believe that linking it to Batchelor will give people in the task force a feeling of purpose rather than feeling that they are some sort of cast-off in the process of restructuring to create a University of the Northern Territory.

Mr Speaker, that is about all I have time for tonight. I am glad that the minister is in the House. I do not expect him to respond tonight to all the matters I have raised but I hope that he followed the broad brush of my argument. If there are any particular points that he would like to discuss

with me, we can do so. This is an area in which I think we have general agreement and I believe that, if we put our heads together, we will be able to achieve a result which will be a credit, not just to the Northern Territory, but to Australia.

Mr HARRIS (Education): Mr Speaker, I am very pleased to follow the member for Stuart in tonight's adjournment debate. His comments tonight seemed quite reasonable and I will come to them in a minute.

Unfortunately, last night he carried on with a lot of what I would call 'twaddle' in relation to the opposition's so-called attitude to post-secondary education. I say that because each time he opens his mouth he tends to change his representation of the attitude of the ALP to this very important issue of higher education. In March, he made a statement on this particular issue. We were discussing another matter but, on that occasion, he started to expound ALP policy on higher education. In his comments last night, he mentioned that I was the minister on that occasion and that I had started to listen to what he had to say. I might inform the honourable member that I was not the minister at that time. In fact, when I became the Minister for Education, I wrote to the member for Stuart because I was here during the course of that debate and was very interested to find out what he felt about higher education in the Northern Territory and what the ALP policy was in relation to higher education. I will read some parts of my letter.

As you are aware, the Northern Territory government is in the process of deciding how higher education in the Territory will be restructured in light of the issues raised by the Green Paper on higher education.

Further on:

My understanding is that you, as spokesman on education, set out the NT Labor Party's position in the Legislative Assembly on 2 March 1988.

Then I closed by saying:

I am keen to know if that position remains the same or if, during the intervening time period, there has occurred some change.

I sent that letter to the member for Stuart on 4 April. Obviously the honourable member was confused by that request, but if he thinks that his comments yesterday pass as policy, he will have to think again.

Let us hear what was claimed as the ALP policy in March. The member for Stuart said in this House: 'We believe that legislation has to be in place to set up a multi-level, multi-campus, multi-purpose institution ...' and 'We believe that the Katherine Rural College could also be incorporated into the University of the Northern Territory'.

The issue of higher education is a very deep issue, and the honourable member should know that. Even the area of TAFE involvement in the university sector is of concern throughout Australia, and the academics in the universities are very concerned about such an amalgamation. Yet here he is, talking about bringing in the Katherine Rural College. Why stop at Katherine Rural College? Why not go through all of the TAFE areas and bring them into the picture at this point in time?

I am concerned about the honourable member's attitude because obviously he does not realise that we need to walk very carefully when setting up these structures. Yesterday, the ALP seemed to have a new policy. The member for Stuart announced this policy during the course of the debate when he said: 'I now wish to lay before the House a model which the opposition believes can serve as the basis for the future of higher-education needs of the Northern Territory'. Again, in yesterday's debate, he was referring to this model as one that the Northern Territory government was falling into line with. I might again inform the member for Stuart, the opposition spokesman on education, that it varies considerably from the model that was originally proposed. We have made it very clear that the University of Queensland is vital in this whole exercise. We are not talking about the old lean-to model that the opposition proposed, using the Darwin Institute of Technology. The Commonwealth government only wanted to fund us for 20 positions there and, although the credibility of a university based on the institute would not have been questioned here in the Territory, it would have been questioned in other parts of the world. We had to make sure that what we had here in the Territory and what we produced was recognised and acknowledged right throughout the world, and we decided to call on the University of Queensland to effect that. That was the difference.

I actually agreed with what Senator Ryan wanted at that particular point in time, and the federal government still refused us funding for higher education.

Mr Ede: I am talking about your latest problem. I am not talking about model mark x ...

Mr HARRIS: The model suggesting that we operate a lean-to university based at the Darwin Institute of Technology was put forward by the opposition. Again, that did not put the institute in a good light. We were saying that the institute had courses of high standing, and we still stand by that, but what we were saying was that the university courses offered to our people in the Northern Territory had to be recognised and acknowledged throughout the world. Again, the University of Queensland will not stay in the picture forever and a day. It is there for a period and, at some point, it will move on down the road.

I might add that the Territory's member of the House of Representatives, Warren Snowdon, also appeared to jump in on the old model. I have just been to Canberra to talk with John Dawkins, the federal Minister for Education. As soon as I came back, a press release was issued by the member for the Northern Territory, Warren Snowdon. It referred to the Northern Territory's 'Rambo' attitude to higher education. That occurred at a vital time. Both the federal government and ourselves acknowledged that we needed to get together and come to an arrangement in relation to funding of higher education in the Northern Territory, and the comments of the member for the Northern Territory were made in that context. He should get his facts right, and he should learn about what has happened here because we are not talking about the proposal which was originally put forward by the member for Stuart who likes to give that impression in the Assembly. We are not talking about the opposition's proposal. All the way through, the issue of TAFE ...

Mr Ede: Is TAFE in or not?

Mr HARRIS: Again he makes comments about TAFE. We have said very clearly that TAFE needs to be protected. We have been telling him this all the time. Now he starts to come in on the bandwagon. The whole issue of TAFE is vital

to the Northern Territory. It is vital to the whole structure that will be created, and we have indicated that we are looking to move towards having an institute within an institution. That is what we are doing.

Mr Ede: Yes, I thought a school of TAFE was an institute.

Mr HARRIS: It is not part of your deal, yet you come in and say that it is. I distance myself from those particular remarks.

As far as Batchelor College is concerned, there are moves afoot to have the college moved to become a national centre for Aboriginal people. Again, I have some concerns about that, and I have indicated those concerns to FEPI and other people who are looking at the proposal. My concern is that Batchelor was set up to look at the particular needs of traditional Aborigines and isolated Aboriginal people.

It has been acknowledged that there needed to be links between the various states, particularly Western Australia, South Australia and Queensland. That is acknowledged, and I have no concern whatsoever about that being the case. But we have to be very careful that Batchelor College does not become an institute where urban Aborigines can start to become involved. Batchelor College is a very special place and it has to remain in that position.

During the course of the adjournment debate tonight, the member for Stuart said he agreed that the college is special and needs to take its own individual approach to education. We happen to agree on that point. However, there is still a long way to go. Basically, the government agrees with the proposal but there are concerns and we need some guarantees about protection and how it is all to happen.

As honourable members would know, Batchelor College was initially set up to train Aboriginal teachers. From there it developed into a multi-purpose tertiary institution. Unfortunately, many of our Aboriginal teachers do not get to the stage where they can graduate as teachers because they are taken from Batchelor College to perform some very important function in their particular community. It might, for example, relate to community management. That is all good for Aboriginal people and we have not objected to it happening. Unfortunately, however, we are not getting the number of teachers we need through Batchelor College because students are moving into other important areas in the community. I acknowledge that that is part of the scene.

I also agree that Aborigines should be servicing Aboriginal communities and that, wherever possible, non-Aboriginal people should be moving out of those positions. One of my recent trips into Arnhem Land made it very clear to me that more emphasis needs to be placed on the training of Aboriginal people within their communities. The RATE program needs to be looked at. I believe that it really holds the key to having more Aboriginal people graduate as teachers and moving back to their communities to teach. That is an area that I will be looking at very carefully.

The areas of community management and health worker training need to be addressed, and the government will be looking at them in more detail in the not too distant future.

In relation to the Alice Springs annex, we acknowledge that we have to provide teachers in Aboriginal communities right throughout the Northern Territory and we also acknowledge that Aboriginal people do have problems when

they leave the area they relate to. It is important that there is access to those facilities in the Alice Springs area.

I do not agree with the comments of the member for Stuart in relation to the task force. As far as Aboriginal people are concerned, if Aboriginal people can fit into the mainstream of education - and I believe that the task force people can - they should go through the established institutions where we undertake our education.

Mr Ede: Where is the freedom of choice that applies in the case of international grammar schools and things like that?

Mr HARRIS: You talk about freedom of choice. You have just acknowledged that Batchelor College is different.

Mr Ede: Ah, you have put your foot in it.

Mr HARRIS: I am saying that you have to look at that issue. Where Aboriginal people can get up and enter into the mainstream of education, let them do that. That is something that the Aboriginal people are quite happy to do. I have spoken to a member of the task force and I will be speaking to others during the course of this very delicate task of trying to merge the University College with the Darwin Institute of Technology.

I acknowledge that there has to be some form of link but I am saying that, where Aboriginal people are able to get up and enter the mainstream of education, they should be doing that. As far as Batchelor College is concerned, the government is generally in favour of the direction, and I will be taking a proposal to Cabinet on that later on.

The member for Stuart also raised issues relating to research. Obviously he is not aware that considerable research is undertaken already in relation to arid zones, Asian studies, linguistics and a whole range of areas that we hope the university will eventually be involved with. Those are areas that we have to grow into; it does not just happen overnight. In trying to create a merger involving a TAFE sector and a university sector, where we are looking at the credibility of degrees and acceptability throughout the world, we have to be very careful to ensure that it is done in a very delicate manner. In this whole exercise, it is very important that we do not start frightening people with comments about problems in relation to credibility or anything else. The member for Stuart spoke about consultation. That is what the government is about and that is what the working parties are about. We will continue to consult until the whole exercise is completed.

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH (Koolpinyah): Mr Deputy Speaker, last Friday, together with many other people, I attended a meeting on the subject of firearms. The meeting was attended by a senior police officer and it was unfortunate that only 1 other parliamentarian was in attendance. I would like to say at the outset that the vast majority of the 70 to 80 people in attendance were members of firearms clubs and specialist gun clubs. Some other members of the public who are legitimate shooters also attended. They all expressed deep concern at the possible introduction of certain changes to the Firearms Act. They felt that they had not been fully consulted prior to the meeting of police ministers and the Premiers Conference, which discussed certain matters in relation to firearm control in Australia. They were banding together to form a very efficient lobby group.

I fully support the views of this group, which were put forward in a very clear way. The group's main concern was with the possible introduction of a permit to purchase firearms. This is what they are violently against. They do not want it, no how, no way.

Mr Deputy Speaker, for those honourable members who do not know the procedure, a person who wishes to hold a firearm legitimately has, first of all, to become a licensed shooter. Then, to put it very simply, he has to have his firearms registered. The dealer from whom he buys his firearms, assuming they are bought from a dealer, takes down certain particulars. These particulars are supposed to be registered and put on a computer by the police every quarter or so. Through that procedure, the police should have a full list of all the licensed shooters in the Northern Territory, together with all firearms sold through licensed dealers. You might say that is okay. It is okay as far as it goes, Mr Deputy Speaker, but certain discrepancies have come to light, the chief of which is that all of this information, whilst gathered very energetically by the gun dealers, is not put on computer in the most efficient manner by the police due, no doubt, to a lack of staff.

Several people at the meeting stated that their personal inquiries about guns held against their names on the list compiled by the police contained incorrect entries. They were supposedly holding guns which they had never possessed or which they could not possess. Also, some guns that they did possess were not recorded against their names. What is the use of having a list kept by the police if it is full of such inaccuracies?

Other matters discussed at the meeting related to the possible introduction of a permit to purchase. It was believed that one of the reasons why the Police Ministers wanted to introduce a permit to purchase in the Australian states was that people used other people's licences to buy their guns, which would be rather like using another person's driving licence in the days before licence photos came in. Incidentally, at the Police Ministers' Conference, Tasmania held out completely against any changes to its gun laws. The people at the meeting said that if all shooters' licences had photographs and plastic covers, as do current drivers' licences, it would be very difficult, if not impossible, for people to use other people's gun licences or shooters' licences illegally.

As I said earlier, the current registration system for guns and shooters is showing up certain inefficiencies which have to be addressed by the police. One of the subjects discussed was the possibility of another amnesty. I believe one may be called later this year so that anybody in possession of a gun which is no longer needed can hand it in. At the same time, those people who have guns registered against their names can check to see whether the entry on the list is correct. The people at the meeting most definitely wanted a review of the current registration system of firearms. That came through again and again. Speaker after speaker, both private shooters and representatives of legitimate sporting groups, stated emphatically that they did not want a permit to purchase introduced. The senior police officer present said that any permit-to-purchase measures would be a response to the federal government's threat to restrict the importation of firearms into the country and to restrict their movement between states and territories if such a permit were not introduced in all states and territories.

Another matter discussed at the meeting was the options believed to have been discussed at the meeting of police commissioners. Some of those were: that the firearms held by any single person be restricted to 3, that firearms be held only by police and defence personnel, and that a permit to purchase be introduced for firearms. Each of those options was opposed at the meeting.

Another reason put forward for the introduction of a licence bearing a photograph was to make it more durable. Mr Deputy Speaker, as you probably know, a shooter's licence is just a piece of paper. Mine, which I carry in my handbag, is getting pretty worn around the edges. It is probably barely still in 1 piece - and it has been looked after. If you are a shooter, shooting legitimately, you are supposed to carry this licence on your person at all times. If you are shooting wildfowl legitimately and you happen to fall into a swamp a couple of times, it will not be long before your licence is just a bit of pulp.

The member for Jingili was at the meeting, and I was very interested to hear him promise that amendments would be proposed to the Firearms Act in August. It was made quite clear that the amendments would be to the Firearms Act itself, not the regulations.

The meeting concluded by passing 3 motions. The first indicated that nobody wanted the introduction of a permit to purchase. The second was to stop the introduction of such a permit or to inhibit its introduction in some way. Those present were agreeable to the issue of a licence similar to the current driving licence, in a plasticised cover with a photograph. They would also like an amnesty to be declared soon and for it to be made very easy for anybody to have access to the records to determine that guns registered against their names are the correct ones. The point was made that, in New Zealand, there is no registration system at all of firearms. It was requested that perhaps the Northern Territory Police Force could look at this. In New Zealand, all gun registration details are contained in the shooters' licence booklet.

It is interesting to note the matters that were discussed at a meeting on Friday 18 March 1988 of the Australian Police Ministers Council. A matter of some concern, which was mentioned several times, was the possible introduction of a permit to purchase. I am concerned about that, as were other people at the meeting. In answer to a question from me last week, the Chief Minister said that full consultation had been undertaken with the gun lobby. If that had occurred, he would have known that there was violent opposition to the introduction of a permit to purchase. I am wondering if he spoke strongly enough at the Police Ministers Council against the introduction of a permit to purchase. It does not hold much water with me to say that we are only a territory and have to do as we are told by Canberra whereas the other police ministers come from states. I believe that there are ways of getting around this permit to purchase if it is to be introduced. Several firearms exponents at the meeting started on the right track by introducing certain voluntary restrictions in the licence they want introduced in order to prevent the introduction of a permit to purchase.

Mr Deputy Speaker, this subject is quite extensive and I will not pursue it in detail tonight. However, I believe that the major determinants of whether a society will be plagued by violent crime are its social and cultural attitudes and crime-detering institutions. In trying to restrict the holding and use of firearms, we are trying to treat the symptoms rather than the disease. The disease is something I have spoken about before: the increasing violence in the community. It is evident in the violence we see reported in the media. Violence in the community is encouraged in no small way by the media presentation of violence as something interesting and exciting. If violence is controlled in the community, the use of firearms to attain violent ends will be curbed. The level of violent crime and the weapons used vary significantly among different nations, regions and ethnic groups. The type of weapons and the situations in which they are used are strongly linked to the

attitudes and traditions of individual people or regions, when it comes to coping with problems.

Sensible people realise that we can control the violence we see presented to us in the media. None of us wants to see a repeat of the Hoddle Street murders in the Territory or anywhere else. Nevertheless, we must control the disease itself - and the disease is the violence in the community - before we look at firearms control. Once we have controlled violence in the community, I believe the firearms situation will sort itself out.

Mr REED (Katherine): Mr Speaker, I rise in tonight's adjournment debate to acknowledge the efforts of the Blake family of Mataranka who, over the last couple of years, have constructed a crusher, kiln and mill and other infrastructure just south of Mataranka to produce quicklime. The plant that was constructed over that period was opened officially by the Minister for Labour, Administrative Services and Local Government on Friday 29 April. For the benefit of members, I would like to record the efforts that the Blake family have put into this commendable enterprise.

The equipment produces quicklime cheaply and efficiently, using limestone from a nearby quarry nearby. The limestone is carted to the mill site where it is crushed and burnt in an oil-fired vertical kiln fuelled by waste oil from industry in Darwin. Thus, it provides an efficient and effective way of getting rid of oil whose disposal might otherwise create some environmental problems.

At the moment, the output of the plant is about 2500 t per annum. It has an annual capacity of some 10 000 t. It is interesting to note that the Territory market for quicklime is in the vicinity of 30 000 t. The quicklime produced by the Elsey Lime Company has been sold to various companies in the Northern Territory, in particular the Pine Creek Goldmine, Pacific Goldmines and Dominion Gold. It is used for chemical reaction in the goldmining process. There is additional potential as further goldmines develop and there is also potential for sales to uranium mines which are major users of quicklime. These are presently supplied through arrangements made interstate. The availability of the local lime from the Elsey Lime Plant might provide an opportunity for this Territory industry to obtain a share of those markets.

The impact of the Elsey Lime Company on the market has had the result of considerably reducing the price of quicklime. The price has dropped considerably since this high-quality product has come onto the market. That, in itself, is perhaps an indication of the manner in which some interstate companies and suppliers approach the Territory market and also the potential which the Territory product has in the market, given that its quality is marginally better than that of the interstate product. No doubt, there are great opportunities for this new Territory company.

The Blake family has displayed a high degree of courage and commitment in developing this enterprise. They have put a great deal of effort into it over the last couple of years. The project has demonstrated a high degree of confidence in the Territory's future and I commend the Blake family for its efforts. It is typical of many of the enterprises that have been developed over the years in the Territory. If companies and individuals emulate the Blake family in pursuing such endeavours, I am sure that you will agree, Mr Speaker, that the Territory has a bright future.

Mr COLLINS (Sadadeen): Mr Speaker, I have had a question on notice over the last couple of months in relation to the number of police prosecutors in

Alice Springs and in Darwin, the number of cases handled in each place and the average time it takes in each place for cases to go through the courts. The answers came back. I had the figures but I cannot find the piece of paper in front of me. The number of prosecutors in Alice Springs was 2 and I believe it was 7 in Darwin. One of the key factors was that the 2 prosecutors in Alice Springs had 50% more cases to handle than did their counterparts in Darwin.

In regard to the length of time taken by cases passing through the courts, I was told that no record was kept of such things and that no inference could be drawn. I disagree, because my information is that often the cases here in Darwin seem to go through the courts very quickly whereas many cases in Alice Springs are held up by argument, particularly by legal aid lawyers arguing points of law. The workload of the 2 prosecutors in Alice Springs was greatly increased because of the amount of time taken to hear cases. I know some people in Alice Springs who, having visited Darwin, were astounded at how few minutes were often taken to deal with cases here. It seems that the legal aid people here are not quite so keen to tackle every point of law that they can lay their hands on.

I was pleased to learn through the Assistant Commissioner in Alice Springs, Mr Andrew McNeill, that my question - and I did not confer with him on it beforehand - helped to put a bit of pressure upon the government to place a third police prosecutor in Alice Springs. The position was designated in about 1984 but is only now about to be filled. However, I regret very deeply that one of the police prosecutors in Alice Springs, believing that his work was fairly futile, has decided to resign from his job, a job which he did very well indeed. He is a man known as well to you, Mr Speaker, as to myself and, if the government had shown a little more skill and thought a few days ago, he might well have been a member of this House. It is with considerable regret that I note that Ian McKinlay has resigned from the police force. I believe he was an officer who did a marvellous job as a policeman and also as a police prosecutor.

The other matter I would particularly like to discuss tonight also relates to the courts, particularly in the southern region, and to sentencing. It has been put to me that, since the Criminal Code was enacted, nobody has been convicted of murder in the southern region. I stand to be corrected on that, but I believe my source of information is very much on the ball; I would believe it to be pretty impeccable. Not one person has been convicted of murder. It was also put to me that, before the Criminal Code came in, an Aboriginal person who was convicted of murder did not receive the mandatory life sentence. As you know, Mr Speaker, under the Criminal Code, anybody convicted of murder receives a mandatory life sentence. That is what this Assembly agreed on. It is rather interesting that, since the Criminal Code came into force, in the cases of a number of people who have died through various causes - I dare not say they were murdered - the people involved in their slaying have been convicted of offences other than murder.

One of the key new offences seems to be the committing of a dangerous act. Section 154, I believe, is the section in the Criminal Code which is being used. One celebrated case was put to me. I certainly did not attend it. I have not attended the hearings of any of these cases but they were reported in the paper. This one resulted from a man stabbing a woman something like 200 times. In summing up, the judge said to the jury that this was obviously a ritual punishment that had been dealt out. The defendant's arm must have become tired after 200 stabs so that he was no longer able to judge correctly how deeply he was stabbing, and the person died. The jury bought that particular story, much to the horror of people who were prosecuting.

I think it is a very odd situation that not 1 person has been convicted of murder since the Criminal Code was enacted. The actual head sentence, the sentence imposed by the courts upon people who have been involved in the slaying of some other person, whatever the actual conviction may have been for - manslaughter, committing a dangerous act, section 154 or whatever - has been 4½ years. That is the actual head sentence: 4½ years. The average time actually spent by people in prison has been 20 months.

Many people in Alice Springs are very disturbed about that, very disturbed indeed, and amongst them are some pretty high-up people in the town who are aware of what is going on. It has been put to me that one of the problems in relation to sentencing is that the prosecution does not have the time or the money to be able to oppose decisions of the courts whereas there seems to be no limit to defending counsel's access to money, particularly where legal aid is involved. I have been told that a judge does not like to have a decision challenged and that there is a natural tendency for sentences to be softer as a result of the push from the people who have more money and time to operate in the court system.

To me, the problem is that the rule of law, which is a bastion of our Westminster system and our western civilisation, is seen by many to be breaking down. As I said, people who are high up in the legal system have said to me that not only is it seen to be breaking down, but it is breaking down, and there are examples of people who are not satisfied with what the courts are doing and who are taking the law into their own hands.

I have placed these questions about how many people have been convicted of murder etc on the Question Paper. To my knowledge, to this moment, my questions have not been answered. If the eventual answers back up what I have said - and I repeat that my sources are impeccable - I believe that we have a problem on our hands, a problem which we, as members of this Assembly, should be bringing to the attention of this House and the media and, through them, to the attention of the people of the Territory so that the message can be brought home that people have to be satisfied that the rule of law is upheld and that those who commit crimes are punished in a somewhat more severe manner than that which I have referred to tonight. An average sentence of 20 months for incidents in which people's lives are taken seems to me to be pretty jolly trivial. I think people's lives are worth a little more than an average of 20 months in gaol.

I look forward to the answers to my questions. No doubt, considerable research may have to be done to get all those figures together, but it concerns me greatly and it certainly concerns a lot of people, particularly many of those who are closely involved with the court system.

My third point tonight relates to the Power and Water Authority and the operators of the Alice Springs Power Station. That station began to operate with a dual system of gas and diesel well before Darwin went over to its gas turbines. Alice, of course, also has a gas turbine. When Darwin went from its Stokes Hill station to gas turbines, there seemed to be some sweetheart deals for the operators. I understand that, on average, the pay of the Darwin operators is 2 levels higher than that of the Alice Springs operators, even though running a dual-powered electric generating machine is considerably more involved than running a turbine. In fact, I believe the day will come when our turbines can be operated from a control room by 1 operator or, at the most, 2 at a given time.

I raised this matter with the minister in a previous sittings and he said: 'Oh well, the operators in Alice Springs can go to arbitration if they wish'. However, Mr Speaker, as you know, Alice Springs being your home town, those operators are not the militant union type. Far from it. They only joined a union reluctantly and they picked on the least militant union of all when they did so. Militancy is just not in their nature. They are a pretty strong band of fellows and they like to do a good job in delivering power to our town. I think the government is making a terrible mistake by insisting that they go to arbitration. That will only force them further and deeper into the union, something which they do not want.

I believe that the minister would be well advised to go and have a talk to those men and settle the differences without going to arbitration. The men have a trump card up their sleeve. If they turn off the gas for 24 hours and run on diesel instead, the cost difference is many thousands of dollars. They will not cut off the power to the town but they can sure give the government a bit of a sting. That is not the sort of thing they would normally talk about. It is foreign to them. However, they did it once in an attempt to bring some sanity into their situation. As I said when I raised the matter on a previous occasion, they were not demanding that their pay go up by 2 levels; they just wanted to be treated fairly and equally with their counterparts in Darwin. I believe that the minister would do well to keep these men onside and to talk to them, rather than forcing them deeper into the union and to arbitration.

Mr LANHUPIUY (Arnhem): Mr Speaker, I was going to speak on a couple of issues in relation to my electorate in tonight's adjournment debate. However, due to the lateness of the hour, I will deal with only 1 of them.

I was not the only person who was upset about a report in the NT News on 13 May. It was written by a Debbie Grimwade and related to communities in my electorate. I believe that the lady concerned went out, on ministerial invitation, to do a report on a ceremony which was to take place at Milingimbi in which 9 health workers, who had recently graduated, were to receive certificates for their work in the field of Aboriginal health.

I believe that the reporter concerned went out with the approval of the Minister for Health and Community Services and was given a briefing on the plane without the knowledge of the community concerned. I have had discussions with people in both Milingimbi and Galiwinku in relation to the matter. Those people were greatly embarrassed and offended by the report which appeared on 13 May and have asked me to take the matter up with the authorities concerned. I do not necessarily want to blame the reporter but I am concerned that, apparently, she went to Milingimbi on the Minister for Health and Community Service's permit. She obviously went out to attend a ceremony which I personally thought was a matter of great achievement for my people.

I heard that, on landing at Milingimbi, she did not announce that she was from the NT News. She was with the group representing the Minister for Health and Community Services. She did not just cover the news. She wrote a report which appeared in the NT News on 13 May under the headline 'Hope Amid Hopelessness'. Headlines of that sort do not create good feelings and race relationships between black and white. They are the very reason why Aboriginal people in such communities do not readily give the okay for visits by reporters who want to do stories about kava, petrol sniffing, and other matters that are of interest to the community at large. After reading the careless sort of report that appeared last Friday, one wonders how many people feel offended and embarrassed by such reports.

I can give you an example, Mr Speaker. When the Minister for Education went to Milingimbi to open the school library, the superintendent at Nhulunbuy advised us that he would have a video camera with him. That is the sort of respect that communities would like. Otherwise, it is like going into someone's backyard and telling that person what type of house he or his family keeps. You do not go into someone's house and rubbish his way of life or the type of accommodation he has or tell him how many dogs he is supposed to have. That is how the people at Milingimbi and Elcho Island felt. I certainly would like an explanation from the Minister for Health and Community Services about the person who made that report and whether she went there in her own right as a reporter from the NT News or whether she had assistance from the Minister for Health and Community Services.

Nevertheless, I am sure that the people there enjoyed themselves during the day. If it were not for that event, the day would have been thoroughly enjoyed by all the people who attended the ceremony. When they see the type of report that appeared in that issue of the NT News, people in communities sometimes feel wary of reporters from the NT News, the ABC or from interstate who wish to report achievements of communities.

I would like some answers from the Minister for Health and Community Services. After he reads today's Hansard, I ask him to write to the community either advising them of his mistake or explaining the situation regarding the reporter, Debbie Grimwade. I believe he should write a letter to the community explaining his actions.

Motion agreed to; the Assembly adjourned.

Mr Speaker Vale took the Chair at 10 am.

STATEMENT
Departure of Journalists

Mr SPEAKER: Honourable members, I am advised that 2 of the longest-serving members of the parliamentary Press Gallery will be leaving Darwin shortly to pursue their careers elsewhere. They are Mr Andy Bruyn, President of the Press Gallery who, as members will be aware, had much to do with the formal establishment of the Press Gallery, and Mr Dave Nason who has been interviewing members in this place for a considerable time. Honourable members, I wish to thank both those gentlemen for their services to the Territory and wish them well in their future careers. I hope that their expectations of greener pastures come true.

SPECIAL ADJOURNMENT

Mr COULTER (Leader of Government Business): Mr Speaker, I move that the Assembly, at its rising, adjourn until Tuesday 16 August 1988 at 10 am or such other time and or date as may be set by Mr Speaker pursuant to sessional order.

Motion agreed to.

TABLED PAPERS
Public Accounts Committee - Third and Fourth Reports

Mr PALMER (Karama): Mr Speaker, I table the Third Report of the Public Accounts Committee entitled 'Report on Auditor-General's Annual Reports 1985-86' and the Fourth Report of the Public Accounts Committee entitled 'Accelerated Year End Spending'. I move that the reports be printed.

Motion agreed to.

MOTION
Noting Third and Fourth Reports of
Public Accounts Committee

Mr PALMER (Karama): Mr Speaker, I move that the Assembly take note of the papers.

Firstly, and before speaking to these reports, I would like to put on the public record my appreciation of the efforts of the members for Araluen and Port Darwin on the committee. I want to thank them for the support they gave me as Chairman, not in a political sense, but in terms of the effort they made to arrive at an understanding of the work of the committee and the issues before it. I wish them well in their new roles and trust that the incoming members will offer the same support.

Turning to the reports, I will deal firstly with the committee's Report on the Auditor-General's Annual Reports 1985-86. To some it may appear tardy to wait until May of 1988 to bring down a report on the year ended June 1986. However, many of the issues raised by the Auditor-General in his reports are attended to immediately by the department or instrumentality concerned and the problems rectified. In many cases, that occurs even before the tabling of the Auditor-General's report and the committee considers it to be a waste of effort to follow up criticisms in relation to problems which have already been rectified.

The committee views its role as one of monitoring departmental reactions to criticisms raised by the Auditor-General and ensuring that all necessary actions are taken to rectify problems and that the Auditor-General's criticisms are satisfied. The committee therefore considers it inappropriate to report to the Assembly on the Auditor-General's reports during the currency of those reports. In more lucid terms, that means that the committee considers that it is its proper and most useful function to call to account those departments and instrumentalities which have been the subject of similar criticisms in 2 or more of the Auditor-General's reports.

It is interesting to note that the bringing down of this report breaks new ground, at least as far as Australian public accounts committees are concerned. Ours is the only committee which reports specifically to parliament on the reports of the Auditor-General. It is of little use denying that the Annual Report of the Auditor-General 1985-86 found that, in respect of the matters on which he chose to report, the situation was anything but satisfactory. In following up the issues of concern, the committee liaised closely with the Office of the Auditor-General with a view to ensuring that its efforts were directed towards those issues which he considered to be the most critical. The committee wrote to each of the departments and instrumentalities concerned, drawing attention to the issues raised. It sought advice on actions taken and proposed, and time scales for resolution of those issues. The issues raised with the departments and instrumentalities, and their responses, are contained in the report.

The next step was for the committee to test the veracity of the responses with the Auditor-General. The Auditor-General was generally satisfied with the actions taken or being undertaken by the departments or instrumentalities concerned, and his comments are also contained within the report. However, there were some issues which the committee considered should be highlighted and further brought to the attention of the Assembly. These issues are discussed within the body of the report and lead to a number of conclusions and recommendations relating mainly to the adequacy, accuracy and timeliness of the government's financial reporting. The committee has noted, however, recent moves towards providing more adequate information and recommends that the Treasurer keep the parliament advised of any proposed changes in the form of government accounts.

The committee considers it imperative that, in the interests of proper and informed debate in relation to the government's budget, the financial statements for the preceding year be presented to parliament prior to the budget debate being brought on. To be more specific, the parliament should have access to the financial statements of the preceding year prior to the third reading of the government's Appropriation Bill.

In relation to moneys and public property written off, the committee is in receipt of further information from Treasury and may make further comment on that in another report. In relation to the hedging of contracts to counter foreign exchange fluctuations, the issue was raised at a time when the Australian dollar was much more volatile than appears to be the case at the moment. At that stage, the issue was more critical. However, the committee is of the view that we should not become complacent and that an appropriate policy should be put in place.

The committee was concerned with the sheer volume of issues raised in relation to the Northern Territory Housing Commission. That volume suggests a lack of care, and disregard for accounting standards in the commission's approach to financial management. However, it should be noted that the

Auditor-General has advised that matters are improving notwithstanding some weaknesses still contained within the system. Heads of statutory authorities should take cognisance of the fact that, notwithstanding that they may not be subject to the rigours of the Treasurer's directions, they are still responsible to account to parliament for the proper and professional management of the finances obtained by them either as a result of allocations approved by parliament or through direct revenue-raising from the people.

I turn now to the Report on Accelerated Year End Spending. This report has arisen out of a direct reference to the committee from the Chief Minister. This report has also taken some time to reach the Assembly. As with the 2 reports that preceded it, the committee's initial learning cycle and the Territory election of March 1987 had an effect in terms of restricting the work of the committee. It has not been until the last 12 months that the committee has been able to settle down and address the references before it.

It is a widespread and generally-held belief that government departments accelerate spending in the latter months of the financial year. In addressing the reference, the committee set itself 2 tasks, the first being to ascertain whether or not the allegations of accelerated year-end spending were true and, secondly, if true, whether such practices were wasteful. In short, the committee found that, indeed, there are higher levels of spending at the end of the financial year compared with the first three-quarters of the financial year. The committee found it difficult, in the absence of recognised performance criteria, to determine whether such practices were in themselves inefficient.

The committee considers that, whilst the Northern Territory is locked into a system of annual appropriation of funds with a system of cash accounting for its expenditure, relatively higher levels of expenditure in the final months of each financial year will remain endemic. That is not to say that there is anything radically wrong with the system of cash accounting employed by western democracies. However, one of the perceived downsides of the system is that the objective of annually exhausting all of the appropriated funds can militate against the improved efficiency of government and its agencies.

The former head of the Department of Community Development said in evidence to the committee:

There are 2 traditional sins in financial management in government. Those are under-expenditure and over-expenditure. However absurd the proposition is, there is no recognition for coming in under budget and, equally, no understanding of over-spending.

The committee recognises that those are sentiments widely held within the public service and it is unfortunate that such sentiments manifest themselves in departments striving to meet expenditure rather than operational objectives. The clearest example of the almost carnal urge displayed by some executive officers to exhaust their appropriation came as a result of a committee inquiry to the former Department of Business, Technology and Communications.

An internal audit report commissioned by the incoming secretary following the department's absorption into the newly-created Department of Industries and Development revealed that the department had decided to utilise remaining funds by identifying certain requirements and placing orders to maximise expenditure by the end of June 1986. The effort to maximise expenditure was not to be constrained by red tape. Government contracts were not used.

Payments were made in advance of receipt of goods. Construction work was carried out without reference to the proper authorities or calling for quotations or tenders. In fact, at the time of the internal audit investigation, the department was unaware that goods which had been paid for some 4 or 5 months previously had still not been delivered. The committee was unable to assess whether such actions were the exception rather than the rule, but prefers to think of them as the exception.

The committee also saw the example involving the Department of Business, Technology and Communications as symptomatic of the view that public accountability merely means being required to account for expenditures in terms of the Financial Administration and Audit Act and the Treasurer's Directions. The committee's investigations have highlighted the fact that departments and instrumentalities need to be brought to account for more than the cash expenditure. There is a lack of obvious performance monitoring of functions and mechanisms within government. It is the perception as much as the fact that led to the commissioning of this report and it is the perception as much as the fact that governments are not as accountable to the public for the expenditure of public moneys as democracy demands that they should be.

I take this opportunity to advise the House that, at a meeting of the Public Accounts Committee to be held later today, it is my intention to seek the committee's approval to immediately re-initiate inquiries into accelerated year-end spending in relation to the financial year 1987-88. Following the committee's approval, I will be seeking certain information from all departments and instrumentalities in relation to their expenditure patterns for the current financial year. This action results from certain information brought to my attention recently. This proposed course of action is supported by my colleague, the Treasurer. I commend these papers to the House.

Mr LEO (Nhulunbuy): Mr Speaker, I do not intend to address at any great length the various figures and revelations contained in the reports of the Public Accounts Committee. Instead, I will restrict my comments to the section of the Report on Accelerated Year End Spending which causes me most concern. That section commences on page 12.

It became clear, after discussion with the heads of various instrumentalities, particularly the head of the public service - the Public Service Commissioner - that nobody really knows what he is doing. A big problem within the Northern Territory Public Service relates to performance criteria. The legislation may implicitly contain some performance criteria. For instance, performance criteria for the Public Service Commissioner could fairly be said to be contained in subsections 14(1), (2) and (3) of the Public Service Act. I will read those subsections for the benefit of honourable members. They are included in the report, but their importance cannot be overstated.

Subsection 14(1) of the Public Service Act, Duties of the Commissioner, reads as follows: 'In addition to such other duties as are by this act imposed on the commissioner, the commissioner shall take all necessary steps to promote and improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the public service of the Northern Territory'. Mr Speaker, I think most people would have a fairly clear understanding of what that means.

The intention was that the spirit of the act would not be in any way eroded over time. That was made very clear by Goff Letts when the act was originally introduced. He said, as page 808 of the Hansard for December 1976 shows: 'There will be a Public Service Commissioner for the Northern

Territory charged with promoting and developing the efficiency of the public service'. That was clearly the intention of the then Majority Leader, Goff Letts, when he introduced the legislation. He made further reference to the matter in summing up:

If the Public Service Commissioner, having read what has been said and having had discussions on this matter, does not understand or feels unable to comply with the spirit of this legislation as well as the precise letter of it, then there is only one thing that the legislature can do and that is return to the legislation and correct any such deficiencies which may have become evident in its early operation.

Mr Speaker, to date subsection 14(1) of the Public Service Act has not been amended. Therefore, one can assume only that it is the intention of the government and the Chief Minister and, I assume, the Public Service Commissioner, that it should remain in its present form. It clearly says that the Public Service Commissioner's duties are 'to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the public service'. That simple expression could be used as the basis for developing performance criteria for the position of Public Service Commissioner. The duties of the commissioner could flow from it. Job descriptions are used in every field of endeavour and subsection 14(1) gives a fair indication of what a job description for the commissioner would be.

Mr Speaker, we now come to another problem. This problem is evident in the public records of the committee and I am not disclosing any confidential matters. I asked the Public Service Commissioner a number of questions. I will not use names here, for the sake of the gentleman involved. I said: 'From what you have said, I take it that you accept that you are responsible for an efficient and effective public service within the Northern Territory. Is that what you said?' He replied: 'No. I did not say that'. So the Public Service Commissioner does not consider that he is responsible for an efficient and ...

Mr Dale: He did not say that.

Mr LEO: Okay. I will continue reading from the transcript of the meeting. I said: 'Perhaps you could tell me who is responsible for the efficient and effective public service within the Northern Territory. If it is not you, who is it?' The commissioner replied: 'I repeat that I am responsible for the control of and effective use of human resources. If you are looking for effectiveness and efficiency in other terms, such as through the use of money and other non-human resources, that is under the control of each CEO'. I then said: 'All right. We will stay with human resources. Would you accept that you are responsible for the efficient and effective utilisation of personnel in the public service? Is that what you are saying?' His response: 'No. That is not what I am saying'.

Mr Speaker, the real problem is - although I do not say that this is the fault of any particular individual - that we have a head of the public service who does not accept the clear intent of subsection 14(1) of the Public Service Act. He does not accept that he is responsible for the efficient and effective operation of the public service. Subsection 14(2) shows that that relates not only to human resources but to financial resources or non-human resources. That is a real problem in the Northern Territory. The Public Service Commissioner does not accept that those are his duties and his lot in life as the commissioner.

The individual does not matter. The person who holds down the job does not matter. However, the Chief Minister and the government should point out that section 14 of the Public Service Act clearly indicates what the commissioner's job is. If he does not like it or cannot handle it, that is fine. The government can get somebody who can. However, until that is achieved, the numero uno and el supremo of the Northern Territory Public Service does not know his job. Mr Speaker, that is a real problem for all of us. The bloke in charge does not know what his job is and cannot do it. We have to confront that because, unless we do, we are doomed to the continuing malaise which has been a feature of public service activity in the Northern Territory since year dot. Unless we can do that, the Territory has a very limited future in terms of better utilising its human and financial resources.

There is a clear need for the Public Service Commissioner to be made fully aware of what his job is. He needs to be told by the appropriate minister that subsection (1) of section 14 of the Public Service Act exists, that subsection (2) of section 14 of the Public Service Act exists and that subsection (3) of section 14 of the Public Service Act exists. He should be told: 'These exist. If you do not like it, we have a problem. You either quit your job or we change the legislation'. It has to be one or the other; we cannot have it both ways.

There needs to be a method of assessing performance against specific criteria. That is done very easily in private industry. A manager is appointed and, at the end of the year, he shows a profit or he shows a loss. I accept that it is far more difficult to introduce and use performance criteria in the public service. Nevertheless, that is what we must do. Make no bones about it, this year's attack by the Grants Commission on the Territory coffers is not the end of the road. Auditors-General throughout Australia, particularly the Commonwealth Auditor-General, are insisting on a greater degree of accountability. They are not fooling around. They are saying that they want to know how we are spending our funds and they want to be satisfied that we are spending them efficiently and effectively. If they consider that we are not doing that, we will have a big problem. We must have a Public Service Commissioner who clearly understands his duties as described in the act and as recorded in Hansard at the time of the act's introduction. His performance of his duties must be subject to assessment. Is he achieving some degree of efficiency in respect of human resources? Is he achieving some degree of effective utilisation of human resources? Is he ensuring that money is expended efficiently? If we cannot use such criteria and answer such questions, we will be slaughtered by the federal government. It will have us on toast every year until we can do it.

Mr Speaker, if you want an example of this lack of accountability and lack of purpose, read the Annual Report 1986-87 of the Public Service Commissioner of the Northern Territory. I challenge you to find one word in there which describes how the Public Service Commissioner at that time efficiently or effectively carried out his functions. I challenge anybody in this House to find a single syllable about efficiency or effective utilisation of personnel or moneys within the Northern Territory. What is more, Mr Speaker, we receive this report 9 months after the end of the financial year. What good is a report 9 months after the end of the financial year? It is stupid. It serves no public purpose and it does nothing to contribute to an efficient, effective public service. It is a waste of paper; we might as well have saved the pine trees.

I hope that the minister responsible for the Public Service Commissioner takes the time to read the legislation, together with the record of my remarks

today and the commissioner's report. He will see that the commissioner's report does not relate even remotely to the requirement under the act. The requirement under the act is stated as follows:

The commissioner shall, as soon as practicable after 30 June, prepare and furnish to the minister for presentation to the Legislative Assembly a report on the conditions and efficiency of the public service and his activities in the preceding financial year.

Subsection 14(6) says: 'The minister shall table in the Legislative Assembly each report furnished under subsections (1) or (5) within 6 sitting days'. One possibility is that the minister did not see the commissioner's report until some time in March or April. If that were not the case, the minister would have breached the act and I doubt very much that he would do that.

The other possibility is what I believe has actually occurred. It is that the commissioner believes that 'as soon as practicable' means 8 months after the end of the year covered by his report. Producing a report at that stage is a stupid waste of time, effort and energy. It certainly does not comply with the spirit in which Goff Letts introduced this legislation. It does not comply with the spirit of the act. It does not mean anything in terms of developing a public service in the Northern Territory. Even more crucially, in terms of this legislature and the entire Northern Territory, it will continue to cause us problems when we go to the Grants Commission unable to justify how we have spent our money. Its members are not playing games. This year was only the first round in what will be a long, hard blue. If we cannot get the numero uno, the top dog in the public service, to understand his job and if we cannot develop some method of assessing whether he is carrying it out effectively, we are wasting our time. If we cannot do that, the purpose of self-government is a complete farce and there is no point in introducing legislation in this place. If it means nothing to the head of the public service, why should it mean anything to any other public servant in the Northern Territory?

Mr McCARTHY (Labour, Administrative Services and Local Government): Mr Speaker, in responding to the report from the Public Accounts Committee and the comments we have just heard, I have to say that I believe the member for Nhulunbuy has missed the point. The Public Service Commissioner's responsibility under subsection 14(2) is not related to the financial administration of individual departments. Certainly, he is responsible for the skill levels of the accounting areas in departments. He has responsibility for the skill levels of all people in the public service. The measure of whether or not transactions are accountably made in a financial sense is provided for in the Financial Administration and Audit Act. I quote from page 15 of Report Number 4 of the Public Accounts Committee:

The Financial Administration and Audit Act is designed to provide a range of controls over the administration of public finance. In contrast to the efficiency, effectiveness and economy aspects of the Public Service Act, the Financial Administration and Audit Act largely confines itself to the safekeeping of the public purse to ensure money is only spent according to authorised government programs. It does not concern itself with value for money considerations.

It appears that the Public Accounts Committee itself is aware of where responsibility rests for ensuring that money appropriated by this Assembly is actually spent on what it was appropriated for. That is prescribed by the

Financial Administration and Audit Act and not the Public Service Act. Nor does subsection 14(2) of the Public Service Act place any responsibility on the Public Service Commissioner for ensuring that value for money, whatever is meant by that, is obtained.

Having dispensed with the Public Service Commissioner's very limited role under subsection 14(2), I will now explain to the member for Nhulunbuy what happens in the Department of Labour, Administrative Services and Local Government in relation to the promotion of an efficient and effective public service. I refer honourable members to page 1 of the commissioner's 1986-87 report, where it says:

A freeze was placed on recruitment and the Public Service Commissioner reported regularly on the progress towards the overall reduction in the size of the public service and the anticipated reduction of 400 people in the public sector. In accordance with government policy, reductions were to be achieved through natural attrition.

Mr Speaker, we actually achieved a decrease in that period of 347. The report continues:

To rationalise and coordinate the activities of government, to improve the delivery of services to the community and reduce administrative costs, all industry departments, except Mines and Energy, were grouped into 1 department of Industries and Development.

The report goes on to detail what has happened to reduce the number of people in the public service over that period and to streamline the public service. On page 14, it says:

As part of the specific cost-cutting measures, the maximum staffing allocations of all departments were held at existing levels and a general freeze was placed on recruitment to vacancies, with the approval of the Public Service Commissioner required for all recruitment action above the base-grade.

Thus, the Public Service Commissioner had responsibility for the levels and the numbers of people in the service.

All media advertising was subject to the approval of the Public Service Commissioner's Office and was scrutinised in relation to the availability of people within the service for transfer and promotion to such positions.

We also recruited 293 students through the school leaver program in order to cater adequately for positions at that level. The report continues on page 16:

Interpers is a computerised service-wide system that allows user departments and authorities to record and manage their staffing arrangements. In addition, the data held on Interpers is used by the office to help describe the physical characteristics of the public sector in such areas as recruitment and training. The data is also used for equal opportunity studies and other requirements by various departments which need service-wide data.

In November 1986, the Chief Minister directed that equal opportunity management plans be introduced into government departments and instrumentalities. Draft general orders and guidelines were subsequently prepared and have been circulated for comment. An interdepartmental working party will consider and finalise general orders and guidelines which will assist departments and instrumentalities to begin development and implementation of their equal opportunity management plans in 1988.

Second-tier increases in pay or conditions under the second-tier principle allowed for increases not exceeding 4% of wages and salaries. The decision also provided for arbitration on superannuation claims. The Public Service Commissioner successfully negotiated a truly cost-neutral 4% second-tier agreement with the Trades and Labor Council. At that level, he has shown that he is fulfilling his role in keeping down the cost of government.

The group intake program had been under way in the public service for some time. This is a training program mainly for Aboriginal people coming into the public service. As a major recruitment initiative, the Northern Territory Public Service group intake to the Aboriginal Trainee Program was begun in 1986 to assist departments in meeting the government's objective to increase the number of Aboriginals employed within the public service throughout the Northern Territory.

The commissioner goes on to give details of the group intake scheme, a scheme which has been extremely successful.

Mr Speaker, I could take up much more of the Assembly's time by quoting from this report, but surely I have made the point that the Public Service Commissioner is fulfilling his duty of creating and maintaining a sound and truly cost-effective public service. The department is engaged in a variety of activities aimed at assisting departments in the better delivery of services to the public of the Northern Territory. Of course, more needs to be done, but I can assure the member for Nhulunbuy that I will not be instructing the Public Service Commissioner to waste his valuable time on what the member for Nhulunbuy considers his responsibilities to be under section 14 of the act.

It may be of interest to members that a considerable amount of work has been done by the Treasury Department on budget performance indicators, and I believe this action is in line with the introduction of program budgeting in government departments. All this has occurred without any puerile, gratuitous comment from the opposition.

Mr Speaker, I will refer to a letter which the Public Service Commissioner wrote to the Chairman of the Public Accounts Committee in response to a series of questions. In the letter, the commissioner said:

When addressing the question of effectiveness and efficiency within the context of the Public Service Act, it is a mistake to confine the discussion to individual sections of the act. Rather, the total act needs to be considered as a whole.

Further on in the same letter he says:

As far as section 14(2) is concerned, I hold the view that this section gives authority to the role of internal and external audit functions. To this end, section 26 has been used to create an establishment for both these functions... Section 26(2) requires me to consult with CEOs prior to responding to the Administrator. Such consultation aims at ensuring that there is agreement as to the numbers and level for the efficient and effective administration of the functions that are held in individual departments.

During the course of the Public Accounts Committee hearing, the chairman asked: 'Turning to your duties of Public Service Commissioner, section 14(1) of the Public Service Act states, in part, "In addition to such other duties as are by this act imposed on the commissioner, the commissioner shall take all necessary steps to promote and improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the public service". First, Syd, I would ask you to explain to the committee how you perceive your role and how you fulfil your functions under section 14(1) of the Public Service Act'. Mr Saville replied: 'I think it is very difficult to extract a particular section of the act and say such and such happens. The act is related to the organisation of the public service and the employment of public servants'.

In further questioning, the chairman asked: 'Syd, could you give us your view of your interpretation of your responsibilities as commissioner in relation to section 14(2) of the Public Service Act?'. Mr Saville replied: 'There is nothing specific in the general orders that have been issued but, as I remarked before, my interpretation of that section of the act was that it referred to the time when the internal audit function was part of this office. The Office of the Public Service Commissioner played a very provocative part in looking at transactions and accountability etc. Once the internal audit function was removed from the office, the actual accounting system etc was removed from the control of the Public Service Commissioner'. The chairman went on to say: 'What you are saying is that in fact the Office of the Public Service Commissioner now has no responsibility under section 14(2) of the act'. The Public Service Commissioner replied: 'Only through the disciplinary procedures'. He went on to explain other matters in that regard. The chairman asked: 'So you would have no structural people in your office who look after duties under this particular part of the act?'. Mr Saville replied: 'No, there is no staff to do that'.

Mr Speaker, it is very clear that the functions of the Public Service Commissioner have varied slightly over the years and that, in fact, responsibility for the good management of departments is clearly in the hands of the Chief Executive Officers. They are responsible to their ministers to ensure that the public purse is well looked after. Section 14(2) of the act does not go into every detail of the financial administration of departments. That is clearly the responsibility of Chief Executive Officers. If the opposition bothered to obtain a legal opinion it would find that the responsibility now rests with departments and the monitoring rests with Treasury. That is not to say that the Public Service Act does not need review. In fact, it is under review at this time and any parts of the act which appear to be in any way superfluous or misleading will be clarified.

I am rather disappointed that the member for Nhulunbuy took this opportunity to cast aspersions on the Public Service Commissioner. Quite clearly, in the course of the committee's discussions, the commissioner hit a raw nerve of the member for Nhulunbuy who is now taking an opportunity to swipe back.

Mr SMITH (Opposition Leader): Mr Speaker, I will return to the comments made by the Minister for Labour, Administrative Services and Local Government shortly.

Mr Speaker, during the last 12 months, we have seen 2 official government publications which say quite amazing things about the level and standard of financial reporting within the Northern Territory Public Service. We only need to go to the conclusion of the 'Report on Accelerated Year End Spending' to see one of those amazing statements. Let me read it to you, Mr Speaker: 'The committee is also concerned that there appears to be no area of government which accepts responsibility for the monitoring of financial performance within the public service'. That is a very damning statement, made coolly and calmly by a committee consisting of members of this House, after discussion with a large number of public servants. It says that we do not have in place, within the Northern Territory Public Service, a proper system for monitoring financial performance.

This is not the first time such a sentiment has been expressed. It was expressed last year in the annual report of the Auditor-General for the year ended 30 June 1987. I quote from page 13, under the heading 'Financial Reporting by Departments': 'All in all, however, the financial reporting by departments is disjointed. There is no consistent approach across all departments and there is generally a lack of meaningful financial information'. That is highlighted in heavy black type. In short, the financial information which is presently available in departments does not satisfy the objectives of general purpose financial reports; namely, 'to disclose information (a) useful in making economic decisions and (b) to satisfy accountability'. I commented on that when the Auditor-General's report was tabled.

That report indicated a situation so bad that it featured in a full-page article in the Business Review Weekly towards the end of last year. It indicated, once again, that we have a situation in the Northern Territory where, according to the Auditor-General, not only is the government not keeping financial information in a form which is satisfactory to him, but that it is not keeping financial information in a form that 'will be useful in making economic decisions'. In other words, the government is not keeping sufficient financial information in a proper form that enables it to make economic decisions about its own level of performance. You cannot get any more damning than that, Mr Speaker. There could not be a more damning report. We have seen it twice in the last 12 months, once from the Auditor-General and now from a committee of this parliament, the Public Accounts Committee. It is time that the government did something about it.

All that we have heard from the government is the minister saying: 'It is not my permanent head's fault that this is happening. It is not his job to provide this information'. I have no doubt that any reasonable person reading section 14 of the Public Service Act would come to the conclusion that it is the job of the Public Service Commissioner to promote and improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the public service. How on earth can he promote the efficiency and effectiveness of the public service if he limits himself to this role, as described by the Public Service Commissioner on page 13:

I repeat that I am responsible for the control of and the effective use of the human resources. If you are looking at effectiveness and efficiency in other terms, such as through the use of money and other non-human resources, that is under the control of each Chief Executive Officer.

I put it to you, Mr Speaker, that a Public Service Commissioner cannot do his job in improving the efficiency and effectiveness of the public service if all he is prepared to do is look at human resources. Obviously, he has to do more than that. He had to look at non-human resources as well. He is given a charter under subsection 14(2) to do that. He is not doing it and the results are obvious to the Auditor-General and to the PAC.

But that begs the question, Mr Speaker. If the Public Service Commissioner is not doing the job which the act prescribes for him, who is doing that job? In other words, who is promoting the efficiency and effectiveness of the public service in terms of the non-human resources? Judging by the evidence given to us in these 2 reports, the answer must be that no one is undertaking that important job in the Northern Territory Public Service. It is time government members absorbed that message. Somebody needs to be made accountable for that job. I do not care who does it, whether it is the Public Service Commissioner, the heads of departments or somebody else, as long as he is uniformly accountable across the system, provides the public service with meaningful information on which to base decisions and satisfies the Auditor-General and the Public Accounts Committee. Unfortunately, that is not the case now.

The Public Accounts Committee has pointed out an extremely serious situation in terms of financial accountability in the Northern Territory Public Service. Perhaps now that some of its own members in this Chamber have pointed it out, the government may be tempted to do something about it. There is certainly very little evidence that it did anything in response to the Auditor-General's report which led to the embarrassment of a full-page spread in the BRW. Now is the time for something to be done to address this very serious problem in the Northern Territory Public Service.

Let me refer to some of the other findings of the Auditor-General. He says: 'Urgent attention needs to be given to the quality of financial reports produced in respect of the various separate government activities and operations and of the government as a whole'. He says: 'Delays are occurring in the production of financial reports which often means that the information has lost much of its relevance by the time it becomes available, as well as adding significantly to the accounting and audit costs'. Members might wonder what progress has been made. This House still receives outrageously late annual reports. At these sittings, we are receiving annual reports for the financial year that ended 11 months ago. That is also not good enough.

He went on to conclude, when examining the public accounts and other accounts, that there is 'generally a lack of meaningful financial information'. Not surprisingly, it was the Treasury that attracted a significant number of critical comments. It was, for example, criticised on the following grounds: '(1) failure to adequately document and implement controls of financial systems; (2) internal control weaknesses and non-compliance with what controls were in existence at the Government Accounting Bureau; (3) computer edit reports not evidenced as checked; (4) non-performance of cash accounts; and (5) inadequate claim examination procedures'.

There is no doubt that there is an extremely serious situation within the Northern Territory Public Service in terms of its financial accountability. It has been revealed by 2 reports: the Public Accounts Committee report and the Auditor-General's report. These come at it from 2 separate angles but arrive at the same conclusion.

For the last 3 or 4 years, the opposition has been pointing out the inadequacies of the government's accounting system. We have been pointing out that, although we might have one of the most advanced computer systems in government in Australia, we are not using that advanced computer prowess to provide ourselves with better government financial information. Until we do so, we will not have an effective system for measuring the effectiveness of the money that we spend on various government departments. In other words, to use some of the jargon, we must start measuring the outputs as well as the inputs. That old idea of one-line budgeting and of adding 5% each year to the existing line items will not wash any longer. We need to develop an effective system for measuring what comes out of government departments. It is easy in some areas and it is more difficult in others.

However, we are not in a situation of having to invent the process ourselves because it has been used for years in other places in Australia and overseas. For example, the concept of performance budgeting has been used in South Australia for a number of years. It goes by other names as well. Essentially, what it does is to put in place a budget program which enables department heads and, through those department heads, ministers, to make decisions on whether we are obtaining value for money in all departments. I would have thought that, at times when money is tight and when our budget is not keeping pace with inflation, there is an economic imperative to address those questions and to ensure that we obtain maximum value for the dollar. We cannot do that, however, with our present budgeting system.

I must say that I was encouraged to hear the Minister for Labour, Administrative Services and Local Government report that some attempts were being made to implement performance budgeting measures. That is positive news, Mr Speaker. I hope that we will start to see the fruits of that in the budget papers presented to this House in the next budget session. That is where the proof of the pudding will be - in the type of information made available to this House and to the public generally. Debate in this House will be much more meaningful if a performance budgeting system can be put in place. Until we have a performance budgeting approach to the financial affairs of our administration, the government will not know where its money is going. Nor will we have a system of checking whether we are getting value for our money in the various programs and activities right across all spheres of government.

Mr Speaker, to return to the reports of the Public Accounts Committee, I would like to congratulate the committee on its work. It has obviously spent considerable time taking evidence and putting together the reports. I would like to signify the opposition's support for the comments made by the Chairman of the Public Accounts Committee on radio this morning when he said that he intended to take back to the PAC a reference to check the end-of-year accountability of public service departments this financial year. I am sure that more than one person within the public service scurried around a little on hearing that particular piece of news. By issuing these reports, by doing its job thoroughly, by being critical where necessary, the Public Accounts Commission has done this House and the public of the Northern Territory a big favour. It has shown that it can provide a meaningful and extremely useful role, as the opposition indicated in all those fruitless years of advocating the establishment of such a body.

Members opposite often say that the opposition never contributes anything meaningful to public life in the Northern Territory. The Public Accounts Committee is one of the major contributions that the Labor Party has made to proper scrutiny of government practices in the Northern Territory and we

justifiably take pride in it. Perhaps the member for Fannie Bay, the most persistent and vocal critic of the establishment of the Public Accounts Committee over a period of years, might feel moved to rise to acknowledge that the Public Accounts Committee does have a useful purpose and has fulfilled it through these reports.

Debate adjourned.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT
Proposed Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission

Mr HATTON (Chief Minister): Mr Speaker, honourable members are well aware of the Commonwealth proposal for an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission, known as ATSIC, which was announced in federal parliament by the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs, Hon Gerry Hand, on 10 December 1987 in his statement 'Foundations for the Future'. They will also be aware that a revised proposal was released on 27 April this year which significantly deferred the proposed establishment date of ATSIC from 1 July 1988 to 1 January 1989 to allow for further consultation and the preparation of necessary legislation. The federal minister indicated in his statement that the legislation would be introduced early in the federal budget session. As an aside, one cannot but wonder when the federal minister intends to find time to consult in any meaningful way with the state and territory governments within that sort of time frame.

Mr Speaker, in the absence of any formal consultation to date on a government-to-government basis and with the prospect of this far-reaching legislation being railroaded through federal parliament in August, I am forced to place on record the Northern Territory government's grave concern about aspects of the ATSIC proposal. 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 intend to address 3 broad concerns. The first relates to ATSIC's proposed regional boundaries which are a mockery of recognised traditional, linguistic and cultural ties. The second relates to the impact of ATSIC on the rights and responsibilities of the states and the Northern Territory in particular and, in dealing with it, I shall focus attention on the separatist potential of ATSIC and on the ramifications for the community government system as it operates in the Territory. The third relates to the proposed preamble with its staggering implications for the future of Australia. In making this statement, my fundamental concern is whether ATSIC will truly advance the interests of Aboriginal Australians or 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.

I turn first to the matter of regional boundaries in relation to ATSIC. In terms of statements made by the minister in the revised 'Foundations for the Future' document, the proposed boundaries are an incredible contradiction. The lack of logic, the contradictions and the poor assessment apparent in these boundaries must make us question whether the federal government has any real idea of what it is proposing. Honourable members will be aware that the original ATSIC proposal was for 28 regional council areas across Australia. These were outlined in the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs' statement of 10 December 1987 in which he announced the formation of the Aboriginal and

Torres Strait Islander Commission. The revised Commonwealth proposal, which was released in late March, proposed an alternative option. By some mysterious process, the original number of regional council areas had been doubled, giving a total of 56. The revised proposal also included a map showing the amended regional boundaries which the minister said had been redrawn 'to ensure that regional boundaries recognise traditional, cultural, linguistic or such other ties as were seen to be important to the Aboriginal groups concerned'. I ask honourable members to keep that statement uppermost in their minds.

To begin with, the indicative map issued as part of Mr Hand's 'Foundations for the Future' document is on a scale of 1:20 000 000. That is, the map is the same size as the maps in a primary school atlas. It is ridiculous to conceive that, by any stretch of the imagination, such a map could possibly provide an adequate basis for detailed assessment. Nevertheless, let us proceed. An initial glance at the map reveals some intriguing features. In Western Australia, every line drawn as a boundary of the proposed regions is a curved line. In the Northern Territory, however, we find that almost every boundary line is a straight line. One wonders what convoluted criteria could possibly have been used to produce this curious anomaly. Or are we simply being subjected to some exercise in creative geography dreamt up in Canberra's remote corridors of power? Alas, the closer one looks, the more likely the latter appears to be.

I will now focus on a few of the Northern Territory's proposed regions. For the benefit of honourable members opposite, I will select regions that fall within their electorates. Where better to begin than the electorate of Stuart? As the erudite member for Stuart would surely verify, his electorate incorporates part of ATSIC's proposed Tanami and Simpson areas. Looking at these maps, we find that the Walpiri are parcelled out amongst 3 of the proposed regions. The Kaytetj, Alyawarra, Pintubi and Kukatja, Anmatjerre and northern Aranda are each divided between 2 regions. Did I get the pronunciations right?

Mr Dondas: They sounded right.

Mr Ede: Unfortunately not.

Mr HATTON: My apologies if I did not.

The net result in the Tanami area is that all Aboriginal groups which are included in this region have their estates dissected. Thus, we have a composite of at least 10 traditional Aboriginal estates with no single group being wholly included within the proposed region. In the Simpson area, which takes in parts of both the Stuart and MacDonnell electorates, it appears once again that no single group falls totally within the proposed region. The net result is that at least 8 groups appear to have their estates dismembered in such a way that parts of their estates are scattered across multiple regions. Meanwhile, in those parts of the proposed Barkly region which fall within the Stuart electorate, the Walpiri, Kaytetj and Alyawarra groups all effectively have their traditional countries segmented so that each individual group will be administered by different regions.

Remembering that we have been told by the federal government that regional boundaries recognise traditional, linguistic and cultural ties, let us move on to the electorate of MacDonnell. Here we discover that the Wangkanguru, Matutjara and western Aranda are each split between 3 regions. The eastern Aranda and lower southern Aranda are each divided between 2 regions, while we

are also left with the residual portions of the Pintupi and Kukutja. The member for MacDonnell must have been shocked to discover that the Finke community, which forms the core of the claimants for the Finke land claim, is completely divorced from the vast majority of the land it is claiming under the Land Rights Act. I would certainly be curious if he or indeed anyone could demonstrate that the regional boundaries have any relevance for the Finke community.

Meanwhile, we discover that the area immediately north of Lake Amadeus has been included in the proposed region which focuses on the Pitjantjatjara group. As the honourable member would be aware, this area is subject to dispute between Aboriginal groups in the Lake Amadeus Luritja land claim. While the hearings have been completed in this case, it would appear that the federal minister is prepared to pre-empt the Land Commissioner's report by taking it upon himself to define the affiliations of the groups concerned at the mere stroke of a pen.

Mr Speaker, I do not intend to deal with each and every one of the Northern Territory's 12 regions. Nevertheless, the proposed north-eastern Arnhem Land region does deserve a mention. In this region, there are at least 20 clan groups whose estates are dissected by the boundary. Clearly then, there has been no recourse to the traditional boundaries of the individual clan groups. In formulating the proposed boundaries, perhaps the member for Arnhem may be able to correct the federal minister's mistake of apparently including Milingimbi in the Alligator Rivers area. As the honourable member well knows, this is utterly ridiculous. Milingimbi has no strong cultural, linguistic or other traditional ties with the East Alligator area. Instead, its traditional affiliations lie to the east with Galiwinku, Gapuwiyak and Yirrkala.

At least the member for Arafura need not despair. Lo and behold, we have one instance where the ATSIC proposal has got it right. Miraculously, the Tiwi of Bathurst and Melville Islands have escaped this saga of mayhem and have been left to form a region in their own right.

The Northern Territory is by no means alone in demonstrating that there is almost no correlation between the boundaries of the traditional estates or countries of individual Aboriginal groups and the boundaries of the proposed ATSIC regions. In respect of the map of Australia showing the proposed regional boundaries, there is virtually no parallel with those boundaries that have been determined by eminent and respected anthropological expertise: (1) the cultural areas of Australia as proposed by Peterson (1976); (2) the linguistic map of Australia constructed by Wurm (1972); or (3) the tribal map of Australia published by Tindale (1974).

Indeed, what we find is that, far from the federal minister's mooted correlation, the proposed ATSIC boundaries make particular deviations to excise major Aboriginal communities from regions within which they would have fallen had certain boundaries continued in the general direction in which they were heading. I ask the federal minister how we can possibly be expected to believe him when he says that 'these amended boundaries ... recognise historical, cultural, linguistic and other important factors'. More importantly, if the very basis for ATSIC representation is so ill-considered and so flawed, what confidence can we have that other issues have been properly considered?

Mr Speaker, I wish to turn now to some of the other issues. First, I refer to the impact of ATSIC on rights and responsibilities of the states and

the Northern Territory. It is already apparent that the ATSIC boundaries will make proper representation a nightmare for Aboriginal groups and this will be exacerbated by the proposed first-past-the-post voting procedures. In view of the manner in which regional boundaries dissect the estates of so many Aboriginal groups while indiscriminately lumping together varying portions of multiple groups, how can council representatives be seen to speak authoritatively and equitably on behalf of those Aboriginal communities within their regions?

Representation on the wider scale is just as problematical and will not, I suggest, serve the best interests of Aboriginal Territorians. The Northern Territory is allotted 1 commissioner in addition to a commissioner who represents the Pitjantjatjara homelands in the Northern Territory, South Australia and Western Australia. Meanwhile, Western Australia, New South Wales and Queensland have each been allocated 2 commissioners while the remainder of South Australia, Victoria and Tasmania will each have 1. Additionally, there will be a Torres Strait Island commissioner. Considering the composition of the commission, we might assume that the interests of traditional Aboriginal people will succumb once again to the radically different aspirations, pursuits and needs of urban Aboriginal people.

The Northern Territory government is also deeply concerned that ATSIC will interpose in valuable and cooperative arrangements already established between it and the Aboriginal community. In its representation and in its powers, ATSIC not only will replicate many systems already in place but also intrude on schemes that have been proven effective and acceptable to Aboriginal people. This is particularly true in relation to the Territory government's initiative of community government for remote communities and the establishment of the NT Community Government Association which represents those bodies and gives them a voice with the NT government as well as at the local and national levels. As honourable members would be aware, our community government system is an innovative form of local government specifically aimed at small, remote communities, the majority of which are comprised of Aboriginal Territorians.

This program has been hailed as unique because of its flexibility in accommodating the Aboriginal relationship system and traditional practices. Each community government scheme is distinct and is specifically drafted to meet the needs and aspirations of the particular community. This flexibility allows each community to continue its traditional leader selection process, to use its traditional leaders in both cultural and local administrative matters and to decide the complex issue of boundaries. Community government in the Northern Territory allows for genuine self-determination by Aboriginal Territorians.

I shall leave it to the Minister for Labour, Administrative Services and Local Government to elaborate on the grave implications that ATSIC holds for community government, for the coordination of services within the Northern Territory and for the distribution of funds to our Aboriginal communities. I also leave it to him to discuss our concern that ATSIC's proposed first-past-the-post voting system will support an inequitable power-sharing basis, given that Aboriginal communities themselves are rapidly dismantling this imposed legacy of previous administrations. Instead, they are returning to systems more compatible with traditional decision-making methods and more likely to achieve true self-government at the local level.

I do not believe that ATSIC, with its dubious boundaries, questionable representation and administrative remoteness, will profit Aboriginal

Territorians. The philosophy of ATSIC may well be grassroots Aboriginal participation. In practice, however, the Northern Territory government is much closer, much better equipped and, I would suggest, much better informed in providing for the needs of our Aboriginal people. The last thing Aboriginal Territorians need is another Canberra-constructed system which will duplicate that which is already catered for under Commonwealth, state and Northern Territory legislation. While I recognise the Commonwealth government's substantial and specific responsibility for Aboriginal Affairs, ATSIC - by virtue of its structure and powers - is anathema to the rights and responsibilities of a sovereign government for all of its citizens, rights and responsibilities which the Northern Territory government shares with the state governments of Australia.

We have been informed that ATSIC will have a very large say in determining the distribution of funds for expenditure on matters to address Aboriginal concerns. ATSIC therefore has the potential to divert and channel funds currently made available by the Commonwealth to the states and the Northern Territory, earmarking them for specific purposes and even determining their distribution amongst Aboriginal communities. Arguably, ATSIC may make the Northern Territory government redundant in addressing the needs of the Aboriginal population of the Territory. In effect, ATSIC threatens to create what is tantamount to a second parliament for Aboriginal people - a parliament to represent an Aboriginal nation within the Australian nation and with the capacity to bypass the constitutional and proper responsibilities of the elected governments of the Northern Territory and the states. It is hardly surprising that such a proposal is unacceptable to this government.

The Northern Territory government appreciates the diversity of the Territory's population. Schemes like community government evince our understanding of and sensitivity to cultural differences. However, while this government will continue to recognise the different backgrounds and needs of its constituents, it is committed to build a common future for all Territorians. Aboriginal Territorians vote in Territory elections. They elect their own representatives democratically and are citizens of the Northern Territory with rights and responsibilities equal to those of non-Aboriginal Territorians. The ATSIC proposal cuts across the elected Northern Territory government's fundamental duty to govern for all of its citizens. It is shameful that, in this bicentennial year, the federal government proposes to create a separate government for Aboriginal people, a de facto or alternative government which will perpetuate a racially-based division in Australia and which will undermine our attempts to build a united nation in which all Australians work together towards a common future.

This monolithic, duplicative and unwieldy commission is likely to bequeath this nation a legacy of divisiveness and disunity. It seems that, after 20 years of centralised control of Aboriginal affairs in Australia, the federal government has simply come up with another system that will further the self-seeking interests of small pressure groups - most of which are urban-based - that will entrench paternalistic bureaucracy, that ignores the responsibilities of elected governments, and that will be too remote from the very communities it is meant to benefit. Our fundamental question must be: will ATSIC truly advance the interests of Aboriginal people - that is, will it do anything to bring about the much-needed improvements in health, education, employment and welfare? I fear that ATSIC will not result in a better and more efficient delivery of services to Aboriginal people. Rather, it has the undoubted potential to complicate what is already a difficult problem.

The interests of all parties, particularly those of the Aboriginal citizens of Australia, might be better served if the Commonwealth were to devote its resources to a reorganisation of its functional responsibilities and its financial distributions to strengthen the position of the state and Territory governments. The Commonwealth has an undoubted role in policy formulation at a national level and in the monitoring of advancement programs in Aboriginal affairs. The state and Territory governments also have undeniable roles in providing services to their citizens. Frankly, I do not believe that the ATSIC proposal will assist either level of government in meeting its responsibilities. It can only frustrate our attempts to better the lives of Aboriginal people.

The other question that we must ask is: why is this legislation being railroaded through federal parliament without consultation with the state and Territory governments and against the wishes of a great many Aboriginal people? On this note, Mr Speaker, it behoves me to point out that community government has been discussed with Aboriginal communities over a 10-year period. Boundaries, voting systems, enfranchisement of electors, functions and representation are usually only decided after 2 to 4 years of community discussion. This is in accordance with the Aboriginal way. On the other hand, the federal minister has seen fit to force Aboriginal communities to decide on matters of such significance within a matter of months, in an atmosphere of uncertainty with far too many questions unanswered. The plain fact is that the reaction to ATSIC proposal from Aboriginal people has been neither enthusiastic nor uniform.

In the Northern Territory, 21 Aboriginal communities, through the Community Government Association, have expressed concern about the proposal to the federal minister. Mr Speaker, I would like to quote from 2 letters sent from Aboriginal communities in the Northern Territory to the federal minister. The Milingimbi community wrote on 28 March:

It is with deep concern that we write this letter to you on behalf of the community of Milingimbi concerning the attitude of your government and the manner in which you are forcing your government's proposals for the establishment of the new commission to be known as the Aboriginal and Torres Straits Islander Commission.

It goes on:

The intricacies of the role which the departments would have to exercise under the new commission is totally outrageous, but not only that, your government is asking us to accept what is totally new and quite ridiculous but also unacceptable to our people in this community.

More recently, on 16 May, the Galiwinku Council wrote to the minister. Its letter refers to concerns it outlined to the minister in previous letters dated 5 and 6 April and its wish 'to see and study the draft legislation and to be given time to study it prior to its introduction' which, it says, has 'not been addressed at all'. It continues: 'We deduce that you do not intend to allow us to see and study this legislation prior to its implementation - that is, the time schedule for your program does not allow any room for our concerns to be addressed positively. We are not happy about this situation'.

We can only assume that the federal government rates its political timetable in this bicentennial year as more important than the need to proceed

in a gradual and cautious manner in accordance with the wishes of the Aboriginal people. Surely, this far-reaching legislation deserves to be fully considered. After all, Aboriginal Australians will have to live under the consequences of ATSIC for years to come. The haste with which the federal government is moving raises doubts as to other aspects of the proposal. Since the federal government has made such a mess of ATSIC's regional boundaries and since the commission's structure seems to be riddled with constitutional complications, what chance is there that the complex legal questions arising from the preamble have been duly considered?

I will deal with the proposed preamble. Honourable members will be aware that in 'Foundations for the Future', a preamble to the enacting legislation was proposed. In his April statement, the federal minister said that the Commonwealth government 'in no way resiles from its decision to recognise the fact of prior occupation and original ownership of the descendants of the people now known as the Aboriginal and Torres Straits Islander people'. If, as the federal government has claimed, this preamble is an acknowledgement of prior ownership which was utterly extinguished in 1788, it seems to be an unnecessary rubbing of salt into the wound. Not content with the blithe reassurances from Canberra, my government has sought legal opinion as to the legal and other effects of such a preamble.

Presuming that the preamble to the legislation is an acknowledgement of prior ownership and that ownership continues or some residual Aboriginal rights continue, legal opinion obtained by this government is that the bill may well be a potent force which may indirectly lead to the courts declaring that the Aborigines of Australia did own Australia - at least, those parts in respect of which they can show traditional ownership - prior to 1788. It is clear that the preamble will add weight to arguments being pressed by Aborigines that they had and have title to Australia, or at least traditional lands, which is or ought to be recognised by the common law of Australia. The nature of the title will be determined to a significant degree by the words of the preamble.

Mr Speaker, to summarise: our legal opinion is that, armed with the preamble, the High Court more than likely will recognise the antecedent title of the Aboriginal inhabitants of Australia and, further, that that title continues in respect of those lands which can be shown to have been or to be traditional lands. In other words, proceeding on the basis that the federal government is true to its word and that the preamble is an acknowledgement of prior ownership, and that the ownership continues or some residual Aboriginal rights continue, it is apparent that the Commonwealth is imposing its uniform land rights on the states and the Territory through the back door. This regime would extend land rights to land in towns and also to land leased for pastoral purposes. It would seem to apply to all land in the states. Given the preamble as proposed, any litigation is likely to favour Aborigines.

Mr Speaker, as we all know, the Territory cannot acquire property other than under just terms. Consequently there is no doubt that, if there is a recognition of 'antecedent native title', the Northern Territory government would face a great number of claims for compensation for the expropriation of Aboriginal lands, as distinct from Aboriginal land. Presumably, the Commonwealth would be liable for expropriation that occurred prior to 1 July 1978. Once antecedent title is recognised by the courts, dealings and holdings of Crown land by the Crown are likely to be the subject of compensation claims by Aboriginal traditional owners. Those lands which have been alienated from the Crown will likely remain in possession of the current owners. But what of moneys paid for or rents derived from such lands? Would

the traditional owners be entitled to an account of all such moneys paid to the Crown in its relevant right? The answer must be yes, as a matter of general principle. Thus, the various governments in Australia will likely face vast compensation claims in respect of lands which have been alienated from the Crown.

It appears likely that the bulk of unalienated Crown land in Australia will be subject to claim by Aborigines that they are the antecedent owners of such land. This would seem to follow from the Territory's experience where all unalienated Crown land has been opened up for claim and approximately 99% has been claimed. There are several possible effects of such claims. One is that the relevant Crown lands would be frozen in that the Crown could not deal with them while the relevant Aborigines sought to establish their title to such lands. A second is that the antecedent owners would need to approve or at least be given the opportunity to be heard in relation to any dealings with the lands. A third is that any moneys paid for, or derived from, the land would need to be paid to those Aboriginal owners. Any payments involved would need to be fair and reasonable because the Crown, in effect, would hold the land as trustee. A fourth is that, if Mr Hand does propose 'inalienable freehold title' and the bill is to bind the Crown and its several rights, then not only will all unalienated Crown land in Australia be frozen, but also the Crown in right of the several states may not be able to alienate or deal with Crown land without the consent of a federal minister - sections 19, 67 and 67A of the Land Rights Act. A fifth is that, as pastoral leases terminate, they become unalienated Crown land.

While it is presumed that any legislation would preserve and protect the rights of individuals to their land, Territory experience has shown that there may be unintended results of this type of legislation. As honourable members are well aware, mineral rights have been one of these results. Our experience therefore serves as a warning that any proposed legislation should be carefully examined and fully considered before it proceeds. Again, this cannot possibly be done in the allotted time frame. It is not clear from the federal minister's statement whether minerals are to be included in the antecedent title. There are, therefore, some immediate questions that need to be answered if minerals are not excluded from the title. First, what regime will govern mining exploration? Secondly, will federal law or state law apply? Thirdly, do Aborigines have a veto? Fourthly, who receives the payments or royalties?

Territory mining is already stifled on Aboriginal land. The effect of the proposed legislation, should it mean that antecedent native title is to be recognised, may well be to impede mining on pastoral and other non-Aboriginal land. The relevant Aborigines may be the absolute owners or, alternatively, the Crown may hold mineral rights subject to a duty of trust. It follows that the Crown, at least, must deal with those minerals as a trustee would - that is, for the benefit of the traditional owners. What needs to be made clear by the Commonwealth is whether minerals are to be part of the land for the purposes of recognition of the antecedent title.

Mr Speaker, courts in the USA and Canada have recognised that Indians owned the land prior to European settlement. Furthermore, where traditional ownership is shown or established by treaty, the courts have both declared the antecedent ownership and declared a trust upon the relevant governments. The traditional Indian owners are the beneficiaries of that trust. I would like to cite one Canadian case to illustrate in graphic terms the possible compensatory ramifications that may follow from the proposed preamble's recognition of antecedent title. In *R v Sparrow*, the Canadian Supreme Court,

recognising the antecedent title of the relevant Indians, overturned and nullified an agreement between the government and the proprietors of a golf course. The agreed-upon rental was held to be inadequate and \$10m in damages was awarded to the Indian tribe. In view of this case and others, governments in Australia may be forced to pay past rentals to the traditional owners. If those rentals are found to be not fair, governments - like any trustee - will have to make recompense.

In New Zealand, there has been an upsurge of claims in the last 10 years. One recent claim involves an area which contains iron sands which are the raw material for the New Zealand steel industry. The United Nations has been called in by the Maoris concerned, who want all extraction of the iron sand stopped. The claimants want the whole area to be returned to them unconditionally on the basis that they were the traditional owners and despite the fact that they had been paid compensation for the land. Honourable members may like to note that, should the claim be successful, New Zealand may have to buy Australian iron ore. As this case demonstrates, claims based on a notion of antecedent title can extend to lands purchased from native peoples.

Lest honourable members think that such litigation is remote from Australia, there are at present at least 2 cases pending in the High Court in which Aboriginal groups are seeking to import these very principles into the law of Australia. They seek to establish in the courts the principle that the Aboriginals of Australia owned the land before 1788 and that their title in most part has not been extinguished. In the case of the Northern Land Council v the Commonwealth and ERA, the Ranger case, the plaintiff has claimed on behalf of a number of Aborigines that the Commonwealth owed them a fiduciary duty in respect of consents and agreements made under section 44 of the Land Rights Act. The claim was based on the Land Rights Act and on the alleged antecedent title of the traditional owners. The claimants seek some \$200m in damages from the Commonwealth because they say it consented to the agreement for a figure well below a fair and reasonable one. This case indicates the phenomenal costs which may well flow from a recognition of antecedent title in Australia.

It is ironic that, while the federal government's proposed preamble to the ATSIC legislation will add inestimable weight to Aboriginal arguments for antecedent title, the federal government itself is vigorously opposing those very arguments. I am sure, however, that the irony of the situation will be of little comfort to those future Australians who will have to foot the bill. Given the far-reaching effects of the proposed preamble, it is also worth noting that land acquisition may become an ATSIC function in respect of which the minister could make only a general direction.

To summarise the Northern Territory government's concern as to the effects of the proposed preamble, I believe that the federal government has a duty to make its intentions clear on a number of key issues. Firstly, what does the preamble propose to do? Secondly, what are the effects on mining and industry? Thirdly, are proprietary rights of individuals or the Crown in right of the states and the Territory affected and, if so, how? Fourthly, what are the constitutional and compensatory ramifications?

Honourable members will be aware that, since self-government in 1978, the Northern Territory government has consistently supported the concept of a system of equitable Aboriginal land rights that can balance the interests of the Aboriginal community and the community at large. We have sought to accommodate the specific concerns and aspirations of Aboriginal Territorians within the wider framework of the needs of the entire Northern Territory community.

This government has established a record of cooperation with the Commonwealth in relation to Aboriginal affairs - cooperation which the Commonwealth ministry is often unable to obtain from even the Labor states. I refer to such areas as the review of Commonwealth-state-Northern Territory financial arrangements in Aboriginal affairs, the joint Commonwealth-Territory housing program and the establishment of advisory committees on Aboriginal housing and the implementation of the recommendations of the Australian Law Reform Commission's report on the recognition of Aboriginal customary laws. Territory and Commonwealth officers at this very time are negotiating proposed joint programs in accelerated community infrastructure and town camps housing and infrastructure which were the subject of exploratory discussions between myself and the federal minister last December.

The Northern Territory government would readily admit that the status quo in Aboriginal Affairs is far from satisfactory. We believe that there is room at the Commonwealth level for some reorganisation of responsibilities and rationalisation of the functions of various agencies of the Commonwealth, especially their relations with Aboriginal organisations and state and Territory governments. However, we do not believe that the ATSIIC proposal will advance the interests of Aboriginal Australians. We are not convinced that it will provide Aboriginal Territorians with a more coherent and accountable administrative structure, nor that it will ensure a more effective delivery of services to the Aboriginal people who live in the Territory's remote communities. These conclusions are based on the fact that the legislation is being prepared in haste and without due consultation either with Aboriginal people or the state and Territory governments, the regional boundaries appear to be ill-conceived and the legal, constitutional, financial and compensatory implications have not been adequately or openly addressed.

What ATSIIC will do is impose on Aboriginal people an unwanted and unwieldy bureaucracy. It will impede the ability of properly elected governments to provide for the needs of Aboriginal people. More critically, it has the potential to promote disunity and divisiveness both within the Aboriginal community and within the wider Australian community. It is this government's philosophy that we must all work towards a common future, not only as a single entity of the Northern Territory but also as a single nation of Australia.

As honourable members are aware, the Northern Territory government is committed to winning for Territorians constitutional equality with other Australians. The Northern Territory will become Australia's seventh state. It must do so on the basis that the Aboriginal community is an integral part of the cohesive and wider Northern Territory community with common rights, a common purpose and a common future. Only then can all Territorians fully participate in the Commonwealth of Australia.

Mr Speaker, I move that the Assembly take note of the statement.

Mr LANHUPUY (Arnhem): Mr Speaker, when the Chief Minister commenced his statement, I thought we would have an interesting discussion in respect of the argument which he has put forward, together with myself and the Minister for Labour, Administrative Services and Local Government, that the 30% of the Northern Territory's population who are Aborigines have not been properly consulted on the ATSIIC proposal by the Minister for Aboriginal affairs.

We certainly made our views known to the federal Minister for Aboriginal Affairs, the Prime Minister and the Chief Minister, who read a letter from communities at Milingimbi and Elcho Island. 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. The Chief Minister, in his wisdom, decided to make a statement that is totally irrelevant to the argument which concerns Aboriginal people. He wandered off the subject by talking about land rights.

The Northern Territory government has an obligation to Aboriginal Territorians. That is not because we are black, but because we are human beings living in the Northern Territory. The Northern Territory government ought to understand that. It is an obligation. That is one of the reasons the federal government gives it so much funding: to support the basic needs of Territorians, not only whites but blacks also. I want to stress that point to the Chief Minister because he has gone off the tracks in talking about land rights, water rights and matters concerning Indians in Canada, the North-west Territories and God knows what else. The real issue is the need for the aspirations of Aboriginal people to be understood through a commission established by a federal act of parliament.

The Chief Minister has shot himself in the foot. The fact is that he has too many problems in the ranks of his own party and has tried to use his statement today to create more divisiveness in a community which is now in the process of seeking statehood for the Northern Territory. If the Chief Minister's statement today is an example of his attitude, statehood will not happen in a hurry.

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. The needs of Aboriginal people in Queensland differ from those of the Northern Territory, as do those of Aboriginal people in Western Australia and South Australia. We have certainly made sure that the minister is aware of that. I even attended the Local Government Association Conference in Katherine, attended by the Minister for Labour, Administrative Services and Local Government, in order to support my people's views by making representations to the federal minister on some of the concerns they have expressed to me about the ATSIC proposal. However, the Chief Minister of the Northern Territory gets up here in this House and talks about land rights, the land councils, the rights of Aboriginal people in terms of waterways, sea rights, roads and everything else. That does nothing for race relationships in the Northern Territory. He also backed down, to an extent ...

Mr Hatton: I didn't mention any of those, Wes.

Mr LANHUPUY: Yes you did.

Mr Hatton: Show me where.

Mr LANHUPUY: Mr Speaker, Hansard will show that he spoke about waterways and the number of Aboriginal people who are claiming land. He said that 40% of the Territory's land is in our hands or under claim. Can he please tell me why he doesn't argue that case in relation to the likes of Warren Anderson, who has locked up a significant percentage of the Territory's land mass from exploration and access?

Mr Dale: You've got it wrong again, Wes.

Mr LANHUPUY: Could he please explain that to me? At least we let people go through Arnhem Land. Just recently, 3 applications for exploration licences were approved by people in Arnhem Land, for BHP and certain other

companies. That is the type of cooperation that we are trying to work towards. We have only had that Land Rights Act within our hands for 10 years and some of our old people have died waiting for land claims to be resolved - Kenbi, Jawoyn, Nicholson River ...

Mr Ede: Mt Allen and Ti Tree.

Mr LANHUPUY: Mt Allen and Ti Tree, as the member for Stuart advises. People are still waiting and other people have died. Do you know the stress that they go through, Mr Speaker, having to tell a court of law about their dreamings, about the land that they have loved and respected for 40-odd thousand years?

Mr Hatton: I am not disputing that, Wes.

Mr LANHUPUY: I am just trying to explain to the honourable member the reasons why people feel so frustrated when they have a government like this giving us some sort of statement that is alien to us. We are now in the process of having to develop our land according to our system and, at the same time, learning the processes of European law. If the honourable members over there do not understand that, and respect that ...

Mr Hatton: We are not disputing the Land Rights Act. We are not disputing it at all. We are discussing the preamble and its effects.

Mr LANHUPUY: Mr Speaker, I am trying to explain to the Chief Minister why so many people out there see this government as one which will be against their rights and wishes for the rest of their lives. For example, how many land claims has it supported? People have died whilst waiting for claims to be heard, and that is a worry for me. I would be pleased if the member for Victoria River could get up and say something in this debate to support some of the views that I have expressed. That is essential from my point of view. Whenever this government opens its mouth, people out there say: 'Hooray, you are right'. They do that even when it says things which are totally against my people, who make up 30% of the Northern Territory's population and whose support is needed in this government's campaign for statehood.

Recently, I attended a meeting concerning statehood and how we might go about educating the Northern Territory community, especially the Aboriginal people in the remote parts of the Northern Territory, on this matter. I cannot honestly say that I will go out there with a straight face and say: 'Yes, statehood is good. Keep going. No worries. We will give you support, control over land rights and God knows what else'. How can I do that when the Chief Minister of the Northern Territory comes out with a statement like this?

I certainly am really offended and very sorry about what the Chief Minister has said. He once lived on the mining lease at Nhulunbuy, where he had to get a permit to go anywhere outside the lease boundaries. He should know how people feel. He should appreciate the restrictions that are being placed on Aboriginal people on pastoral properties to use waterways, to have access to forage on land which they have done since long before the white man settled here and imposed limitations. The old people will never understand that. In their own minds, it is just totally untrue.

Yet the Chief Minister asks us to participate in and contribute to the economy of the Northern Territory and Australia as a whole. We heard all about that in the Treasurer's statement about uranium the other day. Of course, people out there are willing to contribute to the economy of the

Northern Territory. They are. But this type of statement from the Chief Minister is what we do not want. We are willing. I have quite often said in this House and outside, that my people - and I will ensure that they do - will pursue their right to contribute to the Territory and create employment, whether they use their own land or whether they lease it. Those are the things that we are here to talk about.

The ATSIC proposal from the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs combines the Institute for Aboriginal Studies, the ADC and Aboriginal Hostels. It has spent a long time consulting - and this government does not even know about that. The minister appointed several people, including Lois O'Donohue, to come up with something to replace the abolished National Aboriginal Congress, the NAC. They talked about it. A proposal was put forward and accepted by the minister in principle before he put it to the people out there. It was not acceptable to them in the form which it took. However, we are trying to build up an organisation which has been given to us by an act of parliament, which the Chief Minister should be aware of. We have been given the authority to express our views to the ministers concerned. However, in making his statement, the Chief Minister has preempted the decision of the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs.

I would not be surprised if the Chief Minister or any other minister of this government has not been approached for consultation on this matter by any of the federal ministers concerned or any federal departments. It is because of their total ignorance of the facts. It is their own fault. I certainly was very concerned when the Minister for Labour, Administrative Services and Local Government told me that the federal minister, Hon Gerry Hand, did not even take the time to consult him on these matters. I was concerned and I expressed that to him. However, when the Chief Minister of the Northern Territory comes out with a statement like this, whilst we are in the process of developing a statutory organisation that will give us some independent rights without government handouts, I am at a loss to understand his motive. If other members opposite want to get up and say that they support the Chief Minister's statement, let them do so. What he said in relation to the ATSIC proposal was acceptable to myself and my people. What I did not like was the fact that he went beyond that and tried to denigrate the rights of the land councils that have been established by a federal act of parliament specifically to look after the traditional landowners, not the councils that have been established under the Local Government Act. They are make-believe local government councils.

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'. At least that would recognise the traditional rights of the landowner. That is something no legislation and no white man will ever take away from a landowner. If he owns a piece of land, he will own it for the rest of his life and so will his kids. That is the most important thing this government needs to take this into account. It is something which the the ATSIC proposal recognises.

We have contributed to the Territory through BTEC, through the fishing industry, through mining, through tourism and through services to areas such as Nhulunbuy. We are utilising our land for the benefit of the Northern Territory. In the end, that land will be kept in the Northern Territory; there is nowhere else it can go. No one else will come in and grab that land from us. It is held in perpetuity. Therefore, we will develop that land through ATSIC or any other government agency that will be established in future. We are willing to cooperate and participate.

Joint ventures have already been agreed on with this government yet it seems to be totally ignorant of the fact that landowners are willing to work with it. I do not have land outside of the Northern Territory. How many other members have? Our land will always be in the Northern Territory. I will always stay here and therefore my investment for my children will always be here, as will my people's. It is crucial that the Chief Minister realises that and takes it into account. The development we are interested in, the investment and creation of jobs will stay in the Northern Territory, not Queensland or Western Australia.

The Chief Minister has just put a massive argument that will be taken on board. I can assure him that the land councils will take his argument on board and that there will be continuing consequences. The federal government will be into it, and God knows where we will be. Mr Speaker, I agreed with the early part of the Chief Minister's statement on ATSIC but, after that, he well and truly shot himself in the foot.

Mr McCARTHY (Labour, Administrative Services and Local Government): Mr Speaker, the matter of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission has concerned me for some months now, since it first became a matter of public knowledge that the federal government, through the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs, intended to establish such a commission. The concept of the commission in itself may not necessarily be such a bad idea if, in fact, it streamlines the delivery of services to Aboriginal people, amalgamates the 4 organisations that previously carried out that function and puts responsibility for those organisations back into the hands of Aboriginal people.

I believe that the concept as it has emerged should and does cause much concern not only to the Aboriginal people of the Northern Territory but to all Territorians. What is being envisaged by the federal minister is something that will have a major impact on the Aboriginal people of the Northern Territory. In fact, it could mean the beginning of a decline in services and the ability to service Aboriginal people in the Northern Territory.

Mr Bell: What absolute nonsense!

Mr McCARTHY: Mr Speaker, if the members opposite would like to wait a little while, they will find out how I back that up.

I have been visiting Aboriginal communities over the months since the proposal was announced. I will admit that it has changed rather dramatically in that period of time. In visiting those communities, including those in electorates in the southern part of the Territory which are represented by members opposite, the attitude of Aboriginal people generally has been that events are happening too quickly and without sufficient consultation.

Originally, there were to be 4 or 5 regions in the Northern Territory. That has grown quite significantly to 15 regions and, in fact, 4 of those are partly within my own electorate. A very confusing and complex situation is currently confronting the Aboriginal people in the Northern Territory. I found the minister's original proposals extremely confusing. In visiting communities, I found that the Aboriginal people were confused also. They became even more confused following visits to them or to nearby communities by the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs. They expressed that confusion to me. In fact, many of them wrote to me, as they have written to the federal minister, expressing their concerns. The minister has, to give him credit, attempted to move around Australia to explain what he was proposing. However, he himself

did not have sufficient information to be able to really cater for all of the concerns that were expressed to him. In fact, he took the easy road of agreeing to almost everything that was put to him.

The meetings were usually held in major centres. Often, the groups who were able to attend were not truly representative of the Aboriginal people and could not truly give an expression of what their communities would regard as acceptable. However, the minister came away from those meetings saying that he had the full support of Aboriginal people throughout Australia. I do not believe that. I am certain that the Aboriginal people did not give him that support because, in following up his visits, I found that it just was not there.

The boundaries that were originally proposed and, indeed, many of the boundaries contained in the new proposals, are not truly representative of Aboriginal community of interest or of language groups, skin groups and so forth. Some may be - for instance, the Bathurst and Melville Island situation is quite clear. In many other cases, a quick perusal of the map would tell anyone, even a person who did not understand traditional Aboriginal boundaries, that different criteria have been used in different states. That is quite clear if one looks at Western Australia and the Northern Territory: curved boundaries in one, straight boundaries in the other.

Mr Bell: You can tell a lot from that, Terry.

Mr McCARTHY: You can if you want to look at it. Perhaps you would not know.

Mr Speaker, as I said, the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs travelled around to seek decisions from Aboriginal people. In many cases, the people he consulted with could not express the genuine wishes of their communities. He wanted decisions to be made but he was not prepared to give details. Questions were asked and he could not give details. When I met with the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs in Alice Springs, I found that he was unable to give me details in relation to many of the practical aspects of the proposal. At a recent meeting of field officers from the Office of Local Government, a representative of the Department of Aboriginal Affairs made it quite clear that he did not have the details and that they were still not worked out.

The Chief Minister spoke of letters of concern from a number of communities. Those concerns were reiterated by the member for Arnhem. I understand his concerns about this proposal. He certainly expressed the concerns of Aboriginal people about insufficient consultation. Those letters are real; they were sent. The minister was aware of them but they were not responded to adequately. In fact, some communities have written time and time again and have not received satisfactory answers from the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs.

The member for Arnhem commented on the consultation process in relation to ATSIC. He says that officers of the Department of Aboriginal Affairs, ADC and other bodies have been consulting on the matter for some considerable time. That rather surprises me, considering that the Aboriginal Development Commission rejected the proposal outright, saying it was not satisfactory. The minister's response was to sack some of the people involved and to replace them with others whom he believed he could manipulate. Mr Speaker, it is quite clear that not enough time has been spent in negotiations.

It was said that the Northern Territory government does not negotiate with Aboriginal people. If we hark back to the community government scheme, nobody on the other side of the House could deny that, in all cases, the Northern Territory government allows as much time as Aboriginal people wish for consultation before putting any community government scheme in place. Community government offers a great deal of benefit to Aboriginal people. It certainly reflects the boundaries that they desire.

Mr Ede: It does not! You are imposing boundaries on them all alone.

Mr McCARTHY: We have never imposed boundaries on Aboriginal people under community government, Mr Speaker.

Mr Ede: The people from Yuendumu came back to you 4 times and every time you rejected their boundaries because they objected to your community government.

Mr McCARTHY: In fact, we have not imposed time limits on Aboriginal people with regard to community government. Consultation is full and fruitful and that can be demonstrated by the number of success stories. I spoke to the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs after the first proposal which envisaged that every incorporated association would have representation on ATSIC. Every incorporated association! I know of places where there are as many as 20 incorporated associations in a single community. I know others where there is only 1 such association. What sort of representation is that? Quite clearly, it is not truly representative of Aboriginal people and not truly representative of Territorians.

Given the fact that the Minister for Aboriginal affairs now has responsibility for Aboriginal employment and training, I am concerned that he will give responsibility for Aboriginal employment and training to that commission. Mr Speaker, I believe that would be disastrous. If one looks at the power base of this commission, one sees that there are 15 commissioners. The Northern Territory gets 1 full commissioner and 1 part commissioner. Western Australia, New South Wales and Queensland get 2 each whilst South Australia, Victoria, Tasmania and the Torres Strait Islands get 1 each. The central areas of South Australia and Western Australia and the Pitjantjatjara of the Northern Territory get 1 and the minister nominates 3.

The interests of traditional Aboriginal people will, quite clearly, be overridden in that structure. The 1986 ABS figures show why. Those figures show that 22.4% of the Northern Territory population is Aboriginal. The ABS figures for 1971 showed that there were then 23 873 professed Aboriginals in New South Wales. By 1986, that figure had grown to 59 011. That is an increase from 23 000 to 59 000 in 15 years. In the same period, the number of professed Aborigines in Victoria grew from 6371 to 12 611; in Queensland from 31 000 to 61 000; in Western Australia from 22 000 to 37 000; in South Australia from 7000 to 14 000; in Tasmania from 671 to 6716 - an interesting figure that one, with an extra 6 added to the first figure; in the Territory from 23 000 to 34 000; and in the Australian Capital Territory from 255 to 1220. If you look at these figures, it is clear that the interests of the 34 739 Aboriginal people in the Northern Territory, 22.4% of the Territory population, will be submerged or overridden because of the numbers of commissioners representing areas in the eastern states, where most of those people declaring themselves to be Aboriginal have only done so during the last 15 years. Urban Aborigines will be very vocal and will have a great power base on the eastern seaboard. They will override the interests of the people whom members opposite purport to represent, people from electorates like

MacDonnell and Stuart. Their interests will be completely overridden, as they were by the powerful voices in the NAC which ATSIC is supposed to replace in some respects.

It is quite clear that support for the proposed method of setting up ATSIC means support for the downgrading of the interests of the Aboriginal people of the Northern Territory. I am not prepared to go along with that. New South Wales, Victoria, Queensland and Western Australia each have 2 commissioners, and part of Western Australia is represented by another commissioner. This is in a situation where the Aboriginal population in those states has proportionately grown far more than that in the Northern Territory. The majority of our Aboriginal people are traditional people. That is the case with the majority of those who are living in your electorate, Mr Speaker, and in my electorate. I am concerned that the interests of these people will be overridden in this commission.

Mr Bell: There are more Aborigines in New South Wales than in the Northern Territory, Terry.

Mr McCARTHY: In the Northern Territory, we have the largest non-urban Aboriginal population in Australia.

It is quite clear what the minister's power of veto can do in this. My concern is that the powerful people on the eastern coast could say, in any given year: 'This year we are going to put all of our money into shopping centres on the eastern seaboard, and to hell with the housing for the Aboriginal people of the Northern Territory. To hell with that! The money will be spent here'. The Minister for Aboriginal Affairs, however, has the power of veto and has shown that he is prepared to use it. He sacked the ADC. That is the sort of treatment he is likely to dish out again if those sorts of problems are encountered.

Let me talk about the duplication of responsibilities. In the Northern Territory, we have a scheme called community government. I have spoken to officers of the Department of Aboriginal Affairs who recognise that the Northern Territory is in the forefront of Aboriginal affairs in Australia. That department considers that we are doing more for Aboriginal people than any state. Officers of the Department of Aboriginal Affairs in Canberra - not the politicians, who have to protect their own interests - believe that the Northern Territory government is the only government that is really pulling out all the stops to improve the living conditions of Aboriginal people and the power base of Aboriginal people. Our community government scheme is one of the main ways in which we are doing that: we are putting power into the hands of Aboriginal people on their own land.

The land councils would have it that they have responsibility for all aspects of Aboriginal life. They have responsibility for Aboriginal land and a responsibility to the trustees of that land, the owners of that land. They wish to put their tentacles out into every part of Aboriginal life and take control of it. The Northern Territory, through its community government scheme, is putting the power back with the people where it belongs, at the community government level.

The federal government talks about local government and mainstreaming. That is its policy. It is also ours. The land councils have done a deal with the minister on ATSIC. He is going to leave them in place and look after their interests and give them powers. Because they have done a deal, they want a moratorium on local government for Aboriginal people in the Northern

Territory. They do not want local government for Aboriginal people in the Northern Territory, and yet the federal government says it is a must. The Minister for Aboriginal Affairs is supporting land councils in that regard. As we all know, the federal government wishes to change the Constitution so that it incorporates local government. However, if the land councils have their way, local government will not be available to Aboriginal people in the Northern Territory.

ATSIC merely creates another tier of representation. It is a separatist organisation which will put power in the hands of people on the eastern seaboard, in the bigger states where the figures for urban Aboriginal people have grown in the last few years. They are the people who will have the power. It will be the Mansells and the Foleys of the world who will have the power in this organisation because they are the vocal ones.

Mr Speaker, the policy behind ATSIC is clearly separatist. The federal minister has stated that the commission should have the responsibility of handling all government funds that go to Aboriginal people. He is up the creek. There is no way the Northern Territory government will fall for that trap. It is our responsibility to look after the Aboriginal people of the Northern Territory as it is our responsibility to look after every other Territorian. That is what we will continue to do. I support the Chief Minister's statement.

Mr EDE (Stuart): Mr Speaker, the Chief Minister could have made some reasonable points with regard to ATSIC. In some communities, there is a degree of concern about the changes. In my electorate, people fairly universally complain about the fact that they see ADC staff coming from one direction and DAA staff coming from the other. People ask: 'Why can't they get together? Why have we got one mob doing it on this side and one mob on that?' People do not like that. They are fairly happy about the aspect of ATSIC which would put an end to that problem. However, they also say that there are aspects of ATSIC which they might want to change. The Chief Minister could have discussed that matter, as we did ourselves, before we approached the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs and gained a 6-month extension in the consultation period.

Mr Speaker, it should be realised that ATSIC is not something that arose from consultations beginning in December 1987 when the first announcement was made. It is the culmination of a long process of consultation which has been going on ever since the NAC was disbanded. As my colleague mentioned, Dr Coombs and Ms O'Donohue travelled around Australia speaking to Aboriginal groups over a very long period, attempting to create an organisation which would allow the various organisations and communities around Australia to put forward their ideas and have a very substantial impact on decisions about federal funds allocated for Aboriginal affairs. While everybody was extremely disappointed with the NAC and very few people were sorry to see it go, the government recognised the need for a body which it could consult with above community level. Such a group would be able to prioritise needs in terms of allocating funds and resources.

We have all heard about how meetings were held with 450 communities in 415 different locations around Australia and about how, in January, February and March, the minister himself attended 46 meetings with 6000 representatives of 1200 organisations. That was a mammoth effort on the minister's part and I commend him for it. I know that in some communities, as other honourable members on this side of the House know, the effect was not an immediate acceptance of the minister's proposal. People made complaints and identified

a number of different areas in which they sought changes. In fact, the current proposal has been changed quite substantially since those early days.

The Minister for Aboriginal Affairs was true to his word. He said that, if people wanted changes, he would make them. Mr Speaker, just look at a few of the changes which have been made. He doubled the number of regional council areas because people said that those areas were too large. He abolished the zone councils because it was found that, in setting up a national commission, the zones and the councils would make the structure too hierarchical and would make it more difficult for communication to flow up and down. The original proposal envisaged every organisation within the region being able to send along 1 or 2 representatives to regional council meetings, something which I certainly took up with the minister. I said that I believed that would be completely unwieldy in my electorate and throughout central Australia. The minister changed the system to one in which 20 members would be popularly elected from the Aboriginal people within the regional council.

The Chief Minister referred in his statement to a first-past-the-post election procedure and the nightmare it would pose for Aboriginal groups. He is one-up on me there, as I have not been able to find any reference to a first-past-the-post voting procedure in anything that the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs has said. In fact, if 20 people were to be elected on a first-past-the-post system, I would certainly have something to say about it. Another change related to the composition of the commission itself. The number of people on it was increased and there was a very substantial increase in the number of direct representatives of Aboriginal people, reducing the number of nominated people and increasing the number of elected people.

I will not go into the issue of boundaries in great detail because I believe that the member for MacDonnell will be making some very pertinent points in that regard. I only wish to say that nothing is fixed in terms of those boundaries. It has always been clear in the negotiations that, even after the formation of ATSIC, it will be possible to adjust them. The point should be made that the minister did not determine those boundaries. They were determined by Aboriginal people. Even so, if the Chief Minister had gone no further than the issue of boundaries, we probably could have had a reasonable debate.

I will not have time to delve into community government tonight. I hope that the minister will make the ministerial statement on that subject which he has been talking about for some months now but does not seem to have had the courage to deliver. He tried to make the point that the Northern Territory government is much better equipped to provide for the needs of Aboriginal people. Unfortunately, that is simply not accepted by Aboriginal people. Basically, they just do not trust the Northern Territory government and that is a fact.

The Chief Minister said that ATSIC threatens us because it is tantamount to a second parliament for Aboriginal people, a parliament to represent an Aboriginal nation within the Australian nation. I have not heard that sort of rubbish since the member for Sadadeen was peddling 'Red Over Black' up and down the streets of Alice Springs a number of years ago. Hasn't the Chief Minister heard of third-level organisations? Doesn't he remember his time with the Confederation of Industry and Commerce, an organisation which has regional structures, which attempts to advise the government and which is sometimes consulted by government. I must admit it has not got its act together very well. Unions also have structures which enable people with common interests to come together. Governments can consult such organisations

to ascertain the general feeling among various groups in the community, be they ethnic groups, Aboriginal groups, unions or business organisations. To say that such an organisation representing Aboriginal people is an 'Aboriginal nation within a nation' is simplistic rubbish.

Mr Collins: You should ask Pat Dodson.

Mr EDE: You would not know what Pat Dodson was talking about.

He then talked about this 'monolithic duplicate of an unwieldy commission that is likely to bequeath a legacy of divisiveness and disunity'. That is absolute pap, Mr Speaker.

I will now come to the real rubbish contained in the Chief Minister's statement. I refer to the rubbish about the preamble. I would like him to refer back to page 20 of his written statement to see how he developed his argument and how ridiculous it was. On that page, he mentions the preamble and goes on to say that he has obtained a legal opinion. I am not sure where he got it. I would guess that it came from somebody in the League of Rights or the bloke who wrote 'Red Over Black'. It fits snugly with this government's track record on legal opinions relating to Aboriginal affairs. The score must be about 48-0 by now, in terms of the results of cases taken to the High Court on the basis of legal opinions from this individual. After being knocked out of the ring 48 times, I think I would have a look at the person providing the legal opinions because he has not won a single one yet. The legal opinion reads:

Presuming that the preamble to the legislation is acknowledgement of prior ownership and that ownership continues or some residual Aboriginal rights continue, legal opinion obtained by this government is that the bill may well be a potent force which may indirectly lead to the courts declaring that the Aboriginals of Australia did own Australia - at least, those parts in respect of which they can show traditional ownership - prior to 1788.

He started off with the presumption that the legislation does acknowledge prior ownership and that the ownership continues, or some residual rights continue, and then said that it may do this and may affect that. The basic presumption, however, is wrong. It is a supposition that is built on a hypothesis which has been built on a presumption. That is not the way to develop these sorts of ideas. Having got to the point where, if this is right and that is right - doubtful connections made on the basis of a completely wrong assumption - he said that it is more than likely that the High Court would recognise antecedent title. He jumped from that to say that the Commonwealth has imposed uniform land rights through the back door. This is the sort of scaremongering that occurred during the McCarthy era. The aim is, by talking about all sorts of plots and reds under the bed, to bring fear and trepidation into people's hearts and to make them feel that their very homes and hearths are not secure.

There is more of this stuff: 'Once this antecedent title is recognised by the courts, dealings and holdings of Crown land by the Crown will likely be subject to compensation claims by Aboriginal traditional owners'. The Chief Minister has a bad case of Mansell-mania. He has read about a crazy idiot in Tasmania who has a particular problem there and perhaps has some credibility there. He certainly has no credibility with any significant group of Aboriginal people on this side of Bass Strait. Who do we find carrying on with the same sort of absolute rubbish Mansell promotes? Who is starting to

give this sort of stuff credibility? No less than the Chief Minister of the Northern Territory!

The Chief Minister went on to say things like 'the bulk of unalienated Crown land in Australia will be subject to claim'. He said that 'the relevant Crown lands would be "frozen"', that 'antecedent owners would need to approve or at least be heard as to any dealings with the lands' and that 'any moneys paid for or derived from the land would need to be paid to those Aboriginal owners'. He has been reading the newspaper issued some time ago by Kevin Gilbert, in which he talked all sorts of crazy nonsense. Because the Chief Minister has seen that paper and because he has seen something in the ATSIC proposal, he has drawn a link between them.

The Chief Minister's paper then moves on to minerals. He asked: 'First, what regime will govern mining exploration? Secondly, will federal or state law apply? Thirdly, do Aborigines have a veto? Fourthly, who gets the payments or royalties?' This is all on the basis of a preamble to legislation which does not do anything like what he is talking about.

Mr Hatton: Which you claim.

Mr EDE: Your legal record is not too good. At least the federal Attorney-General's office won a couple of cases in the High Court, which is more than yours can claim to have done. Don't tell me to take notice of your legal opinions.

Mr Speaker, the Chief Minister's statement continues: 'Territory mining is stifled on Aboriginal land'. More fear and trepidation. It is like an anaemic little boy pleading to join the heavies in the neanderthal right. 'Let me join the gang', he says, 'I will get in. I will drag out my club and belt them'. Mr Speaker, I would have expected a lot better from the Chief Minister. I thought for a time that there was some hope for him but I can certainly tell him that, on the basis of this statement, he has blown a lot of goodwill. It is crazy rubbish. It is crazy talk and I would have expected better from him.

Mr Hatton: Do you disagree with my arguments on the boundaries?

Mr EDE: Mr Speaker, I have spoken about the boundaries and the member for MacDonnell will give further information about them. We will get on to that and, if the Chief Minister had been listening instead of having his back to me, he would have heard me say so.

Mr Setter: Why don't you address the issues?

Mr EDE: I am going through the statement page by page. You get up later on and address some issues. Let's see how you get on.

The Chief Minister said: 'It is ironic that, while the federal government's proposed preamble to the ATSIC legislation will add inestimable weight to Aboriginal arguments for antecedent title, the federal government itself is vigorously opposing those very arguments'. An interesting point in this debate is that many Aboriginal groups around Australia have opposed the preamble because they believe it limits their rights. I refer to 2 groups in the Torres Strait Islands who feel that they may have some antecedent rights to the particular area they come from and that these rights are affected by the peculiar constitutional position of the Torres Strait Islands. They feel that this preamble actually limits their antecedent rights. The Chief

Minister, however, believes that it will increase them. Various reservations have been voiced by Aboriginal people in relation to the preamble. They do not relate to the facts themselves but to the way in which they have been expressed.

The federal Minister for Aboriginal Affairs has said that he is willing to discuss the preamble. If the Chief Minister was being realistic ...

Mr Hatton: When? We have been waiting since December.

Mr EDE: Mr Speaker, I refer to a statement to the federal parliament by the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs, Hon Gerry Hand, on 27 April 1988. He said that the preamble would be looked at. The Chief Minister visits Canberra now and again. He has some travel rights. He can go down there and discuss these issues. The Minister for Aboriginal Affairs has shown himself to be more than willing to meet with this government. He has probably met with this government more than any other government in Australia and he deserves some credit for that. He does not deserve the sort of treatment that he receives in the Chief Minister's statement and, Mr Speaker, I can tell you that he is not particularly impressed by it.

The Chief Minister asks what the preamble purports to do. I will tell you what it purports to do, Mr Speaker. It purports to do nothing more than recognise the fact that Aboriginal people had prior occupation and original ownership. This land was owned by the ancestors of those people now called the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders.

The Chief Minister then asked: what are the effects of the preamble on mining and industry? I will tell him: none. He then asked: are proprietary rights of individuals or the Crown in right of the states and territories affected and, if so, how? The answer is no. Finally, he asked: what are the constitutional and compensatory ramifications? I will tell him, Mr Speaker. There are none.

Mr REED (Katherine): Mr Speaker, I rise to make some comments in relation to the Chief Minister's statement. I will commence with the opposition's allegation that the Chief Minister has linked the issue of land rights to the ATSIC proposal. I believe that they are separate issues, Mr Speaker. That is why the Chief Minister addressed them. Members opposite have simply misinterpreted his comments.

The Territory government's performance in relation to the Land Rights Act has been illustrated in recent weeks in the agreements that have been reached concerning living areas and stock routes. This seems to me to indicate a change in both attitude and performance in relation to that matter. There is no doubt that the Territory government, over a period of years, has challenged land rights in the courts. It has every right to do so and I support it fully. The Territory Land Rights Act provides for claims to be tested and that is precisely what has happened. I believe that this government has a responsibility to do that on behalf of all Territorians. I reiterate that, in terms of recent arrangements and agreements concerning living areas, the position is not at all as gloomy as the member for Stuart has indicated.

It seems to me that ATSIC will become a bureaucratic nightmare. I cannot understand how people are falling for the 3-card trick. The boundaries, as other members have indicated, have not been drawn on the basis of cultural or linguistic attributes but purely on the basis of bureaucracy. They will, of course, be managed and monitored by people from all parts of the country. I

cannot imagine how this will lead to effective management of ATSIC or, indeed, how it will result in any improvement on the system which has existed in the past.

The staff of ATSIC will all be public servants and they will come under the control of the Commonwealth Public Service Act. Their allegiances will be, of course, to that service rather than the various regions or states. I cannot for the life of me see how that will benefit Aboriginal people or the people of the states or the Territory. It is quite apparent that a bureaucratic nightmare will result. The regions will have little or no control over ATSIC officers who, as I say, will have primary allegiance to the public service rather than to the people whom they purport to serve. I know that we have had all sorts of assurances about responsibilities being decentralised to the regions. It will not happen. It is an attempt to reinvent the wheel. We have seen it all before and we have seen it fail before. Unfortunately, we know who will suffer: the Aboriginal people, whom ATSIC purports to assist.

The staff of ATSIC will advise the federal government on all Aboriginal services and ensure adequate provision of services to all tiers of government. I believe that this will result in a breakdown of our constitutional rights. I do not see that the organisation is to be structured in a way which will bring any benefits to us in that regard.

There will be 56 councils, each of which will have 20 members. Those councils will meet 4 times each year. The mind boggles at the thought of a joint meeting of all those councils, if that is intended. It is hard to see how anything positive could come out of it. Of course, from a bureaucrat's point of view, there could not be a better opportunity to dodge the issues and get out from under the responsibilities which would allegedly rest with the councils.

There will be horrific costs in establishing those councils and paying for large numbers of councillors to attend 4 meetings a year, not to mention the costs of organising elections, however frequently they might occur. In addition, there will be the costs of supporting staff at the head office. If members opposite can convince me that such a structure will be efficient and will fairly represent the Aboriginal people of Australia, I will look forward to it very much.

The Minister for Labour, Administrative Services and Local Government referred to figures from the 1986 census which give a figure of 227 645 as the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population. That amounts to 1.43% of the estimated total population of Australia. It is interesting to look at the breakdown of the figures across the states. In Tasmania, the figure of 6716 represented a rise of 149.9% over 5 years. In Victoria, the figure increased to 12 611, an increase of 108.2% and, in New South Wales, it moved to 59 011, an increase of 66.9%. Of course, what is happening is that, in effect, Aboriginality is becoming popular. It is the flavour of the month, and it is attracting all sorts of people to nominate themselves as Aboriginal people. I think it is a dreadful state of affairs that the full-blood Aboriginal people face. The value and status of Aboriginal people is being downgraded.

Mr Bell: This is pathetic.

Mr REED: If it is pathetic, I would ask the member for MacDonnell to have a talk to his colleague, the member for Arafura, who holds the same view as I do. He believes that it is an absolute disgrace that this is being allowed to

happen and that Aboriginal people of the Northern Territory and the other true Aboriginal people of Australia are facing this problem. We have only to look at Mansell and people of his ilk to see what the real problem is and where it is going to lead us.

Another issue that I want to touch on briefly is the question of antecedent rights. Reference has been made to it in regard to the American Indians, the ownership of land by people other than Indians and the compensation cases that have arisen in relation to such questions. I do not necessarily argue against the concept of land rights but I am concerned about the costs that could be incurred by the Australian population in relation to the recognition of such rights. For example, I understand that figures as high as \$800m have been talked about in the United States as compensation for land currently owned by others and sought by members of the Indian community. If we consider such compensation figures in the context of last night's May financial statement and our national budget, it is clear that they have horrific implications for the national economic outlook.

I believe that there is a great need for caution in relation to ATSIC. I think it is a question of time. We need more time to look closely at the proposal. We need time to look at its implications for the Constitution and the proposed constitutional amendments. We need to look at the fact that, in the case of ATSIC, local government would be directly responsible to the federal government. This would further devalue the rights of the states. It was not intended by our founding fathers, and I believe that it is something that we have to be very careful about before we proceed.

It is clear that there is a great deal of dissent in the Aboriginal community in relation to ATSIC and a great deal of concern, and it is my belief that the majority of Aboriginal people also want more time to consider this issue. They feel that ATSIC is being thrust on them. They do not look forward to dealing with a giant bureaucracy that will be isolated from them. It will absolutely dwarf them, despite the number of councils.

The fact that there are 56 councils, each containing 20 members, might lead one to feel that they would adequately represent people at the local level. A person on such a council might feel that he had the numbers. However, given the number of councils of that size, it is clear that the bureaucracy would tear them to shreds. I do not believe that the system would work. It would be a bureaucrat's delight and a councillor's nightmare. I do not believe we will get anywhere with it. I think that it will not serve the Aboriginal people fairly. We have to be very careful about the direction we take in relation to ATSIC and I would urge that more time be given for consideration of its implications. Mr Speaker, I support the Chief Minister's statement.

Mr BELL (MacDonnell): Mr Speaker, I most certainly do not support the statement. I say that with a single qualification: there is a need for more consultation in relation to ATSIC. I was concerned that the original proposal was floated in December with a prospect of its being in place in July. I was pleased to see that the federal Minister for Aboriginal Affairs acceded to concerns in that regard and has given an extension of time for consultation prior to the implementation of the proposal.

With that minor concession, let me say that the rest of what the Chief Minister had to say was nonsense. Even the government's criticism of the proposal on the basis of the amount of time allowed has a hollow ring to it. Let me remind the Chief Minister and the Minister for Labour, Administrative

Services and Local Government, who also represents electorate of Victoria River, that the community government proposals passed very swiftly through this Assembly. The community government framework was developed with very little consultation with the communities subsequently affected by it and those subsequently approached to take it on. By and large, the opposition has supported the government's moves to implement the community government scheme. I am not sure whether the member for Victoria River was a member of the Legislative Assembly when its provisions were first enacted. They were subsequently amended in 1984 or 1985. On each occasion, the opposition supported the legislation and commented on it. That is one point that needs to be made in respect of community government.

The other point that needs to be made is that it is not parallel with the ATSIIC proposal. Today's attempts by the Chief Minister and the member for Victoria River to compare community government provisions with the federal government's ATSIIC proposal are absolute nonsense. They are not parallel proposals. Both government ministers are attempting to compare fish with fowl. The plain fact of the matter is that the community government proposals are based on single communities. If I had enough time, which I do not, I would go on at length about the problems with the concept of community in western culture. If I may coin a word, we are 'uni-local'.

Mr McCarthy interjecting.

Mr BELL: If the member for Victoria River listened to me for a moment, he might hear something. The fact of the matter is that westerners are 'uni-local' in that they belong in one place: Traditionally-oriented Aborigines are 'multi-local'. Okay? Because of that, there are problems with community government. Also because of that, there are problems with the boundaries that are drawn up for proposals like ATSIIC, and I will come to that in a minute. Before I do so, I want to again state that community government and ATSIIC are not comparable. Their purposes are different.

I am frankly alarmed at the Chief Minister's statement. There is a need for a national representative body for Aboriginal people in this country. A serious vacuum has been left by the removal of the National Aboriginal Conference, which was known as NAC. There has been a real vacuum in Aboriginal affairs. I do not know whether any constituents of the member for Victoria River have made representations to him, but it may come as a surprise to the Chief Minister that one of the people who visited the Assembly today as part of a short-term DIT course is a former President of the Walangkura Council and that he is one of the people who has asked me about the NAC.

In passing, I would like to say that it was terrific to see somebody from my electorate in the gallery today, Mr Speaker. It was an absolute joy. In fact, there were 2 people from my electorate, but they ...

Mr McCarthy: You ought to thank the government for the course they were on.

Mr Harris: Come on, give credit where it is due.

Mr BELL: In the past, I have not been reluctant to grant accolades to ministers and the government when they are due, but I am not going to be sidetracked. I made reference to that particular man because he lives in one of the strongest traditionally-oriented communities in the Northern Territory. He was concerned about the demise of the NAC and is concerned about what is replacing it. Also, quite fortuitously, I happened to be present at one of

Gerry Hand's consultations at Kintore, and it was quite significant. Gerry Hand learned a great deal from it. Although his consultations have been carried out very quickly - and, as the member for Arnhem has said, in some cases too quickly - they have been valuable in terms of making a difficult national arrangement more workable. It will not be perfect. Nobody believes it will be perfect, and I have some reservations about it. However, in terms of making the system more representative and using national organisations to assist Aboriginal Territorians, the Chief Minister's statement does nothing. It indicates to me that the Chief Minister is pursuing some national political agenda.

The national representative organisation which preceded the ATSIC proposal was the NAC, the National Aboriginal Conference. I think its predecessor was the National Aboriginal Consultative Council. It is vitally important that such a national organisation exists and I will give one reason why that is the case. A number of speakers today have mentioned the exploits of Mr Michael Mansell from the Tasmanian Aboriginal Centre. It is a fact that people like Michael Mansell are operating in a vacuum. The vacuum has been created by the lack of a national representative body. Such a body deserves the support of this government, not the outrageous denigration that it has received from the Chief Minister today.

Mr Dale: So he goes to Libya to get ...

Mr BELL: Mr Speaker, I know that the Minister for Health and Community Services does not have a brain in his head, but if he had been listening he would know that I was pointing out that not only do I find those Libyan exploits personally offensive as an Australian, but that I consider that in political terms they are doing extraordinary damage to my constituents in the long term.

Mr Dale: Can we tell Mr Mansell you said that?

Mr Firmin: It has taken you a long time to get to that point.

Mr BELL: Keeping you blokes honest does not leave me too much time for national concerns, but since this has been raised by the Chief Minister, I am expressing a point of view. Is that okay? If you want to send my speech down to him and you have time to organise it, that is fine.

Mr Dale: At least you behaved yourself this morning while your constituents were here. I wondered what was wrong.

Mr BELL: That is contrary to the Minister for Health and Community Services, who never behaves himself.

Mr Dale: At least I am consistent.

Mr BELL: Yes, and offensive.

Mr Speaker, although the Chief Minister graced me with a personal reference in his statement, I do not want to get into offensive criticism. However, when he talks about tribes and boundaries, he is plainly wrong. He just does not know. Speaking about the electorate of MacDonnell, he said: 'Here we discover that the Wangkanguru, Matutujara and western Aranda are each split between 3 regions. The eastern Aranda and lower southern Aranda are each divided between 2 regions, while we are also left with the residual portions of the Pintupi and Kukatja'. I think I was fortunate not to be here

when the Chief Minister attempted to pronounce those names. He also mentioned Finke, and I will come to that in a moment.

Clearly, what has happened is that the person who did the research for the Chief Minister's statement has taken Tindale's map and superimposed the ATSIC boundaries on it - boundaries which are not final, for the Chief Minister's benefit. The boundaries are simply a further proposal for discussion. Okay? They are interim boundaries. Whoever carried out the research for the statement used the 1974 Tindale map or the Wurm map that the Chief Minister referred to. I am not familiar with the Peterson work, but I would be very surprised if Nick Peterson would be referring to Wangkanguru. The fact is that nobody in MacDonnell describes himself as Wangkanguru. There may be a couple of people who would use the term Matutujara but I have never heard it.

As an attempt to take into consideration linguistic and cultural boundaries, the current ATSIC boundaries are not bad. I said before that Aboriginal people are 'multi-local'; that is, they belong to a variety of places because of associations. I attended the 2 meetings on the ATSIC proposal which were held in the region of my electorate. One was at Kintore and the other was at a place called Wingalina, about 10 miles outside the electorate boundary, in South Australia. The purpose of the meetings was to consider the whole Western Desert area. Since the Chief Minister made such a massive point of it, I will point out that Finke is included in the Western Desert area because, by and large, the community speaks Pitjantjatjara.

One of the reasons why the Aboriginal Land Rights Act is sometimes difficult to apply in that region is that it was probably once traditional Aranda country. There are important men in the Finke community who would probably regard themselves as Aranda rather than Western Desert people. That is what I mean by 'multi-local'. There are strong connections right up through the Finke, Maryvale and Santa Teresa area. In any of the communities in my electorate, the people move around in their region. They do not live in one place for 11 months of the year and then go to Sydney for a 4-week holiday. They do not live that way. They may spend 2 or 3 months of the year in 3 places in a pretty restricted area. By and large, the ATSIC boundary proposals reflect some sort of reality.

In respect of the Chief Minister's remarks about the electorate of Stuart, the same criticisms can be made. He has picked up the anthropological term 'estates'. I am not all that well-read in Australian anthropology but I attended a series of lectures on the subject by Dr Nick Peterson, whom the Chief Minister quoted. I think that he would be quite aghast to see the term 'estates' used in relation to areas delineated on a map which, as I have explained with respect to my electorate, bears no relation to reality.

I think I have satisfactorily dispatched the concerns that the Chief Minister raised in relation to regional boundaries. The Deputy Leader of the Opposition demolished the Chief Minister's criticisms of the proposed preamble and I want to reinforce his comments. I would like to see the legal opinion which the Chief Minister referred to and I hope that when he sums up he will tell us that he will table it. He is setting up a straw man and then knocking him down. He begins by saying, 'If this and if possibly this', and then proceeds through a list of dire consequences, concluding with a wonderful oratorical flourish in which he refers to future Australians who will have to foot the bill. There is no mention in that conclusion of all the ifs and buts and maybes; everything has become definite. I certainly look forward to seeing the Chief Minister's legal opinion and I suggest that there will be a few problems with it.

I was hoping to address the sovereignty issue and I think that, by and large, I have. In fact, in terms of its relationship to the Australian government and the Territory government, the situation of ATSIC will be no different to that of the NAC or its predecessors. That has been made quite clear. There are a number of other issues to which I could refer but time will not allow me to do so. I would particularly like to pay tribute to the Aboriginal leaders that we have in the Territory and who receive scant recognition from this government. I refer to people like Galarrwuy Yunupingu, Paddy Dodson, Geoff Shaw and Yami Lester. Instead of the half-baked idiot criticisms that we hear in this House, people should be considering the ATSIC proposal sensibly.

Debate adjourned.

STATEMENT
Unauthorised Use of Evidence

Mr PALMER (Karama)(by leave): Mr Speaker, I wish to speak about a document referred to by the Minister for Labour, Administrative Services and Local Government during the debate on the Public Accounts Committees reports which were tabled today. In his speech, the minister quoted from a letter addressed to the committee, through myself as chairman, from the Public Service Commissioner. The committee does not intend to raise the matter as a matter of privilege under standing order 83. However, I would draw honourable members' attention to standing order 274 which relates to evidence not reported by a committee and which reads as follows: 'The evidence taken by, documents presented to, and proceedings and reports of a committee which have not been reported to the Assembly shall not, unless authorised by the Assembly or the committee, be disclosed or published by any member of such committee, or by any other person'.

The letter quoted by the honourable minister has not been reported or published by the committee or the Assembly and therefore remains the property of the committee. As I said previously, in view of the fact that the contents of the letter are not such that its publication will prejudice or jeopardise the workings of the committee, the committee does not intend raising it as a matter of privilege. However, I warn honourable members that in future debates in relation to committees of this House and their reports, members should be more circumspect in their use of documents that may be the property of a committee.

Mr McCARTHY (Labour, Administrative Services and Local Government)(by leave): Mr Speaker, I rise to offer my apologies to the House for having read from a document which I was unaware was subject to privilege. Quite clearly, it had been referred to me by the Public Service Commissioner for noting and was on file in my office. It supported my argument that the statements of the member for Nhulunbuy did not hold water. I apologise for having used the document and humbly seek forgiveness.

Mr LEO (Nhulunbuy)(by leave): Mr Speaker, I do not think that the point needs to be laboured. The Chairman of the Public Accounts Committee expressed the sentiments of the committee. We are about serious business and, for the sake of the Minister for Labour, Administrative Services and Local Government, I do forgive him. He is quite safe. However, beyond that point, we are about very serious business. Whilst some people in the public service and, indeed, some people in this House may have difficulty in accepting our work, we are nevertheless concerned to do the best job possible for the Northern Territory. I suppose there will always be debate about whether or not we achieve that but

it is certainly our clear intention. I ask that those people who make submissions to the Public Accounts Committee and those who have access to them respect the privilege which this House has given to the committee in relation to those documents.

DRAFT BILL
Poisons and Dangerous Drugs Amendment Bill

Mr DALE (Health and Community Services): Mr Speaker, I table a draft Poisons and Dangerous Drugs Amendment Bill.

Mr Speaker, I am tabling this bill to allow time for adequate public comment. I acknowledge that the issues raised by the proposal contained in the draft bill are significant. They require people to make a judgment as to the relative seriousness of the threat of AIDS on the one hand and, on the other, the threat of illegal intravenous drug use. The bill concerns measures to limit the spread of the human immunodeficiency virus otherwise known as HIV or the AIDS virus. I am sure all members share my concern about AIDS and its alarming spread since the first cases were identified in the United States of America in 1981.

AIDS is devastating in its effects. To try to put this disease in human terms, I would like members to consider for a moment what it would be like to be diagnosed as having AIDS. With our present state of knowledge, you would know that death is inevitable. Either a cure or a vaccine for prevention is still many years away. 846 Australians have contracted AIDS and 441 have died as a result. It is estimated that the number of AIDS cases will grow to 3000 by 1991. Hospital costs alone, for caring for AIDS patients, could exceed \$100m a year by 1990. AIDS is now the leading cause of death among women aged 25 to 34 in New York city. This year, in New York State, 1000 babies are expected to be born already infected with the AIDS virus. Of these children, 250 will die within their first year of life.

At present, AIDS cases are mainly diagnosed in the known risk groups: homosexuals, bisexuals and intravenous drug users. My concern is with this last group, as they will be a major channel for the entrance of the virus into heterosexuals and newborn babies. We will have to live with dire consequences unless we attempt to limit the spread of this disease. The Territory has not been lacking in implementing preventive programs. We have already gained world recognition for the education programs being conducted in Aboriginal communities. We are fortunate that AIDS is not easily transmitted. It does not spread through casual contact, through the air or by means of cups, glasses and spoons. It is primarily a sexually-transmitted disease. It can be transmitted through infected blood and blood products and from an infected mother to her child before, during or shortly after birth.

One of the most efficient ways of spreading the AIDS virus is by sharing contaminated syringes and needles. Unfortunately, this practice is common amongst intravenous drug users. A Sydney study found that 90% of intravenous drug users shared needles. The number of AIDS cases associated with intravenous drug use in Sydney leapt from 25 in November 1986 to 126 in September 1987, an increase of 500% in under 12 months. The consequences of the spread of the AIDS virus in this group are alarming. The economic impact is significant because the group lacks social support networks. In New York city, intravenous drug users who have developed AIDS have required long-term hospitalisation, monopolising hospital beds required for the treatment of other illnesses. The consequences for our community as a whole, as I have already indicated, are higher rates of HIV infection through transmission of

the virus to the sexual partners of intravenous drug users and to newborn babies through their mothers. I consider that we must take whatever measures are necessary to ensure that the spread of this disease is contained. If we can stabilise the number of cases of people infected with the AIDS virus until a vaccine is developed, I believe there is hope of avoiding the awful consequences of the disease in this community.

In a report prepared for the New South Wales Department of Health in March 1987, Dr Alex Wodak and Dr Julian Gold, who are both recognised authorities in the field of AIDS, stated: 'A high prevalence of HIV antibody among intravenous drug users has been noted in cities where supply of sterile injecting equipment is restricted. (New York 59%, Edinburgh 38% to 68.7%). By contrast, cities with a more liberal policy on needle and syringe availability have a far lower prevalence of seropositivity (Glasgow 4.5% and Amsterdam 3.5%)'. Although it is acknowledged that factors other than restrictions on access to clean needles and syringes may have influenced the rate of infection for these cities, other studies show that needle exchange programs significantly reduce needle sharing among those who use the program. For example, a Sydney study showed that over 70% of people using the program had not shared a needle and syringe since they began using it. This would result in a significant reduction in the number of new AIDS cases. The study also showed that 45% of needles and syringes dispensed were returned and that an average of 3% of these were contaminated with the AIDS virus. This is important because it means there are fewer needles and syringes which can be shared and allows used contaminated needles to be disposed of safely. The returned syringes also provide a means of monitoring the spread of disease over time.

The need to ensure that intravenous drug users have ready access to sterile needles and syringes was recognised at the Australian Health Ministers' conference in April 1987. Since that time, all states and territories apart from Tasmania have taken action in this regard. Where there are legislative impediments, amendments are being processed.

In the Territory, with the support of the Chief Minister, who has responsibility for the police, I have permitted a needle exchange program, to be run by the Northern Territory AIDS Council. I also propose that intravenous drug users be able to purchase needles and syringes from pharmacies. This is a matter for individual pharmacists to decide on. As I have said, well-run needle exchange programs remove contaminated needles and syringes from circulation. Provision of plastic disposable cylinders will also minimise the risk of accidental transmission of the AIDS virus to the public. Such cylinders are provided in New South Wales and Western Australia and there are plans to introduce them here.

The law as it stands in the Northern Territory does not prohibit the sale of needles and syringes as such. These are freely available to diabetics. However, where a needle or syringe is supplied through a needle exchange program or sold through a pharmacy to a known heroin user, the person supplying or selling the needle or syringe would be aiding another to commit an offence under section 64 of the Poisons and Dangerous Drugs Act. The person could therefore be charged with actually committing the offence of using or administering an illegal drug. The bill before the House removes this threat of prosecution from those supplying needles and syringes, where this is authorised by myself as minister.

While supporting this proposal in the interests of public health, the Northern Territory Police Force has obvious concerns about the proposed

changes. Firstly, there is the risk that the perception will be created that intravenous drug use is not considered dangerous. Secondly, the removal of the offence could create prosecution difficulties for the police in combating the hard drug problem. Let me make it quite clear that neither the government nor the police are in any way acquiescing in the use of needles and syringes in the commission of a criminal offence. The proposal is supported by the police force only on the basis that it relates to the authorisation of specific outlets to supply and exchange these particular items.

I emphasise that these initiatives do not propose to condone illicit and illegal drug use, nor is there any evidence to suggest that measures such as I have outlined will increase the number of people using intravenous drugs. In fact, preliminary indications from research in this area are that such measures may encourage addicts to enter rehabilitation programs. Needle exchange programs provide an opportunity to counsel intravenous drug users about the danger of drug use, the benefits of ceasing to use drugs and the drug rehabilitation programs that are available.

I consider that these measures are essential for the protection of the health of the community at large. Indeed, they are worth while if they mean that a young person looking for a bit of excitement or keen to try something new is saved from becoming infected with AIDS on the one occasion that he or she experiments with drugs and shares a needle and syringe previously used by a regular user, or saved because that user was not infected because he or she had been able to obtain clean needles and syringes through a needle exchange program or from an authorised supplier.

Mr Speaker, I table the draft bill.

Mr BELL (MacDonnell): Mr Speaker, I move that the Assembly take note of the statement and I seek leave to continue my remarks at a later hour.

Leave granted; debate adjourned.

REAL PROPERTY AMENDMENT BILL
(Serial 114)

Bill presented and read a first time.

Mr PERRON (Industries and Development): Mr Speaker, on behalf of the Attorney-General, I move that the bill be now read a second time.

The purpose of this bill is to make general amendments to the Real Property Act relating to the streamlining of procedures for the registration of land title documents. As members would be aware, the Northern Territory Land Titles Office has a computerised version of its registry book. Further development of this computerisation can only effectively take place if the paper documents and the procedures relating to them are reduced to the maximum extent that is compatible with the preservation of the integrity of the Torrens system. In essence, it is hoped to ensure that documents presented for registration are uniformly and simply structured. This will ensure efficient processing. It would also be expected that such documents would be simpler to prepare than is currently the case.

The first area of reform involves new forms of the various instruments such as transfers, mortgages and leases. Presently, these are contained in schedules to the act and are in the language and style of South Australia in the 1880s. These schedules are to be repealed and replaced by new forms which

will be prescribed in the regulations. Additionally, various other sections are to be amended so as to allow for the prescribing of forms of applications which, at present, are left to the discretion of the applicant.

The second area of reform is to provide for the lodgment of common form documents by parties such as banks. This will enable banks to use short documents which incorporate, by reference, the detailed provisions set out in a registered document containing the standard provisions. This will reduce the amount of paper or computerised data that has to be stored as part of the register book.

The third reform is to simplify the execution of documents so that there will no longer be the necessity of a long appearance clause and so that the class of persons who can witness the execution of a document is widened from the present limited class to a wider class, as will be prescribed in the regulations.

This bill has also provided the opportunity to clarify certain other procedures. Firstly, clauses 24 and 27 aim to equate corporations with natural persons in respect of what they can do and how they can execute and certify documents. Secondly, clause 29 sets out provisions which regulate how instruments and titles are to be delivered after being dealt with in the Land Titles office. Thirdly, certain obsolete provisions relating to restrictions in the execution of documents by married women are proposed to be repealed. I commend the bill to honourable members.

Debate adjourned.

OATHS AMENDMENT BILL
(Serial 101)

Bill presented and read a first time.

Mr PERRON (Industries and Development): Mr Speaker, on behalf of the Attorney-General, I move that the bill be now read a second time.

The purposes of this bill are to amalgamate commissioners for affidavits and oaths, to create a class of ex-officio commissioners for oaths, to increase the categories of persons entitled to witness declarations and to make other changes of a procedural nature. There are 2 major factors behind these changes, which have been discussed with members of the judiciary, the legal, insurance and accounting professions and the police force. The first is that many persons who apply to be appointed as commissioners for oaths for business reasons or because there are none in the area, later leave the business or area, sometimes without notifying the Department of Law. It then becomes difficult to advise people of the location of the nearest commissioner so that they can have documents witnessed. It is hoped to overcome this problem by the amendments proposed.

Secondly, the class of persons empowered to witness declarations is to be expanded to alleviate the need to appoint persons as commissioners for oaths merely to witness declarations. In the Northern Territory, it is possible to appoint 3 different kinds of permanent oath-takers: JPs, commissioners for affidavits and commissioners for oaths. The role of commissioner for affidavits has been superseded by the express power of a commissioner for oaths to take an affidavit. The commissioner for affidavits no longer has a role to play independently of the commissioner of oaths and, accordingly, the title will be abolished. As a transitional measure, all commissioners for

affidavits will be appointed commissioners for oaths if they are not already so. The amendments affecting this appear in clause 18.

Clause 10, which adds a new section 17, creates a class of ex-officio commissioners for oaths consisting of: legal practitioners holding a current practice certificate; the Master and Deputy Master of the Supreme Court; members of the police force over 18 years of age; members of the Legislative Assembly and Territory members of federal parliament. These persons have been selected because it is considered that they hold positions of public accountability or professional responsibility, are likely to be available to members of the public during business hours and have some knowledge of the significance of an oath or the use of legal documents generally. In respect of the classes of august individuals I have named, I point out that, at present, most lawyers are commissioners for oaths or commissioners for affidavits. All police officers are appointed commissioners for oaths. Of the 25 members of this House, 15 are either commissioners for oaths or justices of the peace.

As indicated before, the major problem with the existing system of infinite appointment is caused by the mobility of the Territory population. For example, at least 25% of all appointments made in June 1984 were no longer at the same residential address by June 1986. Many appointees, such as bank managers, are transferees to the Territory for 2 years. Proposed new section 17(2) provides that appointments are to be made for a maximum term of 5 years. It is hoped that this will ensure that people who are no longer eligible to be commissioners for oaths or have left the Territory do not continue to hold appointments and that, when people ask where the nearest commissioner for oaths is, reliable information can be given. In conjunction with this, there will be a number of procedural changes. Each appointed commissioner for oaths will receive a certificate advising him or her when the appointment expires. All ex-officio or appointed commissioners for oaths will receive a booklet explaining their duties as commissioners for oaths. This booklet will be updated as necessary.

The class of persons permitted to take declarations in the Northern Territory is extremely limited when compared to other jurisdictions. For example, in Western Australia, the class includes every permanent state or Commonwealth public servant. The government has examined the position in other Australian jurisdictions and has considered all the options for extending the class of persons who make declarations. It has concluded that all persons over the age of 18 should be able to witness declarations. As members are aware, a will which transfers everything a person owns on his or her death can be witnessed before an adult. If such a document can be made in front of a husband, wife or neighbour, why should people have to seek out a justice of the peace or lawyer to apply for a drivers' licence? If all adult public servants can witness declarations as in Western Australia, why not all adult non-public servants? In conjunction with this, the penalty for making a false statement in a declaration is to be doubled. The proposal has the support of government departments and the police.

Any member who has filled in an income tax return or bought or sold a car will be aware of the unwitnessed statutory declaration or unattested declaration, as it is referred to in proposed new section 23D of clause 11. Such declarations have been used for many years now. Many public bodies require a person to declare something such as their income or entitlement to a social security benefit without the need for a witnessed declaration. The amendment in clause 11 will permit all government bodies and, for the first time, private bodies, to use an unattested declaration if they consider it

appropriate. It will be an offence to make a false statement in an unattested declaration. The savings in time for persons who must declare are obvious.

Finally, clause 18 contains transitional provisions. I should point out that copies of the bill, if introduced, will be circulated widely to persons interested in the reforms for information and comment. It is hoped that the changes in this bill will come into operation by the end of this year. Obviously, there will be some lead time as new forms are made available and the information booklet I have mentioned is distributed to commissioners for oaths. I commend the bill to honourable members.

Debate adjourned

SUSPENSION OF STANDING ORDERS

Mr DALE (Health and Community Services)(by leave): Mr Speaker, I move that so much of standing orders be suspended as would prevent 2 bills, the Powers of Attorney Amendment Bill (Serial 115), and the Adult Guardianship Bill (Serial 118) - (a) being presented and read a first time together and 1 motion being put in regard to, respectively, the second readings, the committee's report stage, the third readings of the bills together; and (b) the consideration of the bills separately in the committee of the whole.

Motion agreed to.

POWERS OF ATTORNEY AMENDMENT BILL (Serial 115) ADULT GUARDIANSHIP BILL (Serial 118)

Bill presented and read a first time.

Mr DALE (Health and Community Services): Mr Speaker, I move that the bills now be read a second time.

Mr Speaker, I tabled the draft Adult Guardianship Bill and the Powers of Attorney Amendment Bill during the March sittings of this Assembly to allow time for interested members of the community to comment on the precise details of the bills. I did this to ensure that all possible interests and views could be taken into account during the finalisation of a piece of legislation which I consider to be one of the more significant to come before this Assembly.

The Adult Guardianship Bill will allow the courts to make orders which will provide much-needed assistance and protection to those people who do not have the intellectual ability to make reasoned and informed decisions about their lives. Such orders could, however, also severely restrict the way in which a person lives. Without properly considering this bill and without understanding the desperate plight of the people we must help, some people might see it as severely infringing on people's civil liberties. For that reason, during the course of the development of the bill, it was vital that community views be heard. We have sought and have been prepared to listen to all views and ideas available.

The central aim of the bill is to provide the framework to ensure that an appropriate balance is struck between the rights and needs of an individual and the rights and needs of the community. All honourable members will recall the immediate reasons for the development of the Adult Guardianship Bill.

These reasons were particularly brought to the public's attention during mid-1986 when a number of people described at that time as behaviourally disturbed came before the courts in Alice Springs. During that period, members of the magistracy criticised the Northern Territory government from the bench on many occasions in relation to the lack of facilities available to assist the people coming before them. They called for a more effective method than imprisonment for those people who cannot be held responsible for their actions and who require special treatment. Suggestions were made by commentators and opposition spokesmen that hospitals were the appropriate places to hold or care for the people concerned. It is clear that the publicity about some of these cases has been valuable to both the people concerned and the community in bringing their plight to the public's attention.

As was pointed out on a number of occasions, both by myself as minister responsible for Correctional Services and Community Development at that time and by the then Minister for Health, the people concerned were not appropriately catered for by either the legislation or institutions in place at the time. These people were, in fact, 'lost' by a system that appeared to ignore their existence. People described as behaviourally disturbed will clearly benefit from this bill. They are, however, a small segment of a number of people who need the protection and assistance it will provide.

I would like honourable members to understand the dimensions of this problem in the Northern Territory. The people who are of concern are not ill. Treatment of their condition in a psychiatric facility is highly unlikely to be of any value or assistance to them. They are, in fact, those who do not have the intellectual ability to make reasoned and informed decisions about their daily existence. Because some of the people exhibit behaviour which appears at times to be consistent with some types of mental illness, they have often been treated as mentally ill. Alternatively, they have been imprisoned for offences which they have committed and this has not been an appropriate, effective or humane method of dealing with them. Most of the people this legislation will assist would not be described as mentally ill. They simply lack the intellectual ability to make reasoned decisions for themselves. During their childhood, many lived in a sheltered and loving environment provided by their parents. However, once these children turn 18 or their parents are no longer able to provide the care, assistance or protection, they are left on their own as adults without the care and guidance they need.

It has been suggested to me that the number of people who could benefit from the legislation which I am introducing today could number anything from 20 to 100. The legislation is not designed simply with a small group of Alice Springs Aboriginal people in mind. Assistance under the proposed legislation will be available to any person who, by reason of injury, illness or disorder is not able to make reasonable judgments or informed decisions for himself.

Mr Speaker, I will discuss the precise details of the definition of 'intellectual disability' and its implications later. At this point, I want to stress that, to date, the problems confronting these people in their daily lives have been dealt with through a range of inappropriate methods. We have either sent them to an institution in another state, tried to classify them as mentally ill, locked them in our jails when they have committed an offence or the community has tried to ignore them. A more reasonable and sensible attitude is clearly required. The government committed itself in last year's election campaign to the provision of facilities for these people who are disabled or socially incompatible. Construction and establishment of

facilities which will eventually cater for the whole range of people who require assistance is under way, including a rural residential facility for socially incompatible disabled people which is to be established before the end of the financial year. A multiply-disabled children's facility will be established in an urban house which is currently being purchased by the government. Centre-based respite services for children up to 5 years old should be on stream by the end of this month. A pilot program of re-socialising behaviourally-disturbed people in Alice Springs is under way. The persons concerned are given a high level of support and assistance in re-entry to the general community. The government is attempting to develop a continuum of caring options which will cater for the range of people who may require assistance.

The Adult Guardianship Bill now being introduced is another aspect of the services which the Northern Territory government is providing for the intellectually disabled. We have provided the ability for the courts to select, from a range of options, that method which is considered appropriate for the person before them. The time has long since passed when the Northern Territory could ignore its responsibility as a community to care for its own. We have a responsibility to provide a full range of community services and medical care to all Territorians. We also have a responsibility to protect and care for those who are unable to look after themselves. We do, however, need to recognise that there are some people in every community who will act in a manner unacceptable to the majority.

The structure and stability of any community relies on adherence of the majority to accepted social values and standard of behaviour. Where people offend against these standards to an unacceptable degree, the community will respond with some method of correction. There must be a balance, however, between the need for enforcement of acceptable standards and individual assistance to people who are not responsible for their actions. We must also protect vulnerable people. We would be derelict in our community duty if we allowed innocent people to be exploited or harmed as a result of this process.

However, protecting and assisting people in the way proposed could be interpreted as a breach of their individual rights. This is clearly a major issue to be addressed in development of legislation of this type. Such a step is momentous, but it is far more unjust in my view to knowingly abandon a person incapable of making reasonable decisions about their daily lives without adequate care and protection. To do so is clearly an offence by omission against that person and should not be tolerated.

Most state governments in Australia have had to deal with this problem. We have reviewed all available legislation. The bill before the Assembly does not follow any similar state legislation. We have examined the experience of others and have developed a piece of legislation which addresses Territory needs and takes proper account of unique Territory issues. Elements have been taken from various state acts, particularly those of Queensland and Victoria. Both of those states are much more populous, have access to a greater number of professions and do not have a significant proportion of their population following a traditionally-oriented Aboriginal lifestyle. All these factors require that the Territory adopt its own approach.

The basic principle on which this legislation is based is that a person who is categorised as having an intellectual disability should be able to lead as normal a life as possible. Any restrictions on that person's daily life should be minimal. However, an appropriate balance must be achieved between the rights and needs of both the individual and the general community. The

bill has been developed to make a body responsible for obtaining the range of information necessary to allow an informed decision to be made about a person's level of intellectual ability, and then to require that body to make a reasoned recommendation about the extent of control which should be exercised to the benefit of that person. The court will then be placed in a position of making the required judgment. The bill will ensure that a person who becomes subject to its procedures will be assisted to live in the most normal manner considered possible. It will require that the least restrictive alternative is adopted in each case.

I will now set out the measures proposed by the bill. The minister, a relative or a person providing substantial care and attention for a person with an intellectual disability can apply to the court for an order appointing an adult guardian for that person. A guardianship panel will advise and recommend to the court in respect of the application. The panel will provide advice on a wide range of matters including the extent of intellectual disability, the support systems which might be available, any matters of cultural significance, whether or not a guardian should be appointed and what guardian would be suitable. At a hearing of a guardianship order, all persons with a reasonable interest in the matter can be heard or represented. The court can issue a full, conditional or temporary order. A guardian shall have those powers and duties in respect of the person represented as are conferred under the order. The guardian must act in the best interests of the represented person. Finally, an order is subject to review within 2 years and is subject to appeal.

The most significant provision of the bill is the definition of 'intellectual disability'. This definition is the only provision of the bill which has attracted any comment during the period that the bill has been on the Table of this House. The definition is the prime determinant of the area covered by the legislation and, therefore, of the authority of the court in the exercise of its powers. It is absolutely essential that this definition be sufficiently precise to include only those it is intended to include, but wide enough to ensure that the processes of the legislation are available to all those who require the assistance it provides. In this regard, it should be clear that we are not simply discussing those people with the greatest need. We need legislation which will allow assistance to be provided to the range of people who may require assistance, from those in severe need of the appointment of a guardian through to those whose needs might be less dramatic but just as necessary.

The only criticism that I have received relates to the use of the word 'disability'. As I have said, it is vital that this definition be as legally precise as possible. Professionals who work in the area from time to time arrive at descriptions of conditions, illnesses and so on which, in their view, are the best available. In legislation, it is necessary to settle on words which can carry a specific definition, and I believe this has been done. The term 'intellectual disability' has been defined in a way that will properly describe those people to whom the bill will relate. The definition is the key test of the application of the bill. It provides that an intellectual disability in an adult is a disability caused by the effect of an illness, injury, congenital disorder or organic deterioration of a person's mental condition. Where such is the case, and the person appears to be unable to make informed decisions relevant to their daily existence, action and assistance is available under the bill. The definition should ensure that there is no confusion between this bill and the Mental Health Act.

Clause 3(3) specifically provides:

A person shall not be considered to be under an intellectual disability by reason only that the person ... expresses or refuses or fails to express a particular political, anarchic, religious, irreligious, legal, illegal, moral or immoral opinion or ... engages in or refuses or fails to engage in a particular political, anarchic, religious, irreligious, legal, illegal, moral or immoral activity.

This specific protection is provided in a similar manner in the Mental Health Act.

Clause 4 is not common in Australian legislation. It is meant to be a clear statement of the intention of the legislation. It provides that, whenever a decision is to be made or a duty carried out, the result will be the least possible restriction of a person's freedom of decision and action, that the best interests of the person will be promoted and upheld and that the wishes of the person, if at all possible, will be given effect. It is a measure of the seriousness with which the government views the decisions which might be made to remove a person's rights and liberties that a statement of intention is provided within the legislation.

The bill takes special care to protect the rights of the individual. Clause 8 allows for applications to be made for guardianship orders. The only persons who may make such an application are the public guardian, a near relative or a person who has been providing substantial care and attention for that person. The public guardian is defined in clause 5 as the minister. A 'near relative' is defined to take account of legitimate and valid relationships which exist in the diverse cultural and ethnic elements of Northern Territory society. A magistrate or judge may also direct that an application be made. Doctors, lawyers, welfare workers or police will not have the right to make applications.

Once an application has been made, a guardianship panel will be created to advise, give reports and make recommendations to the court in respect of the application. It is intended that this panel effectively will provide the research capacity for the court. The panel shall have a member with skills and expertise in the assessment of persons with intellectual disability. Another member shall represent the community in or near which the represented person resides. This will mean that each panel will have the ability to assess the information it obtains under this legislation from the perspective of both the professional and the community. The guardianship panel will examine such things as whether a person has access to a support system in his or her community, whether there are matters of cultural significance to either the individual concerned or the community and who, if anybody, should be a guardian. A guardianship panel will have 6 weeks to carry out this work. It is intended that the imposition of this time limit will ensure that the need of the person and the community for a quick decision is balanced against the need to protect the rights and liberty of the individual and to allow a properly researched assessment to be made.

Due to the nature of the advice expected from a guardianship panel and the need to allow the court the flexibility necessary to reach a determination, clause 12 allows the court to gather information in such a manner as it thinks fit. The court will not be bound by the rules of evidence. In a piece of legislation which allows a person's civil liberties to be removed, it is clearly significant that there is provision for the rules of evidence to be overridden. Again, I must stress that it is a mark of the importance which the government places on the need to assist and protect the people concerned, that it is prepared to ensure that magistrates have sufficient flexibility to fully inform themselves about all aspects of the applications before them.

Clause 13 is also relevant in this regard. This clause allows for a wide range of people to be represented at a hearing. I believe that it includes all those who might have a legitimate or reasonable interest in the care and assistance of the person who is the subject of an application. In any given case, therefore, the court should have before it the full range of options, views and evidence concerning a person, to assist it in determining that person's future. As in all cases of interpretation of the law, our major protection is the probity and trustworthiness of judges and magistrates.

The court will have the option of making either a full, conditional or temporary order for guardianship. It will, of course, also have the option of deciding that no order should be made. Where it is decided that an order should be made, the selection of a guardian and the powers and duties of that guardian are important. A guardian may only be appointed where the court is satisfied, pursuant to clause 14, that the person will act in the best interests of the person proposed to be represented. The court must also be satisfied that the interests of the proposed guardian do not conflict with the interests of the represented person. A guardian will have authority as provided under the order of the court. A full order will place a guardian in a relationship similar to that between a parent and a child. This will allow the guardian the power to decide, for instance, where and with whom the represented person shall live, the type and nature of work a represented person may do and, in most cases, what health care may be provided for a represented person. Under a conditional order pursuant to clause 18, the court may confer powers and duties subject to conditions and restrictions. Temporary orders are also available.

Where there is no guardian and no person who is considered by the court to be an appropriate guardian the minister, as public guardian, may be appointed. This will allow the court to take account of the needs of the person proposed to be represented and of the significant resources available through my department which may be applied for a person's benefit. In every case, the guardian is required to act in the best interests of the represented person. However, clause 20, while not derogating from that overall requirement, provides some protection for a guardian when making decisions relating to a represented person's life. This protection is considered to be necessary to assist those people who undertake, on behalf of the community, the difficult and demanding responsibility of a guardian.

Clause 21 is significant in that it deals with a contentious subject. This clause restricts the authority of the guardian in that it does not allow major medical procedures to be carried out on a represented person unless the court's consent has been obtained. A major medical procedure has been defined as: (a) a procedure that does not remove an immediate threat; (b) a procedure related to contraception or termination of a pregnancy; or (c) any other procedure accepted by the medical profession as being of a major nature.

Neither the courts nor this legislature enjoys the opportunity to play God. It is a fact of life, however, that such decisions have to be made at times. One of the most contentious of these is the clause dealing with contraception or termination of pregnancy. The need to carry out any major medical or surgical procedure on a person without their informed consent is, to me, the greatest possible infringement of his or her civil liberties. It is for this reason that, pursuant to clause 22, such decisions are required to be referred to a court which can take the necessary objective and balanced view and which, pursuant to the legislation, will act in the best interests of the person concerned. The bill also provides for the review of all orders. Each order will be reviewed at least once every 2 years. Orders may be

reviewed at any time by the court of its own volition or on the application of any person.

To allow the protection of the rights of the individual by the use of the weapon of public scrutiny, all proceedings of the court will be open to the public. It will be possible, of course, for the court, pursuant to clause 25, to close the proceedings in full or in part. Unless the court determines otherwise, these proceedings shall not be subject to coverage through the press. The public broadcast or publication of particulars which could help identify a person will be an offence.

The bill recognises that costs should not inhibit applications for guardianship orders or for legal representation. Clause 8 provides that an application shall be lodged without fee and, in clause 13(2), the Executive Officer is required to ensure that, in any proceedings, the represented person is legally represented.

This outline of the philosophy, issues and key features of this bill should provide honourable members with a clear and frank statement of the intentions of the government. As I said in my opening remarks, the significance of this bill and the importance of obtaining maximum community consultation has been recognised from the outset. Since mid-1986, when these issues were raised publicly and forcefully in the courts in central Australia, many of the proposals embodied in the bill have been widely canvassed. A scheme upon which this legislation has been based was distributed among interested bodies both in the Territory and interstate more than 18 months ago.

The range of comments received was taken into account in the further development of the bill now before the House. Again, the bill has been subjected to rigorous community scrutiny during the period it has lain on the Table. In fact, my department has taken the extra step of sending copies of the bill to those organisations and individuals it believed had some interest but who had not taken the opportunity to comment after it was tabled in March. As a result of that step, I received letters from 2 organisations, one based in Alice Springs and the other in Darwin, asking that introduction of the bill be delayed while their committees conduct their own research. Because the community consultation process has taken so long, it appears that these organisations have new committees which are unaware of previous communications on the bill going as far back as 1986. Therefore, I have advised both organisations that I do not wish to delay the bill's introduction any longer. I have assured both committees that changes to the bill can still be implemented if their own research over what is now old ground produces new information. Further unreasonable delay at this time would have meant unnecessary disadvantage to intellectually-disabled people and their families.

As I have said, very few adverse comments have been made. I believe this reflects on the maturity and compassion with which the Northern Territory government has addressed this difficult issue. I am convinced that we have achieved the desired balance between the rights and needs of individuals in a democratic society and the rights and needs of the community in which we live.

Mr Deputy Speaker, with the agreement of the Attorney-General, I have also introduced a bill to amend the Powers of Attorney Act in conjunction with this particular legislation. I commend the bill to the House.

Debate adjourned.

MOTION

Noting Paper on Pastoral Industry Study

Continued from 19 May 1988.

Mr Perron (Industries and Development): Mr Deputy Speaker, the GRM Pastoral Industry Study is one of the initiatives implemented by government in order to bring into focus the issues facing primary industries in the Northern Territory today. The report consolidates and summarises a great deal of information. Naturally, it sometimes reflects the assessment of the consultants and obviously it cannot be all things to all people. It is not difficult to pick particular aspects and argue a countering view. However, the data does provide a baseline from which to move forward and consequently the study is seen as a major long-term contributor to the development of the pastoral and related industries.

Recently, a working group established to make recommendations to Cabinet on future strategies for the pastoral industry completed its work. Its recommendations will provide a baseline for future development and guide the establishment of objectives in areas requiring further study. In preparing its recommendations, the working group has recognised that the beef industry will continue to be the mainstay of agricultural primary industry in the Northern Territory. Not only does it presently constitute the most suitable land use for extensive areas, it also contributes significantly to the Northern Territory economy, offers employment and provides flow-on effects in all regions of the Territory.

The Northern Territory Pastoral Industry Study is extensive and diverse. Similarly, the pastoral industry is extensive and diverse. There are about 240 pastoral leases spread through 4 major geographical regions with variable agricultural and climatic regimes. This makes it very difficult to apply a broad-brush approach in making recommendations. A major constraint in the development of the Northern Territory pastoral industry has been its isolation which affects the price paid for cattle and increases the cost of producer inputs. Seasonality of operation also contributes significantly to increased costs of production and processing, particularly in the Top End. The local market for Northern Territory-produced beef is limited at present by the quality of local cattle and further limited by the small but growing local population. The predominant outlet for Territory cattle is, therefore, to an external market either for fattening or for packaged beef for live export. Annual off-take from the Northern Territory pastoral industry is not major by Australian standards and is therefore insignificant in terms of quantities traded on world markets. Territory producers therefore face a price structure for manufacturing grade beef which is fixed at any point in time, regardless of the quantities produced.

The Territory's low-cost pasture resource and the ability to store beef on the hoof was quite unique in the Australian pastoral industry and over the years seemed to provide a major comparative advantage to the industry as well as to a considerable extent offsetting increased production costs and reduced prices. Current management systems and the need for debt servicing now dictate a market system whereby turn-off occurs on an annual basis, largely for servicing of direct operating costs and debts. Combined with the requirements of the BTEC program and those previous considerations, there has been a change in herd composition and structure. This, in turn, is leading to a reduced supply of the bullock-type animal with more and more animals being turned off at an earlier age, either for fattening and a more intensive management situation - that is, pasture and or feed lots - or direction of younger and lighter animals into the livestock trade.

The working group recognised that current trends in the industry related strongly to the demand for live exports and the low grain commodity price, and may again change depending on the combination of circumstances over time. Nevertheless, the overriding consideration is the level of equity in properties and the current cost of money. These in turn necessitate earlier turn-off. It is the working group's belief that the draft industry plan covers the major initiatives which the industry and government can take within a 10-year period after proper consultation and agreement. The key issues identified in the report relate to a shift in emphasis in research and development and advisory services, the provision of services and their cost, marketing and processing, education and personnel training, range land resources, fuel costs, animal welfare and feral animals.

Mr Speaker, I propose that the working group's report be distributed to interest groups to test their reaction to its suggested directions for the industry and to foster a cooperative approach to further development of the pastoral industry in the Northern Territory.

Debate adjourned.

MOTION

Noting Statement on Screw-Worm Fly

Continued from 19 May 1988.

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH (Koolpinyah): Mr Speaker, when the minister first notified this House that 4 insects had been detected on a ship in the port, I was very concerned. If the screw-worm fly bred in any numbers in the Northern Territory, it would adversely affect not only the cattle industry but every warm-blooded animal in the Territory, including humans. I was concerned that the minister only made the notification and did not give the full details, which I will give now. I was very concerned that screw-worm fly had invaded the Northern Territory but, after making inquiries and receiving full information, my concerns have been allayed.

It appears that the flies were picked up on a ship that had come from Brunei after loading cement in Singapore. An insecticutor, which is normally used on ships to pick up stray insects, picked up the screw-worm flies. At present, the Northern Territory is in a state of readiness, not in a state of panic. The state of readiness is the same as would apply if any other noxious insect was picked up here. As the minister said, there is a monitoring system in place covering an area with a 50 km radius from Darwin. In fact, I was told that one of the monitoring stations is at Yarrowonga Zoo, quite close to where I live. There will be increased monitoring beyond the 50 km radius. Monitoring stations are located at the Coastal Plains Research Station and in the Berry Springs and Darwin River area, as well as throughout the rural area generally.

The particular danger of the screw-worm fly lies in its ability to attack any warm-blooded animal - not only cattle. The adult female lays its eggs in a wound. The wound does not have to be large; it can be the navel of a newborn animal, a castration wound, a barbed-wire scratch or even a very small tick wound. The eggs are laid. They take a couple of days to hatch and the larvae remain in the wound for 5 to 7 days, in which time they do a gross amount of damage and produce a mass of putrefying, stinking flesh which generally becomes worse and worse resulting in the animal's death in a very drawn-out way.

I believe that the screw-worm fly exists in some numbers in Papua New Guinea. I asked why the Northern Territory or Commonwealth government does not set up monitoring stations in Papua New Guinea and, in so doing, start a program of sterilising trapped males. I was told that this has already been considered and in fact has been done in some cases. In Papua New Guinea, there is a system in a state of readiness, much as the Northern Territory Department of Industries and Development officers are now. It is ready to swing into action if a large outbreak is found at any time. There is a sterilisation plant there which, in a period of 2 to 3 weeks, could produce something like 30 million male flies which would inhibit an outbreak in Papua New Guinea and also inhibit an outbreak extending to the Northern Territory which, as a fly flies, is not very far away.

The only problem with activating this massive sterilisation program is that it costs quite a few dollars. Some years ago, a program like this was carried out to test the effectiveness of the system. It was quite effective but involved a substantial cost. Another reason such a program has not been carried out in Papua New Guinea is because the cattle industry there is intensive, unlike the industry in the Northern Territory, where it is extensive. Although the screw-worm fly will attack any warm-blooded animal, it is the cattle industry which we are most concerned about. If cattle or other stock are inspected frequently, a fly strike will be picked up immediately so that remedial action can be taken. However, if cattle are in an extensive situation and are rarely seen from one year's end to the next, those affected by screw-worm fly will probably not be seen at all.

The traps that are now used contain a synthetic lure which smells a little like the putrefying flesh that the screw-worm fly produces. I believe that, as well as setting up these traps throughout the rural area, officers, vets and stock inspectors will be asking all owners of stock to enter into an impromptu program to have their stock inspected. Having an interest in goats, I would certainly willingly make my stock available for inspection, as would any other responsible owner of stock.

Mr Speaker, in conclusion I would like to say that the discovery of the 4 screw-worm flies is serious but, at present, it is a very low-key infestation.

Mr PERRON (Industries and Development): Mr Speaker, I do not have much to say in response to the honourable member. I really cannot respond to any of her questions or suggestions in regard to eradication of screw-worm fly in Papua New Guinea. I understand, however, that it is an important issue for the authorities concerned with the potential import of exotic diseases into Australia. With the frequent transiting of the islands between Cape York and Papua New Guinea by native people with animals in boats, there is clearly an ongoing worry that screw-worm fly could indeed reach the very tip of Cape York at some stage and move into the remainder of Australia fairly quickly. No doubt, the national authorities have action plans in place to monitor the situation.

Fortunately, following the recent detection of the insect in Darwin, there have been no positive signs from any of the surveillance measures set up. We can reasonably assume that no insects left the boat during its brief stay in Darwin. We should all obviously be very thankful for that. It is a reminder that we must be continually vigilant in our quarantine operations right across northern Australia. It is understandable that officials are very concerned that boats may be landing on northern shores unbeknown to anybody, even boats which might reach our shores quite innocently as a result of being blown off

course or becoming lost whilst sailing from islands to our north. It is a real worry that animals or even humans on such vessels could unsuspectingly bring such noxious insects into Australia. I understand that an infestation would be a tragedy equivalent to the entry of rabies into Australia. The effects of an eradication campaign and quarantining of areas would be very dramatic. I am sure that honourable members share my relief that none of the traps have to date showed any positive indication of the screw-worm fly being present.

Motion agreed to.

ADJOURNMENT

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

In tonight's adjournment debate, I would like first of all to pay tribute to a person who passed away some time ago. I have tried to obtain information about him and unfortunately, it has take some time to do so. The person that I refer to was a well-known resident of Darwin, Dick Butler. I think all honourable members of this Assembly would be aware of Dick and the part that he played in this community. Dick died on 24 August and was buried next to his wife Louise on 28 August. Louise died during Cyclone Tracy and that was a sad blow to Dick.

Dick was born around 1915. As I said, I have not been able to get the complete facts. His father was an Englishman and his mother a member of the Jawoyn tribe. He spent his early childhood at the old Kahlin compound. During his early years, he was a horse boy for a retired army colonel and he also worked on the Darwin to Larrimah railway as a bucket boy. He also struck up a very close relationship with another well-known person whose name has been mentioned in this Assembly on a number of occasions. He was none other than Don Bonson. Don was 16 at the time and tells the story of how Dick and others formed what was called the 'Black Watch'. The 'Black Watch' guarded the Darwin fuel tanks prior to the war and also during the bombing of Darwin. I do not know how they guarded them from bombs. Following that, Dick was snapped up by the army during the war. After the war, he applied to remain in the army permanently and his application was accepted. He served in the 7th Military District until he retired in 1960.

Dick Butler was the first Territorian to receive a Good Conduct Medal for 20 years. That medal was awarded at a special military ceremony in Darwin. The Butlers and all of their children agreed that the army was part of his life. Dick and Louise married in 1934 and began what became a respected family. There were 9 children in the Butler family. During that period, he also built a reputation as a sportsman. He particularly excelled at football and as a boxer. He went on to coach many boxers. As I mentioned earlier, it was sad that Dick lost his wife, Louise, during Cyclone Tracy in 1974.

After he left the army, he became the chief gardener at the Administrator's residence and helped to establish that residence as a landmark. I am sure that all members would be aware of the beautiful gardens that surround the Administrator's residence. During his army career, he lived for years at the old East Point camp and no doubt had a great deal of pride in his role as a soldier. Years later, he helped establish the East Point Military Museum, assisted by the late Victor Williams. Dick's Good Conduct Medal is now on display at that museum.

Mr Speaker, I am sorry that I have taken so long to make this tribute because I think that Dick should have been acknowledged before now. Unfortunately, I have been trying to obtain information about his history. He is a Territorian who will be sadly missed. His 9 children have continued the reputation that he has established in relation to sport and also in the very important role they play in the community.

I would also like to raise the matter of the coming local government elections. It is the last occasion that we will have to speak on the elections before Saturday. Quite frankly, I am disgusted at the lack of interest and I think other members would share my disgust, particularly in relation to the Darwin area. For the Richardson Ward, 3 aldermen were needed and only 2 nominated. That will cause a July by-election which will cost a considerable sum of money. We also see that the Lord Mayor is unchallenged. In the Waters Ward, there were only 3 nominees and therefore all of those automatically became aldermen. Even in the Chan Ward, there are only 4 nominations for 3 places.

I must say that, in other local government areas, the response was much more encouraging. If one reads the Alice Springs papers, all one can see is advertisements of the candidates for the various positions. In Alice Springs, there are 24 nominations for 10 positions of alderman, plus 5 for the Mayor. In Katherine, there are 14 nominations for 6 positions, plus 4 for the Mayor. In Litchfield there are 8 nominations for 6 positions, plus 2 for the President. In Palmerston, there are 8 nominations for 6 positions, plus 5 for the Mayor.

I am one of those members of this Assembly who has always supported the third tier of government - local government. I think it is a very important part of our system. I have always felt that the people who live in a particular area should be the ones to have a say in what happens there. As a member of the Darwin community, I do not want the member for MacDonnell or the member for Stuart telling me what is best suited to it. Likewise, they would not like me to have input into the communities in which they live.

The point is that local government is a very important part of our system. People need to take note of that and to become involved. I do not know how to encourage them. I do not accept the comment that people have not stood because they are satisfied with what is happening. I do not accept that for 1 minute. I believe that the people of Darwin, in particular, should start to really look at the issues because local government is becoming involved in areas other than rates, roads and rubbish. It is playing a very important role in our whole economic structure. The people who become involved in local government must bear that in mind.

I was really astounded at the lack of interest that has been shown in Darwin. The only ward which has a considerable number of candidates is the Lyons Ward. Some of those candidates come from the northern suburbs and perhaps they should consider standing there. As we move towards statehood, more power will devolve on local governments and they will have more of a say in what is occurring. In a town the size of Darwin, we cannot find enough people to stand in a particular ward, yet every other local government area in the Northern Territory has shown considerable interest.

Mr Speaker, I raise that point because the people will be going to the polls on Saturday. In the instances where they do have to elect an alderman, I hope they consider very carefully where they place their votes. We are talking about moving away from rates, roads and rubbish. We have to consider

the whole community and, in order to do that, we should be very much aware of the people whom we elect to the city council. The time is past when the distribution of how-to-vote cards is sufficient. People want to see their aldermen and talk to them. Aldermen have to start putting forward their views and ideas about the city's progress. I repeat that I am disgusted by the lack of interest and I hope that the situation changes in future local government elections in the Darwin area.

Mr SMITH (Opposition Leader): Mr Speaker, I rise to give credit where it is due. That it is a rare event in this place, but this is a rare occasion. Today marks the departure of 2 of the most professional journalists ever to grace the press gallery: Mr David Nason and Mr Andy Bruyn. Given the vagaries of journalism, we may hope to see them here again. However, there is a risk that they will find their career paths never lead back to Darwin and I think it is fitting that we acknowledge their contribution.

For almost 4 years, David Charles Nason has been gracing us with his presence. A man of immense charisma, style and character, David is also known as Rambo. Those who know him best describe him as a hard-nosed journalist and ageing footballer. His penetration of the political scene was so deep that, at times, nobody knew that certain things had happened until they read about them in the NT News or The Australian.

His past has always been shrouded by mystery and I am told that short-term memory loss has not been the only cause. Everyone, it seems, has a favourite David Nason tale. His affinity for tales has not been confined to journalism. There was the time he and his colleague, the irrepressible Fred McCue, decided to relocate 2 flags, Dawn Fraser fashion, from the office of the former Chief Minister, Paul Everingham. And who will forget the green and white Kingswood nicknamed 'Thommo' on account of its speed and lethal capacities or the agony of David when Thommo went missing in Alice Springs and the rejoicing when it was found, bullet-riddled but still functioning. There were those who understood that this was an omen for the future. Dave's recovery of Thommo was, as we all know, short-lived. Stolen a second time, Thommo was recovered, washed-out and finished, in the bay.

Heartbroken after that, he decided to stick to company cars. The sight of Dave speeding around town visiting established contacts in Squires, Le Club, the Beachcomber, the Darwin Press Club, the Green Room and Lim's in a beat-up blue Corolla is almost a tourist attraction. It is well-known that his favourite haunt is Darby's, but I am assured there is no truth whatsoever in the rumour that his favourite post-Darby's pursuit is to entertain nubile nymphettes covered in squid to the sounds of the Collingwood Football Club song.

He has always endeared himself to his colleagues who have faithfully responded to his sensitive and understanding approach to their problems. Many a young cadet has fond memories of the fatherly, gentle and always forgiving attitude to their difficulties. I have heard some examples of this advice. Generally, it was an invitation to go forth and procreate.

His most celebrated splash was in Kampuchea. The lasting impression he left upon the place was summed up by the Ambassador in Bangkok who has never forgotten his name. Nor has he forgotten why.

Colleagues of Andy Bruyn, on the other hand, have only one complaint: he has lived a life of such exemplary perfection that they found it almost impossible to recall an event to his discredit. However, with some

encouragement, they were able to provide those small indicators which are guidelines to the essence of the man.

Andy has always depressed others with his hale and hearty nature. His willingness to listen has driven people into paranoid silence. Andy returned to Darwin in 1982 to become part of the team that launched Channel Eight's news service. He rapidly established a flair for the political arena and the forensic political question. Few will forget the post-election moment when Andy, with cameras rolling, approached the newly-elected member for Leanyer, Mr Palmer, and dazzled him with the query: 'How does it feel to win, Mick?'. After such a verbal onslaught, it was not surprising that the new member could only reply: 'Win what, Andy?'

While his face and some of his more presentable mannerisms are well-known to everyone in the Territory, few are aware of his famous 48-hour fitness programs and only station management is privy to the rich inventory of his late-for-work excuses. But, most significantly, he has mastered the stand-up, not by descending into glib facility, but by dogged hard work. One of the trophies in the Channel Eight newsroom records a world-ranking 42-attempt stand-up. In the Olympics of journalism, it is a mark likely to stand forever.

He has a profound and professional dedication to balanced reporting and to junk food. He fears nothing, with the possible exception of his wife whose heroic struggle to domesticate him would make an hour-long news special. Many, of course, have asked him why, after such a long, distinguished and influential career in Darwin, he should now chose to go to Brisbane. Andy has always provided the same crisp analysis. 'Why not?', he replies. The truth is, of course, that since Joh and Russ have left the centre stage, there is a big space to fill in Queensland. Andy Bruyn has the right qualifications.

Both these journalists have done their profession, the parliament and themselves proud in their work here. None of us has agreed with them on all occasions; sometimes we have thought they have been wrong. I suspect we think that quite often, but we certainly cannot accuse them of not being professional or of not having done their work to the best of their ability. I wish them both the very best in their careers and hope that, some day, our paths will cross again and we can continue the stories I began to tell tonight.

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH (Koolpinyah): Mr Speaker, I will say at the outset that I do not agree with the view of the Minister for Education that there was a lack of interest in the local government elections, as evidenced by the few people who have put their names forward. I hold the opposite view. My view is that, especially in the Shire of Litchfield, if few new people nominate for election, that indicates that they are happy with the people who are doing the job. I think the minister has displayed a rather blinkered attitude. The fact that not many people stand for positions does not mean to say that they are complacent about local government. Our shire president has done a pretty good job out our way, and the fact that only 1 person is standing against him is an indication of that. I think the minister is wrong in his assessment of the situation and that, in fact, the opposite applies.

I want to speak briefly on another matter which is rather more sober. I am very sorry to have to say this but, due to certain departmental red-tape restrictions which have been approved by the Minister for Health and Community Services, 3 private child-care centres are closing down in the rural area. I hope the minister is happy because nobody else is. They are closing down

solely because they cannot operate under the red-tape guidelines published by his department. This is to the detriment of parents and children in the rural area. These 3 child-care centres gave such a degree of commonsense care for children that they were always booked out. The parents whose children went there were very happy with the service they supplied. It will now be very difficult for parents with young children to find suitable centres in the rural area to look after their children.

The member for Jingili spoke yesterday or the day before and asked the Minister for Conservation to supply some help to people in his electorate in making gardens. I had made a few notes on this but I cannot seem to put my hand on them at the moment. By his request, the honourable member demonstrated a socialistic outlook, which rather surprised me. He seems to think that handouts are still the order of the day and, in some respects, they probably are. A person only needs to go limping into the office of the Minister for Health and Community Services and he can obtain a handout for something or other.

The days are past when the officers of the Conservation Commission can be considered as just a band of government-funded gardeners who create little, ticky-tacky gardens in the northern suburbs so that the CLP can win more votes. It might do the honourable member and the minister some good to talk to some of the officers who have to do the work. They are not awfully keen on it. In fact, they are just a little short of being very antagonistic towards the idea. The Conservation Commission does not exist merely to make gardens. It is not only my view that commission officers would be better employed doing what they are employed for: looking after real conservation issues, not making gardens to improve the prestige of CLP members in the northern suburbs.

I asked the Minister for Industries and Development a question this morning concerning the possibility of pet meaters being able to shoot out an area prior to an official shoot-out, thus avoiding unnecessary waste. I was prompted to do this because of concern by a very prominent pet meater in my electorate who has shown, over the years, that he is a man of some standing. He is a very good and responsible operator in his field. He realises, as does everybody else, that the day of the pet meater killing feral animals is drawing to a close because of the Brucellosis and Tuberculosis Eradication Campaign which is slowly eliminating feral cattle and feral buffalo. There are also campaigns to eliminate feral horses and donkeys, and feral anything else. The intention seems to be to waste them completely which is something to be deprecated. I was therefore pleased to hear the minister say that he is in favour of benefits accruing to pet meaters and private operators, who are small businessmen, before a shoot-out is conducted.

I will briefly describe the difficulties this particular pet meater has faced. I hope that the minister will be able to offer him more than encouraging words and that he will put his department's money where his mouth is and change the system. The pet meater has said that, since early February, he has applying to the Conservation Commission and the Department of Lands and Housing for a continuation of his previous contract on the Marrakai Flora and Fauna Reserve, the Darwin town environs, the Snake Creek area, the Finnis River, Wildman River Station and areas within the boundaries of Koolpinyah under the control of the Conservation Commission - that is, Black Jungle, not the adjoining private land. He said that all properties adjoining these areas have been issued with destocking notices instructing them to eradicate beasts from all of their bush areas by December 1988. Before the government completely destocks a pastoral property, I am sure that the adjoining Crown land will be destocked by a government shoot-out or by other means, preferably

by means of a pet meater shooting to utilise the animals. The minister said that he was in favour of that this morning and I hope he is.

I have been informed by the Department of Lands and Housing and the Conservation Commission that all of these areas have to be retendered. At present, none of these areas has been retendered. The tendering system takes approximately 6 to 8 weeks before a contract can be finalised. Therefore, these areas would not be let until August if they were to proceed with the tendering system at today's date. These areas do not carry large numbers of stock, but they do supply a living to the pet meat industry of the Darwin area. As there are only 2 licensed pet meat establishments in the Darwin area, this pet meater asks if it would be possible to arrange for shooting in these areas to start immediately without using the tendering system.

Mr Speaker, you might ask: 'What does it matter if they wait until August?' Most of the buffalo are in wet areas and it is not unknown for the first rains to arrive in August and for it to be pretty wet in September. As soon as the rains start, the waters rise and it is very difficult for the pet meaters to get into these areas. It is important for their livelihood that they be allowed into these areas in the dry. The pet meater points out that there are approximately 4 months left before these areas become the subject of another government shoot-out if BTEC proceeds. He stresses that the year is slipping by. I agree with them. The months seem to go by pretty quickly. Before he knows where he is, the wet will be here again and he will be done out of a reasonable income.

Pet meating is not easy work. It has to be carried out in very difficult conditions and pet meaters work for every dollar they get. I hope that the minister will consider what the pet meater is asking for, which is a reconsideration of the tendering system so that he is not disadvantaged by having to wait for the wet season before a decision is made as to whether he can shoot out an area before the minister's shoot-out takes place.

Mr McCARTHY (Labour, Administrative Services and Local Government): Mr Speaker, in the absence of the Minister for Conservation, and being a former Minister for Conservation - as indeed is the member for Koolpinyah - I feel that I should respond to her comments concerning the Conservation Commission. I must admit that I am rather surprised that a former minister responsible for this magnificent organisation in the Northern Territory is prepared to describe it as an organisation looking after ticky-tacky parks in the northern suburbs.

Mrs Padgham-Purich interjecting.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The member for Koolpinyah will be silent. She was heard in silence.

Mr McCARTHY: I would suggest to the member for Koolpinyah that she wander beyond the boundaries of her own electorate occasionally and see what the Conservation Commission is doing. Of course, it is doing a lot in her own electorate too. She needs to look beyond that and see the magnificent work of this organisation. I have no problem at all with the Conservation Commission being involved in the development of parks in the northern suburbs of Darwin, the southern suburbs of Darwin or anywhere else in the Northern Territory because it does that so magnificently. It is easily the best organisation in the Northern Territory to develop such parks, if not necessarily to look after them once they have been developed.

Mr Speaker, I would draw your attention to the areas in Alice Springs of which you are very much aware. I know that, when I was Minister for Conservation, you often approached me with regard to the good work of the Conservation Commission in the hope that it would extend that work into other areas. Indeed, it has helped the Ghan Preservation Society quite significantly in Alice Springs.

I would ask the member for Koolpinyah to look at the Berry Springs Zoo, developed by the Conservation Commission. Most of the work there has been carried out by rangers at very little cost to the Northern Territory. They have used their great expertise and their valuable experience. Furthermore, this organisation which the member for Koolpinyah belittled in her remarks is the same organisation which developed the plan of management for crocodiles. She should be very much aware of that plan because she had the opportunity to travel overseas to talk about that at an international conference. She should be aware of the excellent job the commission did in changing the mind of a particular professor responsible for the Australian National Parks and Wildlife Service who put everything in the way of the development of that plan of management. The relevant world organisation accepted that plan as the work of a very experienced and knowledgeable organisation.

One need only go to places like Berry Springs, Howard Springs, Litchfield Park and Kings Canyon to see the magnificent work of the Conservation Commission, which the member for Koolpinyah likes to belittle as the developer of ticky-tacky gardens in the northern suburbs. I am rather surprised, as I am sure all honourable members are, that a former Minister for Conservation could make comments like that in this Assembly.

Mrs Padgham-Purich: It is not the Conservation Commission. It is you CLP politicians hoping to obtain votes.

Mr McCARTHY: That is very surprising to me.

Mrs Padgham-Purich: You wanted it to make a lake so that you could get votes.

Mr McCARTHY: What is wrong with the development of lakes anywhere in the Northern Territory? Mr Speaker, I am enjoying this.

Just to move away from the subject of the Conservation Commission, that very worthwhile organisation, I would like to reinforce the comments of the member for Port Darwin in respect of the local government elections. I certainly agree with his comments. The lack of interest shown in the council elections, particularly by the people of Darwin, is really quite amazing. We know that people like to complain about the government they get but surely that is their problem if they are not willing to contest elections. I cannot accept that the lack of candidates shows that people think the council is doing its job magnificently. It is disappointing that more interest has not been shown and I hope that changes in future elections.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I did not intend to speak tonight but I was forced to my feet to respond to the member for Koolpinyah's comments about the Conservation Commission. I hope that, at the next available opportunity, she will apologise to that magnificent organisation.

Mr COLLINS (Sadadeen): Mr Deputy Speaker, I would like to say: 'Come back, Dave. All is forgiven'. I have never had a great deal of time for Dave Nason but it is better the devil you know than the devil you don't. I am

referring to an article in today's NT News in relation to the Legislative Assembly sittings. It is headed 'Court Flaws Prompted Pay Back' and is written by one Geoff Atkinson. The article says: 'An Alice Springs vigilante group had taken the law into its own hands to avenge the slaying of a family member, the Sadadeen MLA, Mr Denis Collins said last night'. Mr Speaker, I said nothing of the sort either in this House or outside it. The Hansard record will show that and I am sure that John Louizou, who taped an interview with me, would back me up on it. This Mr Atkinson has taken great licence. I never mentioned the word 'vigilante' nor did I state that people had taken things into their own hands to do a mischief to somebody who had slain a member of their family.

What I did say in the House, and maybe elaborated somewhat outside it, related to a conversation I had with a high-ranking official associated with the Alice Springs courts. I expressed to that official my concern that people were not satisfied with the sentences that were being handed down and said that I feared a breakdown in the rule of the law. In relation to my fear that people would take the law into their own hands, I said that the official had told me: 'I have evidence that this is happening already'. I did not push that person to give me any of the evidence or to say anything about vigilante groups or families taking the law into their own hands. The person simply said that. I respected his comment and I quote it only because I believe that he is an honourable and truthful person.

Mr Ede: Was it a magistrate?

Mr COLLINS: I did so in a general endeavour to bring to the attention of the people of the Territory the fact that the situation regarding the sentencing of people convicted of various crimes is something of great concern to those who know about it. I believe that, as the issue becomes more widely discussed, it will be of great concern to a host of other people.

The newspaper report is rubbish. The journalist has taken stupid licence and invented a story around the things that I said. The member for Stuart can hunt in Hansard to his heart's content in an effort to get me to say it was a magistrate. He will not find anything of that nature there.

Mr Ede: What did you say?

Mr COLLINS: You read it.

Mr Ede: Tell me what page it is on.

Mr COLLINS: I have not bothered to look up the page. I know what I said. I think that the journalist in the gallery there also knows quite well what I said. I am afraid that the report is simply garbage. I hope that he will improve the standard of his journalism because so much of this report is wrong and should never have been printed. He should have stuck to the story as I gave it to him.

This morning, I raised a question about the screening of M-rated videos within our schools. I was pleased to hear that the department has a policy on this and that the principals received a circular on it a couple of years ago. However, it does pain me to learn that there are instances of M-rated videos being shown in our schools. The minister is aware of some of these. The departmental policy puts the onus on the principal but I am sure not all principals have time to check out the videos. I am certainly keen that teachers should view films and videos before they show them to students and

this is particularly important in respect of M-rated videos. As the minister pointed out, these can only be shown with the principal's permission and there has to be a good reason for it to be given. Parents may well be consulted and I think parents have a right to be consulted over M-rated videos.

I will give an example but I certainly will not name the school. I travel round the Territory and, as an independent member, I receive information from many sources. There is an M-rated video called 'Trick or Treat', which was shown at a school within the Territory as part of a lesson. I have seen that video and to rate it M gives a new dimension to the word 'mature'. It was nothing short of a load of garbage. It is available in video stores throughout the Territory. Members might like to view it in order to see what has been shown in at least one school in the Territory.

I do not know how 3 teachers could have sat through that particular video with students in the room. It degrades the profession of teaching. Even if they had not viewed it beforehand, I cannot understand how any teacher worthy of the name could have kept watching it with students in the room. It is an absolute load of garbage of no educational value whatsoever. It was a Year 8 male student who was offended by this video and, through other people, it was brought to my attention. It really does let the side down when some teachers allow such videos to be shown. I am sure the vast majority of them would not do so.

This indicates a weakness in the system of implementing the directions of the department. We have to trust teachers to obey the rules. I would like to think that such rules were unnecessary and that all teachers would take a moral view and act responsibly towards the students in the first place. I am very disappointed that a few teachers have let down the vast majority who do the right thing. Even if a teacher had begun showing it without being aware of its content, he should have stopped it as soon as it was apparent that it was not of a standard that would be condoned. I do not think anybody would get any thrill out of it. The thought that it was shown to schoolchildren simply disgusts me. We must be vigilant and aware that these sorts of things can occur. I would like to think that school councils, school principals and school staff in general would condemn any teachers who do not have the moral courage to say that that is not good enough.

Mr Deputy Speaker, in the few minutes remaining to me, I would like to bring to the attention of the Minister for Transport and Works a matter that I raised 2 or 3 years ago in this House. I refer to the Stuart Highway near the entrance to the Telegraph Station. I regret not having taken this matter further. At the time, I was travelling south along the highway near the Telegraph Station entrance. A vehicle came out from the Telegraph Station, turned left and headed towards the town. It went over into the right-hand lane. The road bends and there is a line of trees which, fortunately, have been trimmed. As it went round the bend, it could easily have crashed head-on into a vehicle coming northwards.

As I said at the time, I believe the driver was fooled by the line of trees. He could have perceived them as a traffic island in a 4-lane highway because there is an access road on the other side, on which vehicles can drive in both directions. At the time, a vehicle was heading north on the access road. I believe the driver coming from the Telegraph Station was under the impression that he was entering a 4-lane highway.

Fortunately, an accident did not occur. However, I was following behind and my heart was in my mouth. It was a horrible situation to be in because,

if I tooted the horn, the bloke would have looked in his mirror and have been distracted from anything coming north and it would have made the situation worse. Fortunately, he rounded the bend and saw cars coming in the distance. He realised his mistake and moved over into the left-hand lane.

A couple of months ago, a lady and her 2 children were heading northwards towards the Telegraph Station in their 4-wheel drive. She was driving to the Telegraph Station to pick up her husband, who was at a Lions Club meeting there. She was met head-on by a vehicle coming south in the wrong lane. That lady, a very lovely person, is now dead. Her 2 young children had bones broken and are now without a mother and a husband is without a wife. Since that has happened, I have pointed out the problem to Transport and Works staff. I have had promises that something will be done and I hope it will be done soon. I do not know exactly how it can be sorted out but it is a real trap. I certainly regret that I did not pursue the matter further at the time.

Mr TUXWORTH (Barkly): Mr Speaker, I would like to read into Hansard tonight the report tabled last night by the President of the Northern Territory Caravan Park Association. I attended the meeting of the association last night and I feel that it is important to record the feelings of the association because, due to other commitments, Tourist Commission personnel were not able to attend the meeting. The contents of the president's report are pretty important and I will read them into the record:

I am pleased to report that the association has made some significant gains in the areas of government negotiation and promotion. Unfortunately, we will not be able to realise our full potential until the long-awaited Territory caravan park legislation is formalised. This issue is no closer to being resolved than it was 12 months ago.

In the area of promotion, we have: produced an association car sticker; formulated a logo; produced new letterhead; acquired listing in the 1988 telephone directory, in the yellow pages; circulated regular newsletters to member parks to keep them informed; produced, in conjunction with AANT on a 50-50 basis, a tourist map listing all member parks who choose to contribute; and, sent representatives to attend the 1988 Melbourne Caravan and Camping Show to promote the Northern Territory parks. Additionally, the association now holds a seat on the Darwin Tourist Promotion Association Executive in an advisory capacity and, although it does not give us voting rights, at least we have a voice.

Early in the year, the executive held a number of meetings with NTEC, including their field study groups, in an effort to standardise electricity charges. At the initial meeting, NTEC verbally agreed that all parks could charge to the nearest cent per unit plus 1c extra for administrative efforts, without contravening NTEC rules. However, when NTEC produced their legislation, they only allowed for 1c extra. A further meeting extracted an agreement from NTEC to consult us again at the next review where we will push our case.

The NT bed tax continues to be a controversial issue. We have asked all member parks to display signs noting our opposition to the tax, and to conduct a petition displaying the tourists' displeasure. The petitions should be completed by 31 July 1988, and will be forwarded to the association head office so we can present them to the appropriate government, backed by media coverage.

In the continuing battle to have the tax lifted, the association has: (a) advertised in the NT and rural newspapers; (b) met with Mr Hanrahan and put our case, to no avail; (c) met with Mr Coulter on a number of occasions, also to no avail; (d) sent letters to the newspapers; (e) encouraged tourists to complain to the government; (f) obtained coverage on the 7.30 Report; (g) authorised notices for public display; (h) raised the matter with CLP Central Council, once again to no avail; (i) held discussions with the NT Tax Department; and (j) negotiated with Treasury for a reduction in tax, which was initially approved and then withdrawn.

This tax, in its present form, is unjust and can only serve to damage the tourist trade. No one in the industry would object to promoting tourism, as we all benefit. However, if we are to be levied, it should be on a more equitable basis; that is, it should be shared by everyone in the industry, not just the accommodation industry.

Since our last AGM, membership has increased by 6 parks and we now have a membership of 32. Whilst this is a fairly good representation, we hope to increase our membership significantly during 1988-89 as funds become available to further promote the association. Remember, the stronger the association the louder the voice.

In closing, I would like to welcome the incoming committee and thank the outgoing committee for their dedication and invaluable assistance - in particular, Robyn Davies, whose dedication and efficiency has held the threads together. I would also like to take this opportunity of wishing all park members a prosperous future.

B.M. Thomas
President.

Mr Speaker, that in itself is of concern enough, but I would now like to read into Hansard the contents of this little, glossy sign that is now being stuck up all over the Northern Territory:

Northern Territory Caravan Parks Association.

On 1 April 1988, the tourism marketing duty (bed tax of 2½% of tariff) was imposed by the Northern Territory government on all accommodation houses. A caravan park is an accommodation house. A caravan park is considered an accommodation house and this tax is payable on caravans, campervans and wagons. The only exemption is tent camping. This association has fought the implementation of bed taxes on caravans and will continue to do so.

It has come to our notice that tourists outside the Territory may be unaware of this tax and, in fact, because of this, there have been some instances of exploitation. The amount payable is 2½% of the total site fee including electricity, unless this is metered and charged separately. Caravan park operators are forced by NT government legislation to collect the tax moneys and so this association asks that, if you object to paying the tourism marketing duty while in the Northern Territory, please do so to the Northern Territory Tourist Commission and not to the caravan park operators, for they have no choice but to collect the tax.

Authorised by the Northern Territory Caravan Parks and Association Incorporated, PMB 14 Winnellie.

While the minister is here tonight, I would like to say that this matter has gone far enough. In this little blue between associations such as the Caravan Parks Association and the hoteliers, we have an open campaign in which people are virtually being told not to come to the Northern Territory. These notices are being handed out like confetti. They will be distributed all around Australia and used against our Territory destinations because of the bed tax. Given his background, the minister should realise the damage that has been done by this bed tax. If he has any influence at all with his colleagues, I urge him for goodness sake, to get rid of it in the coming budget or we will really make a rod for our own backs. This notice is now reaching the grassroots and telling people not to come here.

The caravan park industry in the Territory has a capital investment of at least \$30m. Most of it is owned by small people who have their life savings tied up in it. They work 7 days a week and most of the hours of day in servicing their parks and that seems to ...

A member interjecting.

Mr TUXWORTH: Mr Speaker, I will come back to the honourable member's interjection in a moment, because it demonstrates a naivete which is remarkable in the context of the report I have just read into Hansard.

These are people who have their whole life's work and investment at stake in the Territory, and they are now so upset about the bed tax and the damage it is doing them that they have embarked on a campaign of telling people how bad it is and have asked them not to take their wrath out on the operators but to take it out on the government. That message is being passed around Australia. As the honourable minister would know better than anybody, the big advertising in the caravan park game is word of mouth. You can place all the ads you like in the press, but word of mouth in the caravan park industry is really the way it goes. What we are doing now is turning off just about every visitor we have with the 2½% bed tax and the way it is levied ...

Mr Dale: That's not right.

Mr TUXWORTH: It is right, for the benefit of the honourable minister. That was another half-smart remark which just indicates, without any doubt at all, the intellectual capacity behind this legislation. If the honourable minister had ever spent 2 minutes in the industry, or doing something to support it, he would know what damage he is doing to it.

Mr Dale: I have never spent 2 minutes in it trying to destroy it like you are.

Mr TUXWORTH: Mr Speaker, he says I am trying to destroy it.

Mr Dale: Of course you are.

Mr TUXWORTH: Mr Speaker, anybody who says anything against the government is destroying the Northern Territory. It just could be that there are are other views in the Northern Territory at the moment that might be a little more on track than the one being put forward by the government.

Mr Speaker, I will conclude tonight by addressing some remarks to the Chief Minister. Yesterday, he left the House to hold a couple of meetings. At one of them, he told people that they should no longer concern themselves with the presence of the member for Barkly in the House because, prior to the next election, the boundaries will be changed and it will be so hard for him to win his seat that he will take his money and run.

I would like to put it on record, for the benefit of the Chief Minister, that he can change the boundaries to the electorate of Barkly if he wants to. He can include places like Lake Nash, Warrabri, Yuendumu and even Hooker Creek if he likes. I have represented them all over the years and the voters in those areas have been pretty kind to me. I put it on record tonight that the Chief Minister can go for his life. He can change the boundaries of the electorate of Barkly and he can put in or take out anything he likes. Whatever he does, I will be back in this House after the next election, doing the job that the people expect me to do.

Mr REED (Katherine): Mr Speaker, tonight I want to touch on aspects of Australia's existing immigration policy. I commence by referring to a statement made by the Minister for Immigration, Mr Holding, earlier this week and his commitment to review the question of a mandatory AIDS test before permanent residence is granted to immigrants. Whether this will be applied to all immigrants seeking permanent residence or only to those who fall within the higher-risk category remains to be seen. I contend that, at the least, people in the high-risk category should be tested and that these tests should be introduced as a matter of considerable urgency.

My concern relates particularly to the immigration of homosexuals during recent years and the granting of permanent residence to them. If they are not a high-risk group for AIDS, I do not know who is. This is an issue of both health and morality. It is a matter of great concern throughout the nation, as is clearly indicated by the number of press reports in major Australian newspapers during the last week. I have recent clippings from the Melbourne Sun, The Australian and the NT News.

Honourable members might be interested to know that, since July 1985, the Minister for Immigration, Local Government and Ethnic Affairs has approved a total of 149 resident status applications submitted on the basis of a homosexual relationship. These approvals are subject to satisfactory completion of health and character checks and 4 years of cohabitation in a particular relationship. A further 100 cases await consideration. Given the known incidence of AIDS among people in this category, I find it quite amazing that they could pass a health test. In relation to character checks, Australia does not recognise marriage between people of the same sex. In fact, as far as I am aware, it is illegal. Of course, we uphold the family unit very strongly.

How anyone can pass a character check to gain entry and permanent residence in this country under those circumstances escapes me. I do not know how the criterion relating to 4 years of cohabitation is proven. Presumably, it is by statutory declaration; I just cannot imagine how it can be proven otherwise. It is the minister who approves such requests. Departmental officers are not involved. The fact that status approvals for homosexual partners are made by the minister rather than the department also surprises me. I cannot imagine that such approvals are given in our country. Australians are generally unaware of this immigration procedure and I think they would be absolutely horrified if they were. Hopefully, this week's press releases will draw the attention of more people to it and there will be some

reaction. Over the last couple of days, the member for Sadadeen has mentioned his concerns in relation to M-rated videos. I share his views. I hope that he shares my concern in relation to this matter.

As a matter of interest, I will read into Hansard the National Health and Medical Research Council's report dated 11 February 1988 which illustrated the number of people who are suffering from Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome. One part of that report indicates that there are a total of 758 sufferers, of whom 664 or 87.5% are homosexual or bisexual males. Applying those figures to immigration and permanent residency approvals, one can only assume that we are inflicting on ourselves a greater health risk than we already face.

The Labor government has pursued a curious course in providing funding and assistance to homosexual groups over recent years. I have illustrated this in the House on a couple of previous occasions, but I will just indicate some of the areas where funding has been applied. A classic example is the Literature Board of the Australia Council which gave \$1600 of taxpayers' money to the Gay and Lesbian Actors Ensemble for script development of a play and \$7500 to the Sydney Gay Mardi Gras Association to employ an artist in residence. What these people do defies me and why they should be funded is even more curious. The Community Arts Board has given the Sydney Gay Mardi Gras Association \$5000 towards art worker fees for festival workshops. The Theatre Board has provided \$6700 to the Gay Actors Ensemble. The Community Arts Board has given \$7500 to the Sydney Gay Mardi Gras Association \$7500. The Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet also gave \$5000 in 1985 to the National Network of Young Lesbians and Homosexual Men to enable it to hold its first national conference. The incredible part of that last grant was that it was made in the International Year of Youth.

Those grants have been provided since 1985. The federal government is presently supporting, as I understand it, a Gay and Lesbian Immigration Task Force. That task force can only serve to exacerbate the problem which I allude to tonight. I quote from the Melbourne Sun of Tuesday 24 May: 'The group has held monthly meetings at a suburban venue, describing itself in advertisements as a helper of gay couples wanting to migrate to Australia'. Mr Speaker, one is almost speechless.

One should reflect on how this impacts on our society as we know it and the potential impact that it has. It is contributing further to the terrible health problems of AIDS. I recognise the suffering endured by the unfortunate people who contract the disease but it is still a matter that has to be addressed. One can only wonder at a Labor government funding such actions and groups and supporting the permanent residency status of people of this nature. Fine men of the ilk of Curtin and Chifley - fine Labor men and previous Prime Ministers - must be turning in their graves. It is an absolute disgrace.

In addition to this, we have legitimate applicants overseas who are seeking to migrate to Australia and who would provide valuable contributions to our country, economically, socially and morally. Yet, we have this amazing and horrific practice of the federal Minister for Immigration. Rather than contributing to the nation's cause, it works directly against it, adds to our health bill and increases the danger for our own Australian-born residents and recent newcomers to the country. It is morally wrong, in direct conflict with our Australian traditions and a danger to our social structure. I find the practice totally abhorrent. I hope that the Minister for Immigration introduces a mandatory AIDS test for people in this category who might be seeking admission to Australia. Indeed, I hope he goes a step further and prohibits the entry of people in this category. Marriages between persons of

the same sex are illegal here. This policy is a danger to our social fabric and I hope that Australians speak out against it.

Mr EDE (Stuart): Mr Speaker, a sittings should not go by without my mentioning water for the school of Soapy Bore. I have not been out there for a couple of weeks but the last communication I had was that the water was still not being delivered to the school. It is not a very good situation and I think the Minister for Education would agree. I hope that he would add his voice to mine in trying to ensure that the tank is built so that water can be connected to the school.

I raised the matter of Dagaragu Education Centre in debates earlier. I was hoping that the minister would respond as he has said he would do if I raised such issues in adjournment debates. The education centre is about a third complete and I am told there have not been any contractors on the ground for some months. The community is very worried that vandalism could occur to the building and it could lose its education centre.

I hope that the government will make a women's centre at Yuendumu one of its priorities. One third of the people at Yuendumu are still living in wurleys. While there have been quite significant improvements in housing over recent years, that proportion is quite high in comparison with Aboriginal communities around the Territory. The women have asked for a women's centre so that the old women can re-establish their position in the community. This would enable them to pass on their knowledge to young mothers on how to look after young children and ensure that washing and feeding are done properly. These things do not need to be done by means of a health centre but would be appropriate for a women's centre. They also wish to be able to use their own methods of instructing the younger mothers in child care.

The women at Yuendumu also wish to use such a centre as a place for discussion so that they can become more involved in the community. There are some strong old women out at Yuendumu, Mr Speaker, and you would know them. The difficulty is that they are fairly dispersed. They have great difficulty in getting together so that they can actually put their point of view across. The building that they are proposing for a women's centre is the building just before council chambers on the way into Yuendumu. It could be rebuilt as a community centre and a women's centre. I hope that the government will take that up.

The High Court has now rejected the final attempts of the Northern Territory government to deny the ability of Aboriginal people to make claims on stock routes. I reiterate that I know of no Aboriginal people who actually want a total stock route through a cattle station. They made those claims in desperation because of their inability to obtain action on excisions. People wanted to use the stock route claims as a means of bargaining for excisions. I hope the government will move very rapidly now to resolve that situation.

I must put in a special plea for a very old friend of mine, Leonard Davis Jungarrayi, who, under the Walpiri system, is my father. He fairly regularly reminds me of the obligations that entails. He is a great old gentleman who actually started work at Hamilton Downs when he was 7 years old and is now approaching 70. He was in the first cattle drive across the Tanami from Halls Creek down through Mount Doreen. After 50 years working for the station, he basically just wants a place where he can sit down and live out the rest of his years. When I saw him the other day, I was quite shocked at how much he has aged. I really hope that humanity will prevail and that he will get that place before he dies because he is living out there on the stock

route without water and without shelter. It is only occasionally that people are able to get out there to give him enough water for drinking but not enough for any standard of living that anybody would call satisfactory. He is a great old gentleman, Mr Speaker. You would know his brother, Mosquito Morris Mungarrayi, who in fact was in the House today with a group of people training in management skills.

The Minister for Transport and Works said that he had not received many requests during these sittings. Lest he feels that he is being left out, I will make another plea for the Tanami-Lajamanu section of the Tanami road. The former member for Araluen, Jim Robertson, did some good work while he was Minister for Transport and Works, in getting a number of sections along that road upgraded. However, nothing has been done since. The Tanami road, as you would know Mr Speaker, is not even sealed into my electorate. It is only sealed as far as the Papunya turn-off. You would be amazed, Mr Speaker, at the amount of traffic that travels through there nowadays. The first time I travelled through there I broke down and sat for 24 hours before another vehicle came along. These days, it is like the Stuart Highway, with road trains, tourist buses and the people servicing the mines out there. The Tanami is rapidly becoming the biggest mining area in the Northern Territory. There is an immediate need for an upgraded maintenance schedule on the road and very strong consideration should be given to extending the bitumen at least as far as the Yuendumu turn-off initially and subsequently to the North Flinders.

I finally wish to express my absolute disgust that a person who is standing for election to the Alice Springs Town Council would feel that it was in his interest to identify himself as a racist and a member of the League of Rights. It is my sincere hope that the person finishes at the bottom of the poll. I will not name the person concerned because I am really worried that the recognition factor may give him some votes from people who do not know whom they are voting for. I really hope that a person who has such crazy ideas finishes at the bottom of the poll. I think that you would agree, Mr Speaker, that such people do not represent Alice Springs. They are not what Alice Springs is about. We are battling with a host of very difficult problems down there, each of us in our way trying to solve them. We do not need that sort of thing.

Mr SETTER (Jingili): Mr Speaker, I would like to table a petition which I was unable to present earlier today. I have received a petition from 61 citizens of the Northern Territory which does not bear the Clerk's certificate as it does not conform with the requirements of standing orders. With your permission, Mr Speaker, I would like to read the petition:

We the undersigned wish to bring to your attention the extremely difficult climatic conditions under which the preschool children of Moulden Park Preschool are working. The building is not only facing the wrong direction for adequate air flow, but also the louvred areas stop above the children's height. Under such conditions, the children's ability to learn is greatly impeded and many are extremely lethargic, irritable and covered in heat rash. We feel that the only practical solution is the introduction of air-conditioning throughout the entire preschool building. We urge you to give this matter your immediate consideration.

Mr Speaker, I seek leave to table the petition.

Leave granted.

Mr SETTER: Mr Speaker, I would now like to turn my attention to the absolutely ridiculous comments made by the member for Koolpinyah tonight. She even had her facts confused. She was referring to a question that I asked the Minister for Conservation several days ago regarding the possible creation of an equestrian path in an area of my electorate. I have also written to the minister in relation to the matter. Such a path would allow the people who own and ride horses beside the creek to have a reasonable route on which to travel from McMillans Road to the Water Gardens. The member for Koolpinyah's comments were well wide of the mark and I suggest that she read my question and the minister's answer. That will set her straight.

This evening, I wish to talk about the great lie which is being perpetrated on the Australian people with regard to the East Timorese people and their presence in the Northern Territory. What I am saying is that there is a small group of people in this community who are strong Fretilin supporters. They call themselves the Timorese Association and they try to create the impression that they represent the East Timorese people. They do not. Unfortunately, the media pick up most of their comments and help to perpetrate this misunderstanding.

Let me just describe the East Timorese community in Darwin. It is made up of several different groups. One group is the Portuguese Timorese who have a social club on McMillans Road. Another very large group is the Chinese Timorese. The next group comprises the Timorese Association or, to use the Timorese language, Lafaek. That group of about 30 or 40 people tries to present itself as representing all East Timorese people in Darwin. The reality is that the majority of the members of that group are Fretilin. In my opinion, Fretilin is a communist organisation.

A play has been performed in Darwin recently. In fact, it is being presented this evening at Brown's Mart. It is called 'Death at Balibo'. Mr Speaker, just let me describe that play to you. Its theme is the alleged murder of 5 Australian journalists in the course of the conflict in East Timor. Nobody can tell us or prove who killed them but there are allegations around. I do not question that an incident occurred and I do not question for one moment the right of these people to put on that play. However, one has to realise that any journalist or war correspondent who goes into a war zone places himself at great risk. It happened throughout World War II. When I was in Ambon recently, I came upon the grave of Damien Parer, a very well-known war correspondent who covered World War II war in the Pacific and was killed on one of the islands to our north. Anybody who goes into a war zone is bound to put himself at extreme risk and many war correspondents have been killed. So it was with these 5 journalists. I am very sorry about the whole occurrence.

Mr Speaker, let me turn now to a motion that was moved at an ALP conference about 12 months ago. I quote from the minutes of the conference. The motion refers to East Timor. It says:

This conference, noting that this year is the 12th year since the killing of 5 Australian journalists and the invasion of East Timor by the Indonesian armed forces in clear breach of the UN charter and of international law, calls on the Prime Minister and the Minister for Foreign Affairs to note the present UN position requiring Indonesia to remove its armed forces from East Timor and, in particular: (1) to play a positive role to ensure that constructive negotiations between Portugal and Indonesia include the people of East Timor as represented by Fretilin; (2) to promote the issue of East Timor

within the UN in order to end the last 12 years of massive breaches of human rights; and (3) to provide East Timor refugees with special priority for resettlement and family reunion programs in Australia.

The motion was carried. Mr Speaker, that is the position of the Northern Territory Labor Party.

It is quite coincidental, of course, that at present a play is being performed in Darwin which alleges to portray the death of the 5 journalists. Let me quote from the Ethnic News Column of the NT News of 18 May 1988.

The well-crafted 'Death at Balibo' is probably the most significant piece of community theatre Darwin residents have seen. This bilingual play has raised community awareness and shown how powerful good theatre can be, both as a creative and a political tool.

You see, Mr Speaker, a political tool!

Let me further quote from the Darwin newspaper called The Bulletin. I do not have the date of this particular extract, but the heading of the article was 'Timor's Tribute to Aussie Journos'. It says:

It is over 12 years since 5 Australian journalists were killed in East Timor by invading Indonesian troops. Despite the deaths of the Australian journalists, Australia, along with the rest of the world, turned its back on the tragic plight of East Timorese people and, in the first 2 months following the Indonesian invasion, 60 000 East Timorese died in a resistance denied by the Indonesians. In 1976, Indonesia claimed East Timor as its 27th province, to free it from colonialism and its communist element. It was a move applauded by the United States President, who praised Indonesia's national resilience and commended its responsible manner. In 1983, the Australian government, which had tactically supported the Indonesian takeover, formally recognised Indonesia's annexation of East Timor.

According to Mr Graham Pitts, who was one of the co-authors of the play, 'Australia has betrayed that link and the Australian denial of support for East Timor casts shame on our nation'. Mr Pitts collaborated on the play whilst working in Darwin as a writer in the community. In a report to the Migrant Resource Centre he said: 'The idea of the Balibo 5 was conceived by Maria Alice Branco Casimiro and Jose Montiro'. He further said: 'The Balibo 5 was intended to bring together the factionalised Timorese community and to serve as a bridge between the community and the wider Australian society'. If Mr Pitts thought that was going to occur, the play has had the opposite result. Let me further quote from his report - and this is the important part: 'On behalf of the Lafaek Cultural Association, to which Maria and Jose and many of the participants belong, I drew up an application for funding to the Community Cultural Development Unit of the Australia Council. With some no doubt inspired advocacy from Barbara Pitman, the full amount of \$15 710 was granted'. The play is being funded by the Australia Council, a Commonwealth organisation.

Mr Speaker, the problem is that some people in the Australian community are being misinformed and misled. Let me give you some facts about East Timor and what happened over there in those years. In 1974, there was radical political change in Portugal. East Timor, of course, was a colony of Portugal. Following a military coup in Portugal on 25 April 1974, the decision was taken to allow political parties to establish in East Timor.

There had been none prior to that time. The parties that were established were UDT, a right-wing democratic party which had a policy of maintaining its links with Portugal and eventually integrating into Indonesia; Apodeti, which was basically an East Timorese party which favoured immediate integration into Indonesia; a smaller party called Kota; and, of course, Fretilin.

It is Fretilin about which I now wish to speak. On 14 November 1974, Colonel Lemos Pires was installed as the Governor of East Timor. He quickly moved to promote the left-wing Fretilin so that it could politically manipulate people in East Timor. On 8 August 1975 UDT, seeing what was going on and suspecting a Fretilin coup, mounted a coup itself. It took over the police station and seized police weapons. On 20 August, Fretilin staged a counter-coup. The Portuguese military failed to intervene. They were there. They had the power and the weapons but they said and did nothing. On 26 August 1975, the Governor of East Timor fled to Atauro Island just to the north. Fretilin immediately seized the military's weapons which included modern arms such as machine guns and mortars. Of course, the UDT and the other groups were no match for those weapons obtained by Fretilin. The civil war raged.

In September, talks were held between the minor conservative parties - UDT, Kota and Apodeti - which agreed to amalgamate and invite the Indonesians to support them. They said that they favoured the integration of East Timor into Indonesia. On 6 October, Indonesian forces and the forces of those other 3 parties commenced their counteroffensive and the war raged on for quite some time. The thing I want to talk about in the minute that is left to me - and I wish I had another 10 minutes - is the atrocities that have been perpetrated by Fretilin. There have been many of them.

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

Mr HARRIS (Education): Mr Speaker, in reply, I would like to comment in relation to the member for Stuart's concerns about schools in his electorate. Perhaps he is at last starting to get the message that the adjournment debate is the place to raise issues of concern in a member's electorate. I am quite happy to take on board his concerns in relation to the school water supply at Soapy Bore.

In relation to the Dagaragu project, that is one of 4 similar projects being handled by the same contractor. The others are at Peppimenarti, Lake Nash and Yarralin. There were some delays earlier in the year. I understand that most of those delays were caused by late rains. The Department of Transport and Works has expressed its concern to the contractor and it has been satisfied that the delays have largely been overcome. The Dagaragu complex will be finished in July this year.

I again say to the member for Stuart and other members that, if they have concerns about schools in their electorates, please let me know in the adjournment debate or through correspondence. I will examine those matters and try to address the concerns that they have.

Motion agreed to; the Assembly adjourned.

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